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José, Joe, Zé Carioca: Walt Disney's Good Neighbor Colonial "Monument" in Brazil

Andrew Kelly Nelson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Frederick G. Williams, Chair  
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## ABSTRACT

José, Joe, Zé Carioca: Walt Disney's Good Neighbor Colonial "Monument" in Brazil

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Department of Spanish and Portuguese, BYU  
Master of Arts

Although Walt Disney's early animated feature films were successful, a variety of economic, operational, and external forces required him to continually be on the cutting edge of new ideas and technologies in order for his studio to continue operations. Latin America became the studio's source of inspiration in the early 1940s, sprouting from Walt Disney's involvement with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* were the result. While many critics have decried Disney's involvement in Latin America as being an apparatus of cultural imperialism and economic exploitation, they almost universally give him credit for his pursuit of cultural authenticity within the films. They are, however, sparing in what ways such was done and are reticent in declaring that he fulfilled that quest. As one who was involved politically and economically in the shaping of a nation, with his enterprise benefiting as a result, Walt Disney can in fact be seen as a colonial power. Within Brazil, José Carioca was the "monument" he erected to that end. Unlike full-fledged colonial figures in earlier centuries, however, his "monument" was overall friendly and was not based on the image of a sovereign leader, but a character that was intended to be seen as native. Where Disney was bound by the interests of the government he represented, and consequentially the Brazilian government, his "monument" was imbued with hues that were inherently skewed toward those entities; however, he worked within those parameters to present a credible image. This thesis seeks to substantiate those ways and how the original monument-like figure Disney erected in the Brazilian public square, the image of José Carioca in *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros*, led to unity—and not division—as most imperial monuments had done in earlier centuries. A possible explanation as to how Disney's multiple nuanced iterations of the character leads to such critique of the original "monument" will also be provided.

Keywords: José Carioca, Brazil, Walt Disney, OCIAA, Good Neighbor Policy, cultural imperialism, hybrid cultures, intercontinental representation, monument building

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Walt Disney became a household name after introducing sound to animation in *Steamboat Willie* (1928) and further yet after his development of animated features as full-length films, beginning with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Bambi* (1942). He was innovative in his form, nostalgic in his storytelling, and touching in his exploration of the human condition. Although these latter films were successful, a variety of economic, operational, and external forces required Walt Disney to continually be on the cutting edge of new ideas and technologies in order for the Walt Disney Studio to continue its operations.

It was after the release of these initial full-length animated films that the studio turned to another short-lived source on which to base its films: culture, specifically the culture of Latin America. As was the case with Walt Disney's earlier animated features, the two flagship films of this kind—*Saludos Amigos* (1942/1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1944/1945)—garnered a generally positive response in the United States. The first claimed similar, albeit varied, success one year earlier when it “opened in Brazil in August 1942 (with the title *Alô Amigos*), and in parts of Spanish America in September and October of the same year,” Borge reports, owing that “Disney still held considerable prestige among Latin American film journalists and intellectuals” (159). *The Three Caballeros* followed suit two years later in terms of reception in both regions, but struggled to yield a substantial financial return. As will be discussed, however, Walt Disney's draw to Latin America was not born of pure economic or operational necessity, or even mere curiosity; it was part of a much larger initiative based around the interests of various entities, not the least of which were the United States government and its Good Neighbor Policy, Germany and its Nazism, and the allegiance of the right-wing governments of Central and South America to these two nations. Although the two films characterize the cultures, peoples, and

landscapes of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, the interest of this thesis is to bring further light to Walt Disney's involvement in and representation of Brazil.

Unlike earlier historical representations of European political dominance over the territory that led to division and independence, Disney's anamorphic Brazilian parrot named José Carioca, became a historical representation that was erected in order to unite the continents. While many critics—including Ariel Dorfman, Armand Mattelart, and Julianne Burton—have decried Disney's involvement in Latin America as being an apparatus of cultural imperialism and economic exploitation, most almost universally give him credit for his pursuit of cultural authenticity within the films. They are, however sparing in what ways such was done and are reticent in declaring that he fulfilled that quest. As one who was involved politically and economically in the shaping of a nation, with his enterprise benefiting as a result, Walt Disney can in fact be seen as a colonial power. Within Brazil, José Carioca was the “monument” he erected to that end. Unlike full-fledged colonial figures in earlier centuries, however, his “monument” was mostly friendly and was not based on the image of a sovereign leader, but a character that was intended to be seen as native. Where Disney was bound by the interests of the government he represented, and consequentially the Brazilian government, his “monument” was imbued with hues that were inherently skewed toward those entities; however, he worked within those parameters to present a credible image. This thesis seeks to substantiate those ways and how the original monument-like figure Disney erected in the Brazilian public square, the image of José Carioca in the films, led to unity—and not division—as most imperial monuments had done in earlier centuries. A possible explanation as to how the multiple nuanced iterations of the character leads to such critique of the original “monument” will also be provided.

## Historical Background

The world found itself at a crossroads. Many nations were emerging from the depths of the Great Depression, the United States was becoming a world power, and Europe was falling into the depths of the Second World War in 1939. As citizens of the United States grew in their ability to spend and invest, the markets into which they could expand became limited due to the effects of the Depression and further worsened once the war began as Europe and portions of Asia and Africa fell into combat. Naturally, the border region with the Rio Grande stretching through South America's cone rose as the only significant area open to North American involvement and intervention, both economically and politically. As these shifts occurred, the nations of Latin America could look to Europe or the United States as its model, and, seeing this, the United States government began to fret the possibility of Latin Americans fixing their gaze on Europe, leaving them susceptible to the spread of Nazi influence.<sup>1</sup> The State Department consequentially rushed to ensure that these nations would become their allies and not the allies of fascist Germany.

Before this shift in influence could occur, and if “the citizens of the different nations of the Americas were to consent to new and closer inter-hemispheric partnerships, they would need to change their images of each other” (Melgosa 4). In 1940 Brazil, for example, Carmen Miranda performed a presentation exclusively for Rio de Janeiro's elite. The performer, who had come to be seen as the representation of Brazil within North American media, had returned to the land of

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<sup>1</sup> This worry came due to the large presence of Italian and German communities in Latin America, specifically in Argentina and Brazil. Whitaker reports that during the “peak period of the world's oversea migration, 1821-1932, six countries absorbed 90 per cent of the total, and among these six Argentina . . . [received] 6,405,000 . . . [and] Brazil . . . [received] 4,431,000 . . . from 1857 to 1958 [Italians] accounted for 46 . . . per cent . . . of the total immigration [to Argentina]” (53–54). German and Italian communities also flourished across the southern and southeastern regions of Brazil. The country is also home to the largest Japanese community outside of Japan, the first group of which, “consisting of 781 people, embarked aboard the *Kasato Maru*, which sailed from Kōbe on April 1908 and at Santos . . . on 18 June the same year” (Nogueira 48). By the 1920s, “the Japanese headed the entry lists of immigrants by nationality at São Paulo” (Nogueira 49).



her upbringing with the hope that her efforts to disseminate the Brazilian spirit would be well received by her audience. To her dismay, she received an opposite reward. “Para aqueles brasileiros, qualquer manifestação cultural, ainda que popular, não poderia vir da própria América e, muito menos, dos Estados Unidos, identificado sempre com a ‘bárbara’ cultura de massa...O paradigma era a Europa, principalmente a França” (Tota, *O imperialismo* 17). This group felt that the performer had not only adulterated the Brazilian image, but that she had also made it Americanized, and until that point in history, as Tota points out, the United States had yet to receive the same regard that culturally esteemed Europe had enjoyed throughout centuries. The beginnings of this transformation were already in the works and would come to fruition within a short time.

A similar transition within the United States had already. Nearly four decades before Carmen Miranda’s performance in Rio de Janeiro, President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) extended the aims of the Monroe Doctrine during his State of the Union address in 1904 in what has come to be known as The Roosevelt Corollary. While the Monroe Doctrine decried European intervention within the Western Hemisphere, the Roosevelt Corollary sought to give validity to monopolized United States intervention throughout the same region. This ideology led to several episodes of United States interaction within the hemisphere that left a negative image within many Latin Americans minds, yet “if Brazilians had previously looked to European models for guidance, the disillusionment and destruction brought about by World War I [as well as the Great Depression] now seemed to indicate a need for reassessment” (Prutsch 252). While this shift was still in the works, a different President Roosevelt, Franklin Delano (1882-1945), in order to precipitate change, modified the terms of the former President Roosevelt’s declaration as a means to reverse the United States’ “negative reputation for meddling in the affairs of Latin

American states” (Brewer 127) and more easily sweep into Latin America to dissuade any sympathy of South America’s right-wing governments towards Nazi ideology. The 1933 Good Neighbor Policy was the result.

The policy had a simple and direct commission: develop hegemony within the Americas. The approach in doing so, however, was strikingly different than other attempts by the United States to sway its sphere of influence, as Brewer explains: “Where the US had used its military in the past, it now tried to influence governments in more subtle ways such as through electoral oversight, investments of capital, international corporations, and the overt actions of the CIA” (127). As an aid to these counteroffensive efforts, President Roosevelt appointed Nelson A. Rockefeller to head the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) in 1940 as an extension of the Good Neighbor Policy.<sup>2</sup> Although the office had a direct charge—to “provide for the development of commercial and cultural relations between the American Republics and thereby increasing the solidarity of this hemisphere and furthering the spirit of cooperation between the Americas in the interest of hemisphere defense”—it was structurally flexible in the ways it fulfilled its intended purpose (Roosevelt).

Within five years, a plethora of professionals had become engaged within the mission of the OCIAA—ranging from doctors, to engineers, to business managers—and were sent to Latin America to develop a range of infrastructural projects. Each of these were divided into one of the many divisions of the greater Office and carried out a specific function aimed at fulfilling the Office’s presidentially commissioned charge. The Health and Sanitation Division, for example, built new or improved existing hospitals and medical clinics, while also providing “other

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<sup>2</sup> From its inception, this office passed through a variety of names: Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics (OCCCRBAR), August 16, 1940-July 30, 1941; Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), July 30, 1941-March 23 1945; Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), March 23, 1945-May 20, 1946 (Anthony 7). Throughout this thesis, it will be referred to as the OCIAA.

services...for improved inpatient medical care such as sanitary facilities and surgical, laboratory, and x-ray equipment” (Dunham 819). Others worked in agricultural enterprise, forest protection, and the development of transportation infrastructure, including airports.<sup>3</sup> Before these had begun their work, however, others had been in Latin America as early as 1940, stimulating the political environment through goodwill tours. Many of these were Hollywood celebrities.

Nelson Rockefeller felt it crucial to share culture as a means to make good neighbors out of the United States and Latin American. The decade between 1940-1950 thus saw a flurry of cultural exchanges between the two regions. Working in tandem with the Division of Cultural Relations of the State Department (created in 1938), “art exhibits, cultural conferences, educational exchanges, and speakers from Latin America, as well as subsidizing the translation of Latin American works into English” (Cohn 30–31) became common occurrences. In one of the OCIAA’s most innovative efforts, the Office “sent to South America scores of celebrities, including Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and actress Dorothy Lamour, even the Yale Glee Club” as well as several other well-known actors as ambassadors of goodwill and every major Hollywood studio began to include depictions of Latin America within their programs (Gabler 371).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the US government also coordinated efforts for Brazilians to come to the United States in order to share their culture with US citizens, taking their impressions of the country back to Brazil. Such examples include Érico Veríssimo—twentieth-century prize-winning and major novelist of southern Brazil—who spent three months, beginning in January 1941, observing the social and political scene of the United States and recording his impressions in his

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<sup>3</sup> This also served U.S. interests, for in Brazil, “...coastal cities like Belém, Recife, Salvador de Bahia, and Fortaleza became home to military airports serving as bridgeheads for U.S. invasion forces heading for Africa and Europe, with thousands of U.S. soldiers stationed there” (Prutsch 255).

<sup>4</sup> This approach was not new, as several studios had released full-length films related to Latin America in accordance with the sentiments and policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt even before the creation of the OCIAA, including *Flying Down to Rio* (1933) and *Down Argentine Way* (1940), and that led to other Latin American inspired productions, including: *That Night in Rio* (1941), *Week-End in Havana* (1941), and *The Gang's All Here* (1943).

book *Gato preto em campo de neve*. An August 14, 1942 article in Brazil's *O Globo* newspaper also reports a trip Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Estrella would take in February 1943 “num esforço para desenvolver o entendimento cultural entre o Brasil e os Estados Unidos” (“A arte brasileira”). The trip, paid in full by Columbia Concerts, also included performances in Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, and Indianapolis. While these and other Brazilians had a notable presence within the United States, Hollywood's presence within Latin America was more prominent and had longer lasting effects—both positive and negative.<sup>5</sup>

Hollywood's engagement within the larger umbrella of OCIAA efforts occurred under the auspices of the Motion Picture Division. The head of the division, John Hay Whitney, described the basis of recruiting celebrities and film studios in this Washington-led initiative:

Never before in its brief history has the motion picture faced the opportunity which now confronts it to prove to the world its great strength as an educational medium. In the last World War the motion picture was an infant. In this war it is a full-grown power for enlightenment. The proper use of this power for the preservation of freedom is a duty which challenges everybody connected with the American industry. (960)

Although the directive appeared hopeful, the approximation the US government hoped for came only slowly to fruition. The studios that had begun to incorporate images of Latin America within their works only did so minimally. As historian J. B. Kaufman puts it, within these studios' efforts, “Latin American content rarely ventured beyond an occasional good-natured caricature of Carmen Miranda” (*South* 17). As these celebrities and studios continued to produce listless Latin American media and participate in tepid goodwill visits, the directive to send

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<sup>5</sup> These types of activities were made possible due to an exuberant budget of “\$3.5 million [during the OCIAA's] first year alone and a staggering \$38 million in its second” (Hess 113).

Hollywood south began to do more harm than good. Kaufman continues to report that “by the spring of 1941 these unwanted ambassadors had become an active irritant in South American culture. ‘The next good-will mission that arrives in Rio,’ said Oswaldo Aranha, Brazil’s foreign minister, ‘Brazil will declare war on the United States’” (*South* 19). The OCIAA desperately needed to change its approach if it were to garner the effects it sought.

By this time, the OCIAA had also extended an invitation to Walt Disney to do a goodwill ambassadorial tour of Latin America. In order to shift the perception that previous celebrity ambassadors had created, however, “Walt would represent himself simply as a working artist, gathering research material for his films” (Kaufman, *South* 20), and not the institutional United States (though he still would serve as ambassador of and be supported financially and institutionally by the government). Such an arrangement proved opportune for both parties, as Walt Disney was in search of new inspiration and funding for his animated features and the survival of his enterprise at the same time the United States government was in search of him.

Due to demands in pay increases caused by financial hardships consequential of the troubled United States economy, the Walt Disney Studio was plagued by an animators’ strike. As one employee reported, “It was spring of 1941, and the Depression seemed to be over. Prosperity was just around the corner, and a lot of the people at Disney’s wanted to turn that corner” (Kinney 137). Walt was unwilling to meet such demands not only because he felt it was unnecessary but also because the studio was suffering financially due to the war and the diminished demand on European and Asian cinematic markets (*Walt & El Grupo*).<sup>6</sup> He willingly accepted the OCIAA’s offer once approached about the possibility of the ambassadorial tour,

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<sup>6</sup> One scholar notes that just the European market at this time “contributed a good half of the corporate income” (Kunzle 20).

graciously assuming the guise of an artist collecting material for future films, as that was what he precisely set off to do.

With the strike in full throttle, however, a delay in the trip occurred; but with time, the offer became the perfect opportunity to use the financially backed trip to produce more of his films and extend his market.<sup>7</sup> With Walt preparing to leave for South America, Screen Cartoonists Guild business agent, Bill Pomerance, having learned Walt’s itinerary, contacted the heads of unions where Walt would visit asking them to “picket the Disney tour and his pictures” (Denning 411). Pomerance also sent word to Washington DC, promptly leading the Labor Conciliation Service to settle the nine-week strike in order to safeguard Disney’s government-sponsored tour from negative press and interruptions.<sup>8</sup> With a small team of handpicked artists who had not turned on him during the strike,

along with his wife, Lillian, and who came to be known among themselves as “El Grupo,” Disney left in August 1941 on a tour to meet the people of South America and capture their customs, landscapes, and people on the artist’s pallet (*Walt & El Grupo*).<sup>9</sup> The purpose of the trip is



Walt Disney’s Brazil immigration card dated August 7, 1941 at the Brazilian Consulate of Los Angeles (“Brasil, Cartões”).

<sup>7</sup> Noting the economic benefit film studios would receive as a consequence of their involvement with the Motion Picture Division of the OCIAA, Adams notes: “Hollywood’s embracing FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy was not entirely altruistic or indicative of a new and higher level of ethnic consciousness but in large measure economic. That is to say, as Europe was becoming more and more under the control of Nazi Germany in the 30s, the European market for Hollywood films was severely curtailed. Thus, Hollywood began to look to Latin America to make up the loss” (292).

<sup>8</sup> The studio reopened in September of that year, while Walt was still abroad, and, “saddled with harsh terms imposed by the federal mediator...started production again with a reorganized company structure” (“The Strike Ends”).

<sup>9</sup> Beyond the Disney’s, El Grupo consisted of animator Frank Thomas, former animator Norm Ferguson, and a host of concept artists: Ted Sears, Herb Ryman, Webb Smith, Lee Blair, Mary Blair, and Jim Bodrero (“El Grupo”).

encapsulated in Walt Disney's straightforward declaration: "While half of this world is being forced to shout 'Heil Hitler' our answer is to say, 'Saludos Amigos'" ("Saludos Amigos").

Walt Disney's visit was met with great enthusiasm by many of the Brazilian people from the moment the group landed in Brazil where "there were hundreds and hundreds of school children there to greet Walt. They knew who Walt Disney was. They might not have known who the president of their own country was, but they all knew Walt Disney" (Gabler 372). Respected Brazilian critics were also acquainted with Walt Disney and his works. The esteemed Mário de Andrade—preeminent trendsetter in Modernist poetry, prose, theory, critique, music, and folklore—praised "The Skelton Dance" (part of the Silly Symphonies series), one scholar noting that "[ele] se encantou com os esqueletos que dançam e usam seus próprios ossos e dos companheiros como instrumentos musicais, e reputou a produção de Walt Disney 'uma obra-prima perfeita, coisa das mais perfeitas que o cinema inventou até agora'" (Cunha 167). Although Andrade believed *Fantasia* relied too heavily on the musical component, he stated: "perhaps the banality, the conventionality of the animated cartoon is an essential necessity. It is derived from its own 'poetic' reality. From its own psychological—and moral—destiny" (quoted in Borge 153). Other critics gave *Fantasia* even higher praise.<sup>10</sup> It was no coincidence that *Fantasia* premiered in Latin America around the same time Walt Disney would visit the region. After visiting Brazil, the team continued their tour, visiting several other South American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru; returning to the United States in October 1941.<sup>11</sup> These four countries were then highlighted in a single film—*Saludos Amigos*—

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<sup>10</sup> Other Brazilian critics who commented on *Fantasia* include Sérgio Milliet, Ruy Coelho, Almeida Salles, Antonio Branco Lefèvre, Alberto Soares de Almeida, Lourival Gomes Machado, Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, Plínio Sússekind Rocha. These, together with Andrade and the 1935 remarks of Flávio de Carvalho concerning the relation between paintings and music, contributed to the October 1941 edition of *Clima* magazine, which was dedicated to the film (Cunha 165–66).

<sup>11</sup> For an account of the tour, see: *Walt & El Grupo*. Dir. Theodore Thomas. 2009. and Kaufman, J. B. *South of the Border with Disney: Walt Disney and the Good Neighbor Program, 1941-1948*. New York: Disney Editions, 2009.

fulfilling a government directive to portray the nations as united since “many Latin American countries felt deep mutual suspicion toward one another” (Lochery 2). This led to major criticism, as many Latin American critics saw straight through this cloaking of tenuous union. Additional visits to Latin America by smaller groups in the proceeding years, specifically to Mexico, were instrumental in obtaining information and inspiration for *The Three Caballeros*.

Both films were generally welcomed by the Latin American countries they presented—not only because they represented a valorization of their culture by the United States, but because they exported an awareness of their identity to a global audience. In particular, media in Brazil was limited during this period, so Walt Disney’s portrayal of Brazil, albeit brief, was an opportunity for the country to be exposed in cinema houses.<sup>12</sup> Even more so, Brazil was not only being celebrated in Hollywood, it was being represented by the world-famous Walt Disney. For progressives, however, this was cause for concern; yet their interests yielded to the interests of dictator Getúlio Vargas and his *Estado Novo* regime (which lasted between 1937–1945). Major efforts of the Vargas government were associated with state building and economic development, and the dictator saw United States interest in the region as an opportunity to push his political agenda, “hence, Brazil’s cooperation came at a price. The U.S. financed the workhorse of Brazil’s industrialization, the steel mill Volta Redonda” (Prutsch 255). In consequence of the United States cooperation with Vargas’ demands, the mission of the Good Neighbor Policy directed toward Brazil was fulfilled when the country’s government remained allied with the United States.<sup>13</sup> Although the United States was the first country to recognize

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<sup>12</sup> Canclini argues that Brazil was only able to mass produce national media decades later: “Statistics reveal that in the last several years [Brazil’s] cinematography and the proportion of national films...grew: from 13.9 percent in 1971 to 35 percent in 1982. Books by Brazilian authors, which accounted for 54 percent of publishing production in 1973, rose to 70 percent in 1981. Also, more national records and cassettes are listened to, while imported music declines. In 1972, 60 percent of television programming was foreign; in 1983, it fell to 30 percent” (230).

<sup>13</sup> Historian Neill Lochery points out that Brazil went beyond remaining an ally of the United States in that “Vargas...[went] so far as to send Brazilian troops to the European theater to participate in Germany’s defeat in the



Brazil's independence in 1822, this mid-twentieth century partnership was perhaps one of the first visible times the two countries were seen as good neighbors. Compared with the July 24, 1941, article of *The Hollywood Reporter* which declares: "Forty-five Argentine exhibitors are regularly playing issues of Nazi newsreels, distributed free of charge by UFA...Although the number is small in comparison with the 1100 exhibitors in that country, it is steadily growing because of the difficulty on the part of the American companies to meet the unfair UFA competition" ("Germans" 1), it is apparent that the policy was at work in Brazil. There was still much disunity within the continent, mostly between the United States and Argentina. Brazil was thus seen as a battleground for allegiance and as a checkmate for Argentina.

An OCIAA memo, dated January 1942, and drafted by Robert Spencer Carr, later published in the July 1945 issue of *Politics* magazine reveals a motivational factor behind the creation of films characteristic of Latin America that leads to better understanding of the development of Hollywood representations of the region. Part of this memo, in its 1945 form, iterates the need to create symbols à la Uncle Sam "to express today's new conceptions," reasoning that "these anthropomorphic symbols have always been a great comfort to the common man, for they create in him a secure feeling that he understands the rather complex values which he is being asked to give his life to defend. Hence the high importance of symbols in morale-building, and the crucial importance of cartooning as a source of symbols" (212). Although the United States government never explicitly developed an official anthropomorphic representation of Pan-Americana as described, Disney's Latin American films—as an extension of the government's efforts—did create symbols of their own that served a similar, uniting

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final months of the war". He further elaborates that such cooperation "improved the economic situation in Brazil," but that it "deepened internal tensions and jeopardized both his leadership and the continuation of the Estado Novo when the war ended. Yet Brazil itself thrived" (xiv). Consequentially, the Good Neighbor Policy proved helpful to his state building program, yet detrimental to his rule as dictator.

purpose. Preeminent among these symbols was the development of José Carioca as a representation of Brazil (as well as Panchito Pistoles, representative of Mexico, which will not be discussed here). The character first appeared within the United States as early as October 11, 1942 as a character in “Disney’s Sunday Pages” (Santos 7) and was further elaborated in Disney’s two Good Neighbor films. Within the historical context of his creation, it’s clear how José Carioca was not developed merely as a means to entertain audiences, and thus create revenue for the Disney studio, but that he was also developed as a political tool to aid the United States in its wartime efforts. This context provides background into the depiction of Brazil resultant in the films.

#### Symbols, Monuments, and Néstor García Canclini’s Theory of Hybrid Cultures

Walt Disney’s creation of politically charged symbols is reminiscent of Néstor García Canclini’s theory of Hybrid Cultures in which he argues that “while historical objects in museums are removed from history and their intrinsic meaning is frozen in an eternity where nothing will ever happen, monuments open to the urban dynamic facilitate the interaction of memory with change and the revitalization of heroes thanks to propaganda or transit: they continue struggling with the social movements that survive them” (222). European political ideologies and figures have been imposed on Latin America throughout much of the region’s history. Many of these ideologies and figures have in turn been immortalized in stone monuments that, due to their being “open to the urban dynamic,” have been reshaped, manipulated, and re-signified during incessant periods of social change. Like monuments erected by European colonizers in the early centuries of Latin American colonization in order to sway allegiance to an overseas crown, José Carioca, as a commissioned image of the political interests of the United States government, was erected as a type of modern “monument” in order to sway

allegiance towards the United States wartime efforts.<sup>14</sup> Unlike European monumental predecessors, the parrot's image was not cast in stone, for the public square had experienced an ample change in venue. As Canclini explains: "'To appear in public' is today to be seen by many people scattered in front of the family television set or reading the newspaper in their home"; in short, media had become the predominant space for social influence and interaction (211). The State Department intended for *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* to be shown "não só no circuito comercial, mas também em universidades, escolas e instituições culturais dos países da América Latina"; thus, a major portion of the population would inevitably view the "monument" Disney constructed (Tota, *O amigo* 120).

Unlike previous generations who were required to take on the task of physically mutilating a stone monument in order to imbue new meaning, José Carioca as a cartoon was much more easily reshaped and decontextualized to represent changes within society. What's more, Disney allowed this reshaping to happen. As intended through the Good Neighbor Policy, *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* led many Brazilians to see themselves through a seemingly positive North American lens, readily incorporating that image into their own identity during the period in which the films were first exhibited, and within the years that followed. As time passed, and as political intervention and Disney's interest in Latin American-themed media waned, corporate Disney sold specific rights to José Carioca to their affiliates within Brazil, namely *Editora Abril*, allowing them to readapt that image into one that was more authentically Brazilian.

José's reshaped image became Brazil's inheritance of Disney's involvement in the Good Neighbor Policy, one onto which Latin American artists inscribed more culturally authentic

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<sup>14</sup> Although unlike earlier colonial explorers, Walt Disney was commissioned by, but not affiliated with a government directly. However, as one scholar notes, "these pro-war and goodwill efforts also solidified Disney's reputation internationally as a face of the United States" (Sperb 53).

meaning and that led to a much greater sense of unity between two distinct continents than had earlier monuments imposed by European powers. With the rights to further develop the character of José, the original “monument,” the image of José Carioca presented in the two flagship Disney goodwill films, was metaphorically returned to the United States where it is used today as an ostensible representation of Brazilian, and often general Latin American, culture within Disney’s theme parks, merchandising and the occasional animated short, but within a context that does not correspond to that which was presented in the films. Various qualities lead many critics to see Disney’s approach to Latin America as merely imperially and economically domineering, while leaving aside the manner in which he sought authenticity in the original films. These include the additional hues inscribed in the Brazilianized (comic) and reshaped (theme park) character working in tandem to cast modern understanding on the original “monument” as well as the Brazilian people becoming one of the Disney entertainment empire’s best neighbors in a financial sense. These will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapters.

*Saludos Amigos*

*Saludos Amigos* was the first full feature film dedicated to Latin America that resulted from a goodwill tour of the region.<sup>15</sup> This production is already indicative of a striving for legitimacy on the part of the United States government. Although no direct mention of World War II or the Good Neighbor Policy is made in the film, the representations of Latin America within the picture leave no doubt of their being the root of its production. Historian Wagner Pinheiro Pereira points out that “os governos de Hitler e Roosevelt sabiam que a definição de um inimigo era o recurso mais importante. Atacar o inimigo faz com que o líder político pareça mais poderoso . . .” (387–88). Although the films never point out Hitler or the Nazis as the enemy, they make it a strong point to indicate that North America was the friend, their good neighbor. This was done through a variety of methods. For example, before the animated section dedicated to Brazil, entitled “Brazil” in English and “Aquarela do Brasil” in Portuguese (named after Ruy Barbosa’s anthem highlighted in the segment), 16mm images present images of Rio de Janeiro that are the pride of many *cariocas*: carnival, Sugarloaf Mountain, and the mosaic sidewalks of the city’s South Zone, with the popular tune of “Escravos de Jó” playing in the background. In other words, the best of the city’s festivities, nature, artistic infrastructure, and music are celebrated before an inter-hemispheric audience. Yet, the images that soon follow as the screen fades from live to animated images present a plethora of representations, both blatant and inconspicuous, that reveal the intentions behind the making of the film, and that imbue meaning on the monument-like figure that José Carioca would come to be. Images that later appeared in *The Three Caballeros* further imbued the “monument” with meaning, creating an object that was

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<sup>15</sup> Orson Welles’ film *It’s all true*, shot between 1941–42, could have held this distinction; however, the film never came to fruition due to a variety of difficulties. A 1993 documentary, entitled *It’s All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles* was an attempt to bring as much of the original footage as possible to a public audience.

rich in representations. This chapter will analyze these representations in order to understand the elements of Brazilian identity that Walt Disney and his animators inscribed upon their monument so as to understand to what extent they were authentic, as well as the reaction they produced within Brazilian society.

### Brazil as *Papagaio*

José first appears within *Saludos Amigos* as an animated sketch and the image of a live green parrot standing on a perch. Although the narrator talks about the *papagaio*, he does not elaborate what led the animators to select the animal as a representation of Brazil, historian J. B. Kaufmann relates that before the goodwill tour, artists “Ted Sears and Bill Cottrell had tentatively suggested ideas for parrot stories” and that after realizing the admiration many Brazilians had for the species, “artists were being dispatched to zoos and museums to sketch and photograph parrots. Norm Ferguson sent his family a newspaper photograph of himself and Sears with a trained parrot that, he wrote, ‘sings, dances, and talks Portuguese’” (*South* 34). However, the animators’ allure towards the parrot as an anamorphic representation of Brazil had a much deeper historic precedence, one that began hundreds of years prior to their arrival.

Early European explorers who were amazed by the exotic beauty of the bird named the locale *Terra Papagalís*—one of the territory’s earliest names (Schwarcz). Their fascination was preserved throughout the centuries that followed as the “primeiros mapas que os europeus fizeram do Novo Mundo eram enfeitados com desenhos de papagaios,” and how much later, in 1880, Joaquim Nabuco sent Charles H. Allen two *papagaios* as a “prova de ‘brasilidade’” (Schwarcz).<sup>16</sup> Not only was the bird beautiful and endeared by many Brazilians and American visitors, the creature was distinctly a resident of the New World. Peaking during the late

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<sup>16</sup> Allen was serving as secretary of the Foreign Anti-Slavery Society when this gift was sent.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, influential Brazilian figures, notably authors and artists, had sought to create an aesthetic that was distinctly Brazilian, not adapted from European trends as had been the case in earlier centuries. Disney was thus keen in electing the parrot to represent Brazil as a nation that sought to be seen as distinct from its Old World roots. Contrasting the other characters created for *Saludos Amigos* further reveals the importance Disney placed on creating its representation of Brazil.

While plans called for “many traditional Spanish American and Brazilian stories...[to] be used,”—Disney himself suggesting that “conscious ‘South American touches,’ aimed specifically at the Latin American market do not build goodwill for Hollywood,”—such was not the case for each segment of the film (“Rockefeller and Whitney” 14). Bolivia and Peru are represented by Lake Titicaca, Chile by an airplane, and Argentina by Goofy in the role of a gaucho. A fully developed character, one that would outlive the film’s original production, on the other hand, portrays Brazil. In fact, Richard Huemer, one of Disney’s animators, revealed how the representation for Chile was developed as an eleventh hour effort.

Joe Grant and I worked up a little story while Walt was in South America, called ‘Petey O’Toole.’ P.T. like the letters on an airplane. Joe and I wrote this story of the baby mail plane who was to make his first trip around the country. He has parents who are big transports and they warn him to look out for high tension wires. These were weird menacing characters (which incidentally were left out of the story) that live only to tear an airplane from the sky. There’s a storm and his getting lost and the mother going out and searching for him and so forth. When Walt came back he didn’t have enough material for one of the South American features which he had contracted for so he brought [sic] this story from Joe and

me, and he changed it over to give it a South American setting. He now had to carry the mail over the mountains, past terrible Mount Acumcagua [sic] to the coast. (“From This” 174–75)

In the case of Argentina, renowned Argentine illustrator and friend to Walt Disney and whose work focused on the gaucho and the pampas, Florencio Molina Campos, is said to have been upset with the “El Gaucho Goofy” segment of the film for imposing a famous Disney character in the role of an Argentine national icon. As Smoodin notes: “[he] found that he was little more than public relations window-dressing at the studio, because by the time he was hired to provide authenticity to the films, ‘the larger part of the work had been finished’” (142). His lament was not meant to antagonize Walt Disney, the studio, or the film, but was an attempt to conjure more authenticity within the segment. In fact, his fidelity to the studio is witnessed by his involvement in the creation of the earlier *Bambi* and continued collaboration on the later *Fun and Fancy Free* (1947) and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951). Nevertheless, and to the contrary, José Carioca was developed through a thorough effort to understand Brazilian traditions and customs. Indeed, Disney historian J. B. Kaufman notes that “the original plan to arrange the sequences in a running order that reflected [El Grupo’s] actual 1941 itinerary—beginning with “Aquarela do Brasil,” the strongest of the four segments, and ending with “Lake Titicaca” was scrapped because it would have created an anticlimactic effect,” (“The Latin” 255).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, film historian Leonard Maltin observed that in the case of *Saludos Amigos*, “...the government complained that each cartoon would only be valid in the country at hand, so Disney strung his four shorts together, with the aid of 16mm color footage that had been taken of himself and his

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<sup>17</sup> This special attention given to Brazil also had political ramifications for, as Smoodin points out, retaining Brazil as an ally would counter Argentina’s neutrality, “a neutrality that, in fact, shaded more and more toward a sympathy for the German side” (149). Lochery further notes that “any move by the United States to help Argentina was viewed with deep suspicion by the government in Brazil, which assumed that American aid to the Argentines was detrimental to Brazilian interests. Needless to say, the Argentine government harbored the same assumptions” (3). Thus giving preferential treatment to Brazil was in the United States government’s and Disney’s best interest.



staff during their trip. The result was a hybrid, too long to be called a short and too short to be called a feature” (57). Had the “Aquarela do Brasil” segment been released as a separate film, it would not have only outdone the other four segments, it would likely have been better received by critics for it would not be contextualized by three segments that do not serve it well in that capacity.

Furthermore, Disney made the effort to endow José with an intrinsically Brazilian personality. The inclusion of Brazilian music allowed the character to dance to the rhythms of his homeland, and not those imported from abroad. Beyond this, “Disney insisted on native voices for [José and the later Panchito],” resulting in the casting of Brazilian-born José Oliveira to voice the parrot (Burton 37). Not only is his accent authentic, he speaks Portuguese—a far cry from the other films of the period where characters only spoke English, or in which Brazil was cast as a Spanish-speaking nation.<sup>18</sup> So while José Carioca originates from the strokes of a paintbrush located from without the frame—representative of José’s creation from the outside (the United States)—he is immediately inserted within a Brazil that appears to have a similar origin. While the depiction of the country and its customs are also North American in creation, we will see how both the Rio de Janeiro of *Saludos Amigos* and the Bahía of *The Three Caballeros* relied heavily on Brazilian inspiration. Of the elements that were imported, the presence of Donald Duck looms—however not in a manner that is imposing, at least within *Saludos Amigos*.

#### North and South American Social Roles

In one of its most striking attempts to present the United States as the friend, the good neighbor, Disney took great effort to exalt his new Brazilian character. Paramount among these

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<sup>18</sup> Especially when compared against the 1928 Mickey Mouse short “The Gallopin’ Gaucho” in which all on-screen text is in English, with the exception of the negligently translated name printed on the façade of the establishment—“Cantino Argentino”—as well as a poster on the wall offering a “rewards” for the capture of the gaucho, Disney had taken great strides in assuring linguistic authenticity in these latter films.

efforts sending Donald Duck to represent the United States within the film. The character “first appeared in a minor role in...1934,” as Taylor explains, but “in less than five years, he had overtaken Mickey Mouse as Disney’s most popular character” (vii). There are no immediately noticeable differences between the lifestyle of the two characters, for as one critic decries, “to display strong cultural differences would be disturbing and would not promote the unity which the government hoped for, so instead cultural similarities are accentuated” (Shale 45). In fact, at first glance, the two characters appear to be mostly binary: both are anamorphic variations of birds, communicate through spoken language, and present a generalized image of their respective homelands. Yet as the film progresses, small details highlight the blatant gestures Disney and his animators used to project the best possible image of their southern neighbors, even if it was to the demise of their most popular character.

Within moments, the audience observes a blatant inversion of traditionally accepted social roles as it is introduced to the intrinsic camaraderie between the duck and the vivacious parrot. In historically cultural terms, Brazil has most often been categorized as lesser refined socially when compared with the United States. In the film, however, José Carioca—the embodiment of the Brazilian spirit—is the more sophisticated character between the two birds. Upon meeting each other, José says to Donald: “Cavalheiro, aqui está o meu cartão” [Sir, here is my business card], and while reading it, Donald inarticulately pronounces José’s name and hometown. Then, after asking for Donald’s card (which is unbecomingly printed on the back of a used playing card), José promptly discovers that he is *the* Donald Duck, the famous Hollywood star. At this point, José cannot contain his excitement, the script describing that he “jumps up and down in fighting pose imitating Donald and quacking and squawking” (*Cutting Continuity*), and what one critic describes as “a brief charade of one of Donald’s famous temper tantrums...[that]

is one of the many small touches which make the personality of this new character and his relationship to Donald so satisfying” (Shale 47). Although the two characters are seen here on a similar level, it is but for a brief moment. As a gesture to welcome his new celebrity friend, José frantically proclaims the names of the various locations within Rio de Janeiro he wants Donald to experience:

Vamos sair por aí. Vai conhecer o Rio. Vamos a todos os lugares. Vamos a Tijuca, Copacabana, Salgueiro, Laranjeiras, Botafogo, Andaraí, Méier, Jardim Botânico, Furnas, Campos de Sant’ana, Cinelândia, Praça Onze, São Cristóvão, Niterói, Paquetá, Avenida Atlântica, Leme, Leblon, Gávea, Pão de Açúcar e ao Corcovado! Or as you Americans say: Let’s go see the town!

All the while Donald is lost amidst his stack of Portuguese to English dictionaries trying to understand José. The parrot is suddenly seen as a bilingual, cultured individual while Donald Duck, the Hollywood socialite, is a monolingual, ignorant tourist; high and popular culture are suddenly inverted as José takes prestige where the North American typically held sway. In the remaining minutes of the film, the distinction between the two feathered friends are increasingly reinforced as Donald is placed in social situations that he fails to navigate without the aid of José, despite the stigmas surrounding José’s identity.

#### The *Malandro* and the *Favela*

José Carioca is the anamorphic representation of the stereotypical Brazilian *malandro*. The word *malandro* can be translated several ways into English, including rascal, scallywag, and vagabond; or in a more typically Brazilian description, “the *malandro* is often described as *jeitinho* incarnate. The concept of *jeito* or *jeitinho* refers to a way of subverting authority, evading the law, or using one’s contacts for personal advantage” (Dennison 22). In short, a

*malandro* is the individual who is able to get what he wants without having to work hard to obtain it. Although Brazilians historically have idealized the idea of this societal figure for his ability to live a fulfilling life despite social oppressions, the social stigmas surrounding the lifestyle of the *malandro* reside among Brazil's most despised.

What appears minor in detail, the animated map used near the beginning of the film to provide an overview of Disney's goodwill tour, and that is then again used to begin each of the individual segments, has several implications in understanding the representation inscribed in Disney's monument of Brazil. The first location to come on screen is that of Brazil's vast interior; the camera then zooms in on Rio de Janeiro. The city is presented as developed and vibrant, two descriptions that were unlikely to be used by North Americans to describe any part of South America at that time, thus placing the country in the forefront. However, only the South Zone of the city and the Christ the Redeemer statue hovering above the cityscape fills the frame.<sup>19</sup> This focus on a single region of the city blocks out views of the expanses of Rio de Janeiro that are inhabited by the largest amount of citizens, most of whom do not live in a developed, vibrant world. A well-known allegory within the Christian canon provides astute insight into this limited exposure of the city and how the social divide it obscures imbues significant meaning onto Disney's monument. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ taught a parable in which he separates sheep and goats on his right hand and on his left hand. The parable foretells the day of final judgment when there will be a division of the peoples of the earth. The blessed, who will be found on the right hand of Christ, are endowed with an inheritance of his abundant kingdom and eternal peace therein. The cursed, on Christ's left hand, are those who

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<sup>19</sup> It must be noted, however, that the animated map of Rio de Janeiro at this point in the film is not entirely accurate, as the South Zone appears to stretch into the territory occupied by the North Zone.

will be cast into eternal despair and misery.<sup>20</sup> The geography of the city of Rio de Janeiro and the condition of the people on the right and the left hands of the Christ the Redeemer statue reveal that this Day of Judgment has already arrived for the residents of that city. Although there is a mixture of rich and poor on either side of the statue, on the right hand sits the posh South Zone, while on the left hand, the miserable North Zone spreads across a vast expanse.

The center of Brazilian civilization is the upscale neighborhoods of major metropolises, while the periphery, in its most defining sense, is these city's *favelas* and the country's underdeveloped rural expanses. Within Rio de Janeiro, the majority of these *favelas* are located in the North Zone—an area that is nowhere present in the film. These slums are traditionally where the *malandro* comes from, and as such, they would seem peripheral in nature, except that they are able to defy the center/peripheral divide by living a sophisticated lifestyle despite their background. In this sense, José Carioca is the ultimate *malandro* for overcoming the center/peripheral divide within Brazil as well as the larger divide between North American high culture and Latin American popular culture. The film's inversion of cultures, in a sense, validates this lazy folk character of Brazilian society by raising him above the American celebrity. What makes José Carioca endearing, and what made the soul of Disney's monument tolerable to many Brazilians, however, is that he is merely representative of the best, most positive aspects of the *malandro* lifestyle while on screen—he is good tempered, doesn't violate any laws, and takes great pride in ensuring that Donald Duck experiences the very best that his society and hometown have to offer.

While Disney's celebration of the character in the films certainly raised Brazilian admiration of the social type, *New York Times* journalist Larry Rohter, calling the *malandro*'s status within Brazilian society “ambiguous,” relates that “officially he is censured as a swindler

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<sup>20</sup> To read the allegory in its full account, see: Matt. 25:31–46.

and cheat, preying on the innocent, trusting, and gullible. But he—and the *malandro* is almost always a *he*—is also the subject of sneaking admiration in samba lyrics, folk tales, books, and films, admired for his guile and his ability to think on his feet and deftly dribble around barriers and obstacles” (38). The larger Brazilian public had knowingly admired the positive aspects of the *malandro*, and had become more accepting of his image on the big screen, but were progressively against the stigmatism associated with the social type. In fact, a study conducted in 1996 by *Veja* magazine notes that of 2,000 Brazilians surveyed in 25 states, many had “preservado os ingredientes do jeitinho como uma de suas características. O brasileiro se acha especialmente informal, criativo e esperto. Mas o lado ruim da malandragem, como não trabalhar, foi rejeitado” (Grinbaum 52). It is thus interesting to recognize how the United States, through Disney, used the *malandro* as its symbol of goodwill to the Brazilian people and the result it caused. “Nada mais representativo do modelo indenitário dos anos 1930, quando a mestiçagem cultural se viu associada à boa malandragem e uma espécie de sociabilidade particular. Não por acaso, mais uma vez o papagaio reinava glorioso, ao lado do tedioso Pato Donald. Só que, em vez de negro, era verde – diziam – como nossas matas” (Schwarcz). The reasoning behind the latter part of this observation, the reassignment of pigment color—in this case José Carioca being green like Brazil’s forests, instead of black like the *malandro* he represents—, will be discussed in detail in the “Race” section of this chapter. Santos further elaborates the role of the *malandro* in the film explaining that “*Zé Carioca* harmoniza o paradoxo de cordialidade e malandragem, não como contradição, mas como condição intrínseca de sua personalidade: sua cordialidade suaviza a malandragem, evitando que ele (e, por extensão, o brasileiro que representa) se torne o vilão da história. Sua malandragem reveste-se de função

narrativa – é ela que impulsiona suas desventuras” (4). The geography of the film does not stop at this point; its implications go much further.

### Urban Modernity and Stagnation

The locations where José takes Donald are among the most refined in all of Rio de Janeiro, the country’s capital and social hotspot at that time. They visit the Copacabana Palace Hotel, social bars and the Urca Casino. José had perfectly assimilated both high and popular North American and Brazilian social acumen and is able to easily navigate the social scene, while he must acculturate Donald Duck who does not espouse the same intrinsic social literacy. Thus, by inverting the social status of the two characters through the film, the spaces occupied by Rio’s elite become even more so because not even a Hollywood star is able to behave properly in them. Such representation would have been readily accepted by allies of Vargas who sought to increase the power and image of the Brazilian state not only through this type of depiction, but also because the exhibition of these locations made them known to North Americans who were mostly ignorant of their existence. The timing was quintessential, as these locations would later become the only viable intercontinental vacation spots during the war.

What was equally impressive and surprising to many contemporary American audiences at the time were the live-action documentary sequences that revealed...the modernity and architectural wonders of the large, Latin-American cities with skyscrapers, automobiles, and surprisingly clean and bustling city streets with fashionably western dressed men and women—scenes many Americans associated only with large American and European cities and certainly not what the prevailing Hollywood images of Latin America had been. (Adams 294)

Thus, Disney did not only give light to such urbanization, he corrected the course the earlier Hollywood visitors had created. These live-action shots were used to depict the urbanized aspects of the other countries represented in the film; however, Brazil receives the greatest benefit of all as it's the last country to be showcased and the audience is able to associate these images of modernity with the country (as well as the images presented earlier in *South of the Border with Disney*), but also is inspired through the fusion of exotic sound and color with these images of their modern existence.<sup>21</sup> The Vargas administration, as early as 1930, had sought to “colocar o Brasil no mapa do mundo” by increasing foreign tourism within the country (Freire-Medeiros 68). The government's role in this regard is also present in the film through the anthem that inspired the name of the segment and that provides the beat to which the animation is synchronized; Ary Barroso's “Aquarela do Brasil”. The lyrics, which exalt the Brazilian territory and nation and which became an almost pseudo national anthem, were composed through a government-sponsored musical movement. While “El Grupo” was in Brazil, Walt picked up on the song after hearing it played on several occasions and the decision was made to include it as a highlight of the film. This decision would have garnered full acceptance and support from the government for, as Dunn describes: “The Estado Novo government had realized that Brazilian popular music was not only a useful vehicle for encouraging patriotism within the country but also a potentially effective means for projecting a positive national image abroad” (27).

Many will argue that at the same time that modernity is celebrated in the film, the stagnation of the city's peripheral regions, José Carioca's home, are all but forgotten. Not only did these areas suffer stigmas within their own culture, they were also excluded from Disney's

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<sup>21</sup> This documentary, released in November 1942, was a precursor to *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* in that it showcased highlights from the goodwill tour Walt Disney and his artists had made and in that it prepared North American audiences for the kind of images that would be presented in the animated features. Like the two animated features, heavy emphasis is placed on Brazil. Of this fact, Hess notes: “Brazil's loyalties were an open question during the filming of *South of the Border with Disney*, and perhaps for this reason, the Brazil sequence leads off” (112).



representation of their country. While this type of depiction is indeed disingenuous, Disney was constrained in what he could do. For Vargas and others who sought to depict Brazil as a modern country, such a depiction was beneficial since North American viewers who were ignorant of the magnitude of economic inequality within Brazil saw the rich and poor lumped together. For the United States government, the important thing was that its citizens realized the country wasn't all poor and had much to offer, even if it were to the detriment of the city's impoverished.

Furthermore, as critic Richard Shale argues, "like any Good Neighbor, Walt, who was a guest of these countries as well as an ambassador of his own, was careful not to embarrass himself or his hosts by pointing his camera at their slums or by questioning the economic or political structure which kept so many South American peasants in lifelong poverty," for, as he continues, both *Saludos Amigos* and the later *The Three Caballeros* "take as their shaping force this tendency to minimize contrasts. For Disney and the federal government, the most germane approach to hemispheric unity was to suggest, through film, that the two Americas were really not very different after all" (49). While North American audiences were acquainted with poverty, the extent to which poverty inflicts itself upon the masses of Brazil's poor would present an image that would depict Brazilians much more as an 'other', instead of as a 'neighbor'. Thus the political roots of the film's creation restrained the possibility of an authentic presentation of Brazil's inhabitants on both sides of the Christ the Redeemer statue, and across the diverse regions of the country. The presence of José, at the very least, is the presence of an inhabitant of this repressed region.

Showcasing Brazil from right within its social center was the safest way to ensure an appreciation of the country by North Americans, and the acceptance of the José Carioca "monument" by a major portion of Brazilian society, including the highest echelons of the

government; “sucesso não só junto à família de Vargas — que reviu o filme diversas vezes, durante um prolongado final de semana que durou de sexta a terça-feira —, mas em toda a cidade do Rio de Janeiro e, depois, por todo o Brasil urbanizado” (Toto, *Imperialismo sedutor* 135). Almost as soon as the Brazil segment begins, José Carioca as a United States imposed “monument” within the Brazilian public square is presented so as to be accepted by as much of society as possible. Just as Donald Duck had raised to the top of the Disney franchise in terms of popularity, *Time* magazine went so far as to claim that José Carioca became “as superior to Donald Duck as the Duck was to Mickey Mouse” (“The New Pictures”).<sup>22</sup> Canclini further elaborates that “monuments are almost always works with which political power consecrates the founding persons and the events of the state” (222). José Carioca is thus, in a sense, the representation of the United States government, and consequentially Disney, aiding to shape the future of the developing Brazilian state. As the country was in such a state of transition, the presence of this type of image would inevitably be noticed and both common citizens and critics were bound to take deep interest in what would become of José.

### *The Three Caballeros*

*Saludos Amigos* was met with general success in both North and South America. It was only a matter of time that Disney would produce another film representing Latin America. As World War II would continue through the latter half of 1945, the political agenda of the OCIAA and the interests of Latin American countries were still a shaping factor in the production of *The Three Caballeros*. Indeed, as Gabler notes, “the countries that had not been represented in [*Saludos Amigos*] were complaining to the coordinator about the neglect, prompting one of his

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<sup>22</sup> Anecdotal commentary argues that the flexible personality of Donald Duck superseded Mickey Mouse’s popularity during the 1930s. Mickey’s starring role in *Fantasia* was supposedly Disney’s attempt to regain the mouse’s role as the face of Disney animation.

representatives to suggest leaking a report that Disney was at work on a sequel in which those countries would be shown, as indeed he was” (402). For its side, the Walt Disney Studio had collected much more material during the original goodwill visit than what had been included in *Saludos Amigos*, making it sensible to produce additional media using the excess content. However, with Latin American countries demanding more cinematic output, and the federal government offering continued financial backing, it didn’t only make sense, it would have been senseless not to move forward. As the war, like a living organism, had shifted course since the creation of the first film, the approach to be taken in the sequel, and the countries to be represented, likewise transformed. Consequentially, the viewer finds in *The Three Caballeros* a film indubitably distinct from *Saludos Amigos*, though the rhetoric of the Good Neighbor Policy continued to permeate the creation of the latter, albeit less blatantly.<sup>23</sup> However, just as the geopolitical course within the war had shifted from 1942-1944, so too had the selection of the countries to represent shifted within *The Three Caballeros*.

By the time of the film’s production, the countries represented by the three avian *caballeros*—the United States, Mexico, and Brazil—were joined together as allied powers, the latter two having "contributing to air surveillance in the Pacific and by sending expeditionary troops to Europe, respectively. Hence Disney’s geographic focus was almost in exact alignment with the Coordinator’s changing policy focus” (Benamou 120). The three *caballeros*—Donald Duck, Panchito Pistoles, and José Carioca—thus created a bond that metaphorically represented the union that was sought between the United States and the Latin American countries deemed highest priority at that time within the conflict: Mexico and Brazil. These two countries

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<sup>23</sup> Famed film critic and Disney historian, Leonard Maltin, notes that “although [*The Three Caballeros*] was capitalizing again on the strong Latin-American bonds of the 1940s, it has little of the propaganda feeling of *Saludos Amigos*, although one is constantly fed a series of definitions, explanations of customs, and picture-postcard footage (both literal, as in Panchito’s live-action storybook, and animated, as in the vision of Baia, which was obviously animated from detailed photographs” (67).

consequentially received the greatest attention and most memorable characters within the new film, but as had been promised, countries that had not been represented in *Saludos Amigos* were represented in *The Three Caballeros*, albeit briefly.

The two opening segments, entitled “The Cold-Blooded Penguin” and “The Flying Gauchito” are the only homage given to countries beyond Mexico and Brazil within the film, and both are lackluster in representing the dozens of additional Latin American countries. The first takes the audience further south of South America, straight down to the South Pole where Pablo, a penguin, sets sail for the exotic landscapes of Latin America (revealed by the posters in his igloo, including Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Viña del Mar, Chile; Carrasco, Uruguay; and Acapulco, Mexico). After a strenuous journey through the Straits of Magellan and the coasts of Chile, past the Juan Fernández Islands, around the coastline of Peru, and across the equator, Pablo arrives in Ecuador, jumping from the continent to the Galapagos Islands. The narrator then proceeds to take the audience over the Andes Mountains where, within a matter of moments, we arrive in the Amazon Jungle and meet several *aves raras* identified as being from Colombia, Venezuela, and Paraguay. The plot then moves on to recount the story of a Uruguayan gaucho who captures and races a flying donkey, while traditional dances, music, games, and the traditional mate are also portrayed. Beyond incidental glimpses of these and other countries that did not hold as much political weight, no additional attention is given. The interests of the government and the Walt Disney Studio were to arrive as soon as possible at the sections devoted to Brazil and Mexico, and thus they did.

### Preserving the Monument

The representation of José Carioca as the “Baía” segment begins is one that reinforces the image that was engraved on the “monument” during *Saludos Amigos*, and is imbued with

additional meaning as the story unravels.<sup>24</sup> The segment commences as music permeates from within a package wrapped in green and yellow paper, colors representative of the Brazilian flag. José soon emerges identical in appearance and with a nearly identical opening dialogue, suggesting to the audience that José Carioca is the same, friendly bird they had met in *Saludos Amigos* and that the tightly-forged friendship between the two nations remains the same. The welcoming reaction between the avian characters upon seeing each other again further suggests that the bond would continue to be strong, even with periods of non-direct contact between the two entities. While many elements between the two films remain constant, there are also striking differences, including the cities in which the Brazilian segments of each film takes place.

Whereas the Brazil segment of *Saludos Amigos* was set within watercolor Rio de Janeiro, the Brazil segment of *The Three Caballeros* is set within storybook Bahia. Through a romanticized montage of music and images of the city, the audience is taken inside of José's mind as he reminisces about that beautiful city, a city that we soon discover he has never visited. After the scene fades back onto the characters, José insistently asks Donald if he has even been to Bahía, of which he has not. Then, after asking Donald if he likes samba, José proceeds to morph into several images of himself, Carmen Miranda, and the traditional image of the malandro; thus intensifying the expectation of what Bahía is all about, and laying the foundation for the synthesis between the movement of the city and the beat of the music that proceeds to develop as the vignette continues. Once it is revealed that José has yet to visit the city, the two birds set off on a haphazard train ride, soon arriving in the "the land of romance". As the plot

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<sup>24</sup> While the city is officially named Bahia, the train station in the film has it written as Baía. This is because the Portuguese language passed through 1943 orthographic reform, in the spelling of the city was changed (officially, although not accepted by residents of the city). Kaufman notes a 1944 memo drafted by Jack Cutting and sent to Norm Ferguson in which he elaborates that "the modern dictionaries show the word spelled without an 'h', and when Assis Figueiredo [of the DIP, the Brazilian propaganda department] was here a year or so ago, he himself pointed out that it was incorrect for us to have Bahia spelled with an 'h' in the picture" (*South* 194). This detail, while minor in detail, is evidence of Disney's attention to cultural and social sensitivities at this time.

develops, the “monument” Disney erected of José Carioca in *Saludos Amigos* is imbued with additional representation, two of which—morality and race—have caused some to question the authenticity of the resultant engravings.

### Morality

Not long after the birds’ arrival, the audience immediately hears a *baiana* singing “Os quindins de yayá” from afar as she strolls through the street selling her baked goods. Aurora Miranda, younger sister of Carmen Miranda and the source of the singing in the film, soon appears and both Donald and José are smitten; however, as additional live action male actors arrive, Miranda’s attention is diverted away from the animated characters, upsetting Donald. As a counteroffensive, the duck manages to quickly master the dance moves in which the other characters are already well versed, as he believes they are what captures the woman’s attention, yet he is still unable to capture her gaze. After asking José about the man who had stolen Miranda away, Donald learns that like José, the man is a *malandro*. Yet again, the audience is led to see the role of this social type within Brazilian society, in this instance acquiring the attention of the coveted female without exerting much of an effort. Meanwhile, Donald Duck, who is not a *malandro*, nor even Brazilian, exerts as much effort as he can muster to obtain the same result, but to no avail. This does not extinguish his hopes, however, and Donald continues to give his task all that he can, even when his actions would be questioned morally had they occurred within another context.

As the singing and dancing continues, Donald’s attempts become increasingly concentrated and astute. He picks up on the lyrics, blurting out “como é, como é, como é?” then proceeds to butt out José, who, being prosaically Brazilian and *malandro*, appears to intrinsically know how to dance with Aurora Miranda without exerting much of an effort, thus causing him to

fly across the space, landing flat on his face. Instead of expressing frustration or resentment, José, with a wink in his eye, turns to the camera and declares in broken English: “This Donald, did you ever see such a fast work?” After continually failing in his attempts to win Miranda’s gaze and attention, José offers Donald a sledgehammer to swing over the head of the live actor, but even then, he fails. While such behavior is not unique for the ill-tempered duck, this type of action would result in reprimand, yet within the context of *malandragem*, it is acceptable as a means to arrive at the desired object.

Some would claim that morality is questioned even further when, after bringing Aurora Miranda flowers, Donald receives the sensual object of his desire and Miranda’s kiss sends him into a delirious state in which he is overcome by the beats of Bahia. Later in the film, as the three avian friends travel around Mexico, Donald is overcome by sexual fantasies as they fly over the beaches of Acapulco on their magical *serape*. These episodes lend the idea that south of the Rio Grande, it is okay, and even expected, for one to experience such loose sexual fantasies with no thought given to the consequences of such actions. Within the animated world of Disney, Donald has a girlfriend, Daisy, in the United States, yet here he chases after (both physically and cognitively) a host of Latin American women. On the other hand, as Shale notes, “Joe and Panchito are themselves not immune to the charms of these Latin sirens, but they never become as flirtatious and obsessed as their friend, and they frequently serve as restraints to Donald’s libido” (99). The two Latin birds are the moral beings, while it’s the foreigner who cannot control his lusts. Furthermore, the Mexican sunbathers do not reciprocate Donald’s sentiment and the passion between Aurora Miranda and Donald is fleeting, for after Donald gains composure, he continues to follow after Aurora Miranda who is seen transforming inanimate animated objects into objects that move to the beat of the diegetic music. Donald attempts to do

the same but is defeated as his endeavor backfires and he finds himself trapped in a chair and doused in water from a nearby fountain. Instead of running to his aid, Miranda carries on into her next escapade and the book in which the segment takes place soon shuts. The duck is ultimately frustrated in his attempts; however, before they had embarked for Bahía, José had reckoned with Donald that “if you’ve even been to Bahía, you’ll never return,” and that’s precisely what happened. While it is thus painted as sensual, José is seen as a moral standard against North American reverie. Upon returning to the outside of the book, Donald remains in an inebriated state, still singing “Os quindins de yayá,” and proceeds to reveal to José everything he loves about Bahía: “it’s marvelous . . . romance . . . moonlight . . . beautiful girls.” He is enchanted, and his libidinous mindset remains with him as the two birds continue their adventures, but before they can journey further, both birds must return to normal size. José responds that returning to normal size is easy, that black magic would fix them. Donald attempts to imitate José who had successfully returned to normal size through some sort of incantation, but he once again fails—contorting himself into a variety of ridiculous shapes.

In another regard, each of these episodes, from Donald ultimately failing to win the passion of the two groups of Latin American women to unsuccessfully performing the incantation, show being José as enviable, that his characteristics are innately absent within the North American outsider. José is able to easily act, react, and perform gracefully in each of these scenarios, yet Donald continually struggles, despite his intense attempts to the contrary. By withholding any depiction of any nefarious acts that may lead to such results lends additional support to the image Disney’s artists had inscribed on José Carioca as a symbol of a united Americas: what was a unique aspect of Brazilian identity made them distinct and capable of succeeding in a variety of circumstances in which others fail. Yet, the disregard towards a moral



lifestyle cannot go unnoticed: this type of representation did not set well with critics who did not appreciate the way in which their country was presented, let alone support North American intervention within their country. Such critics were of a mindset similar to Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart who declared that the Disney Latin American comics, and correspondingly the films that inspired them, are “the manner in which the U.S. dreams and redeems itself, and then imposes that dream upon others for its own salvation, which poses the danger for the dependent countries. It forces us Latin Americans to see ourselves as they see us” (95).<sup>25</sup> This was, however, exactly what the OCIAA aimed to do: have Latin Americans see themselves in a light it felt was positive. Like earlier colonizers, Walt Disney, who held a position dominant to others who were doing similar work (other studios), had the upper-hand in the way Latin America was portrayed. Even if critics didn’t agree with his representations, he still had the support of much of the North and South American government and populace. As another critic sees it, “the true subject of Disney’s feature films is the North American *experience of* Latin America, rather than Latin America itself” (Benamou 121). In this frame of reference, Donald’s raging desire can be seen as a North American infatuation with the territory, rather than a representation of a lack of morality within Latin America. Beyond this aspect, however, another element that has proved unsettling for critics is the bleaching of traditionally African elements of Brazilian society.

## Race

Disney’s representation of Latin American race in *The Three Caballeros*, and *Saludos Amigos* to a lesser extent, is often called into question. A look into the process in which the films were developed, however, casts light onto why and how Disney’s racial bleaching of Brazilian race surfaced. In terms of *The Three Caballeros*, many critics note the presence of white actors

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<sup>25</sup> These two critics, both Chilean, are the originators of the book *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. This piece is applauded as one of the largest defamers of Disney’s imperialist influence.

who play the roles of the traditionally black-skinned Afro-Brazilians, most notably the *baiana*. Within the context of the Good Neighbor Policy and the rhetoric of Vargas' state building, this depiction is not accidentally stereotypical. Like Brazil, the United States had a history of subjugating African slaves that led to economic and political disparity, causing a stigmatism towards Afro-Americans within larger society. In the United States, actors of African descent were absent in starring roles within the media during the early years of its development. Lincoln Perry, who began his acting career in 1927, receives distinction as the first black movie star within U.S. cinema, but as Hurst notes, "for that distinction, Perry paid a heavy price — he is best known as the character of Stepin Fetchit, a befuddled, mumbling, shiftless fool". The roles he played were grounded in stereotypes reflecting the effects of slavery, leading many to believe that he was partly responsible for "keeping white America from viewing blacks as capable of joining the mainstream" (Hurst). Within the realm of television, Ethel Waters was "the first African American to star in her own program on the tube," and this was as late as 1939, over a decade after the medium was first presented (Bogle 9). While the adverse and delayed presentation of black characters within North American media was not necessarily condonable, both unwittingly influenced Disney's treatment of race in *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros*.

For its part, the Walt Disney Studio had run into issues of racial depiction just a few years earlier in *Fantasia* (1940). In one scene, a black centaur is seen "eagerly shining the hoofs of an elegant white centaur who is coolly filing her nails," while the whole film is rife with a binary association of "black with evil and white with goodness" (Byrne 95). Others have pointed out that many references are made towards Afro-Americans through the crows in *Dumbo*, not only in their color and southern vernacular—"I'd be done see'n about everything / When I see an

elephant fly!”—, but also the fact that they are crows and that their leader is named Jim. Similar defamation occurred after *The Three Caballeros*, in 1946, when the treatment of African Americans in *Song of the South* was called into question, resulting in the film's absence within the home media market through the present. As the studio was walking a fine line to appease the demands of the OCIAA and win the esteem of the Latin American governments, notably that of Vargas, careful measures were taken to present the image the latter desired. Thus, Disney's masking of Afro-Brazilian identity was not self-imposed, but departmentalized.

Hollywood's Production Code Administration was responsible for acquiring the aid of Addison Durland, native of Cuba, who verified “Spanish and Portuguese spellings and excised images of excessive poverty and indolence he believed would make Latin America look ‘too much like a slum’” (Hess 113). Within Brazilian society, the slum and its accompanying poverty is often associated with dark skinned inhabitants, a legacy of the country's long history of slavery. Thus, as both Hess and Shale note, accentuating the similarities between the countries by masking the identity of Afro-Brazilians made the film more palatable and intriguing to the North American audience, but also obscured a facet of Brazilian society the elite—those who would determine Brazil's alignment in the war—did not want to see or have presented to foreign audiences. Tota postulates that “talvez a ausência de negros e mulatos nos filmes de Disney sobre o Brasil tenha agradado à elite brasileira, vítima do complexo de pertencer a um país de negros e mestiços” (*O imperialismo* 138); Brazil was a country that had experienced periods of pursued racial and social whitening, and thus the Vargas government would have given full support to this depiction. Indeed, in fact, during this period, the regime established the Press and Propaganda Department (DIP), which among other objectives, required that “all U.S. films, weekly newsreels, and radio programs...pass through the DIP's censorship boards before

reaching the Brazilian public” insomuch that “by closely cooperating with the OIAA...[it] also gained influence on the way Brazil and its president was presented in the United States” (Prutsch 253).<sup>26</sup> A closer look at the depiction of Afro-Brazilians within the Brazilian media reveals how Disney’s racial treatment in *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* worked within this realm.

The best-known black film personality in early Brazilian cinema was Sebastião Bernardes Souza Prata, commonly known as “Grande Otelo”. His first stint in cinema came in 1935 when he had a minor role in *Noites Cariocas* and he continued to star in a variety of minor roles throughout the rest of the decade. It was not until the early forties, with the establishment of the Atlântida studio, that he began to appear in major roles. The studio, founded in 1941, sought to create a cinema that authentically portrayed the realities of Rio de Janeiro, not avoiding polemical issues and depiction as earlier national studios had done. Despite their adage, however, footage from an event celebrating the founding of the studio “reveals both the honors accorded to Grande Otelo as the star of the film and his isolation as a black person, since Otelo is virtually the only black face in sight” (Stam 90). The Brazilian produced film *Rio 40 Graus* (1955), released in the decade following this event and the release of *The Three Caballeros*, which highlights the lives of Rio de Janeiro’s black community, while not sugarcoating the reality of their hardships, is an example of how this sentiment lingered long after Disney’s films were shown in theaters. As the film’s images were not yet acceptable for exhibition in the public square, Rio’s police chief, who was also responsible for censorship within the city, banned “the film, alleging, among other things, that in Rio it never reached 40 degree centigrade. (The film was released only after a campaign by Brazilian and international intellectuals)” (Stam 161). The director of the film, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, set out to make a trilogy of his Rio films, the

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<sup>26</sup> This is to the extent that “the initial subject for Welles’ film, the yearly Carnival celebration, was chosen precisely through the [Motion Picture Division’s] consultation with the DIP” (Benamou 116).

other two were to be called *Rio Zona Norte* and *Rio Zona Sul*, the latter of which was never completed. In *Rio Zona Norte*, a main character is an upcoming samba composer who accepts another character's offer to distribute his music. The distributor, however, steals his compositions and sells them without giving him credit. Upon discovering his plight, the distributor explains: "I was going to tell you, but you live so far away,' a 'far away' that is both literal and metaphorical. Espírito literally lives in the Zona Norte, but figuratively, as a poor uneducated black, he is marginalized, peripheralized, far from the centers of power and decision" (Stam 163). Geographically, the distance between the South Zone and the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro is relatively short. Socially, however, they are continents away. This type of divide is additionally present in other areas of the country, including Bahia, where the white Aurora Miranda is seen representing a traditionally black social type.

The Walt Disney Studio thus had to navigate around the racial issue as best it could, while also representing a country known for major racial diversity. They did so mostly in what Byrne and McQuillan refer to as "Disney's major strategy for negotiating the tricky issue of representing race: exclusive anthropomorphism" (96). In their book, they go on to quote a Disney writer, who in an August 1963 issue of *National Geographic* stated: "This anthropomorphism is resented by some people – they say we are putting people into animal suits" (96). *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* are thus full of anthropomorphized animals and objects, with the exception of the occasional live-action actors in segments of both films. However, the use of anthropomorphized animals was not the only vehicle the Disney used to negotiate race within the films.<sup>27</sup> Just as Bishop-Sanchez argues that "an outward celebration

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<sup>27</sup> The role of the war in this decision must also be noted. The use of live actors, "by virtue of its photographic realism clearly endowed the films with an aura of authenticity. But the inclusion of live action footage was, in the end, a financial decision. The highly realistic animation such as the featured in the early, 'illusion of life' films...was extremely labor-intensive and very expensive" (Goldman 27). With the financial loss of earlier films,

and inclusion of Afro-Brazilianness is inherent to Brazil's cultural richness, yet blackness, especially during the 1930s, was frequently masked behind the sanitizing white articulation that obliterated the black body proper while drawing from this diversity" (46), while never represented phenotypically, Disney was still able to represent the Afro-Brazilian in both *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* through a variety of mechanisms. As one critic notes:

In *Saludos Amigos*, Afro-Brazilian identity...is encrypted into the black and white stripes of Copacabana's sidewalk, Zé Carioca's dance moves, and filtered into the mainstream samba song "Aquarela do Brasil". In *The Three Caballeros*, it is effectively sublimated in the animated drawing of flora over a sprawling black background, the omnipresent Afro-Brazilian rhythms on the soundtrack, and in the cross-casting of Portuguese-born Aurora Miranda, Carmen's younger sister, as an undulating Afro-Bahiana who sells *acarajé* in the first travel sequence. (Benamou 133)

So while José can be seen as having been employed to represent peripheral citizens, Miranda can be seen as having been used to represent Afro-Brazilian citizens. Employing Aurora Miranda to represent the *baiana* was a keen maneuver in that her sister Carmen was well known within the United States and Brazil for her depiction of the social type. So while she did not have dark skin and did not faithfully recreate the culture she represented, she mirrored an image that was already known and accepted by North American viewers, approximating them by building on their pre-held understanding.

As was discussed in the introduction, however, many within Brazil sought to defame the more famous Miranda's Afro-Brazilian persona, as they felt she had not held true to her roots

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the unrest caused by the animators' strike, and the financial instability caused by the Great Depression and World War II required Disney to produce these films as cheaply as possible, even with government backing.

and had adulterated a part of their national identity. Interestingly enough, however, the image of the *baiana* that was created in Hollywood influenced a change within the way Brazilians represented the *baiana* during one of the country's largest celebrations. "The creations by Travis Banton worn by Carmen in *That Night in Rio* (1941), for example, made such an impact in the Brazilian press that organisers of the Rio carnival celebrations requested replicas from the Twentieth Century-Fox wardrobe department, that were used as the inspiration for the parade costumes in 1941" (Dennison 112). Where this hybridization of Brazilian culture had occurred, by employing the younger Miranda in *The Three Caballeros*, Disney was faithful to a baseline authenticity, while still being able "to play it safe with the known restrictions inside the studio system regarding racial integration on the screen, while simultaneously ensuring his films' appeal to local conservative elites" (Benamou 133). His treatment was such that Addison Durland—charged with inspecting Good Neighbor films for any content Latin Americans would find offensive—drafted a letter on September 22, 1942, in which he declared: "Dear Mr. Disney: We have read the synopsis...for the proposed Latin American short subject titled BAÍA, bearing in mind the possible reaction of the Latin American audiences, and are happy to report that this material seems to be quite acceptable from this point of view". For more progressive Brazilians, however, the conflicting racial image the films presented were arguably flawed.

These sought to denounce his efforts in favor of a more visually authentic representation. Orson Welles had gone to Brazil in 1942 to begin work on his OCIAA film *It's All True*, a film in which he hoped to give light to the country's Afro population and the slums in which so many resided. In his attempt, he "was harassed by government thugs, who didn't want Welles to show the favelas to the world, but he was not harassed by *favelados*. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Welles was very well received, and even cheered, in the favelas, and this quite apart from the

fact that his presence brought with it jobs, money, and a certain prestige for the *favelados*” (Stam 111). Welles became so engrossed in the project that he made it his quest to complete the film; however, his endeavors proved futile when the film was never finished. Thus, like earlier European explorers who sought to declare Brazil in the name of their crown, Disney came off conqueror of the OCIAA’s mission and it was his “monument” that was erected within the public square. So while many oppose Disney’s adherence to government sanctions, the image he presented was ultimately the most viable. The opposing views of fans and critics ultimately brought Walt Disney’s “monument” under scrutiny, making modification inevitable.



### CHAPTER 3 – REPURPOSING THE “MONUMENT”

#### Brazil Reacts to and Creates a New Representation of the Original “Monument”

Within Latin America, *The Three Caballeros* was well received at the box office.<sup>28</sup> In Mexico, Walt Disney was hailed as “‘one of the greatest creators in the motion picture world,’” and that he cultivated a “‘world of friendship and understanding to the people of all countries.’” A Brazilian newspaper, *A Noite*, went even further, calling it the ‘best thing Disney has made so far’” (Gabler 410). While the film brought a modest return on investment to the company in both North and South America, the film wasn’t met with the same enthusiasm by American audiences as it had in Latin America, leading to a brief hiatus in the creation of additional José Carioca-related media within the United States. The warm reception *The Three Caballeros* received in Brazil and the rest of Latin America, however, resulted in a much different course by the Disney Company than it had taken in North America, and the José Carioca character evolved, taking on a more authentically Brazilian form. Not only did his physical image change slightly, and the environments in which he lived change drastically, the Disney studio ceded the rights to Latin American artists to imbue more authentic meaning on the original monument, keeping a good neighbor-like status between the company and a large mass of the Brazilian public that consumed its goods.

Unlike earlier monuments erected by European colonizers that suffered modification at the hands of the public, Disney was able to maintain his original “monument” intact by figuratively returning it to North America in order to preserve his film library. This was done as the original image of José Carioca was used exclusively within animated shorts that had a much smaller circulation than the feature films and did not have the political charge the films espoused.

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<sup>28</sup> Gabler reports that “[*The Three Caballeros*] accrued \$900,000 in billings in just 11 weeks, compared to 30 weeks for *Bambi* and 48 for *Dumbo*” (410).

With the tepid reception of *The Three Caballeros* in North America, together with the resurgence of the Walt Disney Studio after the war and Walt Disney's ever innovative efforts that led him to fix his focus on the next project, Disney's feature films directed towards Latin America came to an end. Additional films had been planned, however, and although they were never brought to fruition, traces of the planned films surfaced within other projects, including the 1944 film *The Amazon Awakens* and the 1948 package film *Melody Time*, in which Donald Duck and José Carioca star in the segment entitled "Blame it on the Samba". In early 1960, the two birds also starred in an episode of the Walt Disney Presents series entitled "Two Happy Amigos," originally airing on ABC. He also made occasional cameo appearances, most notably in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), in episodes of the *Mickey Mouse Works* and *Disney's House of Mouse* TV series, and recently in the twenty-second episode of the rebooted *Mickey Mouse* series, entitled "O Futebol Clássico," as the commentator of the World Cup, which premiered while Brazil hosted that event in 2014. In a sense, within the United States, José Carioca was not further developed. Adams notes that "Hollywood went on to produce more than twenty additional musicals with Latin actors and Latin themes between 1945 and 1955, thus testifying to the fact that both Latin actors and Latin themes had caught on with American audiences as more than just Good Neighbor era politics" (294). Disney's halting of Latin American film production during this period shows that he was not in the business purely for self-serving economic interest; he was in fact ready to move on to other endeavors. The company's maintenance and continued, limited use of the José Carioca "monument," however, has led to small-scale economic enterprises. Consequentially, this act has led to a confusion of the original inscriptions and the inscriptions that were forged as the monument went through a series of transformations.

Just as many Latin Americans had reservations in accepting the United States as a model nation at the onset of the 1940s, many citizens of the United States had a limited, and many times tainted, view of Latin America during the same period. Indeed, “it was not until the 1840s and the Mexican War that individual, one-on-one relationships between Americans and Latin Americans began to take place much more frequently in places such as Texas and California,” historian Stewart Brewer reports, and resultantly, “from these locations and others inside Mexico, the seeds of Latin American stereotyping were born” (4). The events that transpired as a result of United States’ approximation to Latin America during the War served to further develop these stereotypes, for the better, and for the worse. The proximity between the United States and Mexico has led many to see that country as a synecdoche of the entire Latin American region. This confusion, while absent in *Saludos Amigos*, began to creep into *The Three Caballeros*. As one Brazilian scholar notes, the juxtaposition of “Aquarela do Brasil” with images of “*villas e sombreros*” allows the audience to anticipate what they are about to experience: “*ritmos brasileiros, signos mexicanos*” (Freire-Medeiros 75).

One of these initial reactions was the premier of the film *Berlim na Batucada* in the same year that *The Three Caballeros* was released (1944). As the title indicates, the film references the war in Germany, but more so the Good Neighbor Policy and the doings of the OCIAA within Brazil. In striking similarity to *Saludos Amigos*, the film “featured a *malandro* by the name of Zé Carioca . . . and a rotund American tourist who had come to Rio in search of carnival” (Dennison 72). The characters correspond to Disney’s characters by name and by type and tour Rio de Janeiro just as Donald Duck and José Carioca had done in *Saludos Amigos*, but with a twist. The American, instead of coming to Brazil for mere tourism, is looking to contract and bring Brazilian artists back to Hollywood to film a musical feature. His guide, however, makes a

change in the itinerary, checking him not into the Copacabana Palace Hotel, but into an obscure inn with a similar name: Palácio. Furthermore, instead of leading his visitor to the highlights of Rio de Janeiro, he takes him to a slum—the birthplace of many of Brazil’s popular musical genres. These artists, who would likely be black, would then get their big break and be included in a Hollywood film. This twist is suggestive of Brazilians looking to change the image Hollywood had created of them, avoiding the image sought by their government. Curiously enough, “o empresário Norte-Americano,” the character in *Berlim na batucada*, “segundo os historiadores do cinema brasileiro, foi inspirado em Orson Welles e sua estada no Brasil, em 1942, para filmar *It’s all true*. Considerando o fracasso do projeto de Welles, pode-se dizer que a personagem de ficção teve mais sorte que a personagem histórica” (Ferreira 115). Brazilian artists were thus attempting to immortalize the image of Welles—the North American who had sought to depict a realistic representation of Brazilian reality—by defacing the image Walt Disney had created. Unlike Disney, however, the filmmakers had the advantage of being able to present this type of image as they were not bound by political restrictions. The film, however, was one “sem grandes méritos” (Ferreira 117), and Disney was already working to fortify its monument from being felled.<sup>29</sup>

Where the Portuguese in earlier decades had erected monuments celebrating their own national heroes and interests, the United States had too erected a monument to celebrate its own interests, but through the image of a hero that was distinctly Brazilian. Such early Portuguese

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<sup>29</sup> Dennison notes that other Brazilian studios, Sonofilmes and Cinédia, were also functioning at this time. Sonofilmes, for its part, also sought to recreate the cinematic image of Latin American from the Good Neighbor Policy era. “In *Laranja da China*, for example, one of the many popular songs performed was the ultrapatriotic samba by Ari Barroso, ‘Aquarela do Brasil’ (Watercolour of Brazil). Yet, this popular song, so representative of national pride, was sung in Spanish in the film by the Mexican performer, Pedro Vargas, in a rendition that was reportedly *cucarachíssima* or exaggeratedly ‘Latino’. By subverting the symbolic force of this unofficial national anthem, this Brazilian musical poked fun at the nation-building ideology of the Vargas regime. It likewise made a tongue-in-cheek allusion to the blurring of geographic borders and, more specifically, the linguistic confusions that resulted when Hollywood first started to portray Spanish America and Brazil” (70).

monumental images include Pedro Álvares Cabral, Martim Afonso de Sousa, and Dom Pedro I, and while they were instrumental in the development of Brazil as a nation, they are often seen as having imposed themselves on the territory. While the United States pursued a similar, yet less invasive course during the outset of the Second World War, the covert nature of the imposition, which fed off of Brazilian acceptance, facilitated the operation and made it nearly universally accepted. Even still, social change occurred with the shifts in urbanization within the country, leading to a change in national identity. Coupled with outcries of the more liberal populace towards Disney's involvement in and representation of their society, the call to reshape, manipulate, and re-signify the image of José Carioca, a call that was signaled in the plot of *Berlim na Batucada*, was sent out and responded to by Latin American artists with the Latinization and eventual Brazilianization of the José Carioca character; “esse produto cultural de origem norte-americana foi sendo aculturado e ganhou contornos muito nítidos de brasilidade” (Santos 13). Consequentially, “fruto de uma estratégia de ocasião, ele se mostrou mais longo do que o esperado” (Monteiro).<sup>30</sup>

Disney comics had begun in Brazil as early as 1934, gaining their own publication in 1946, entitled *Suplemento Infantil*, and by 1950, *Editora Abril* had purchased the rights to publish Disney comics within the country (Reis 89)—one of Disney's “núcleos descentralizados” (Moura 168). Comic strips starring Disney's token Brazilian began to appear in Brazilian newspapers as early as 1960 (less than two decades after *Saludos Amigos* was released) and were mere adaptations of American comics starred by the traditional Disney lineup, but in which José was inserted in the starring role. “A simpática ave só viria a se tornar um carioca, mesmo, na década de 1970, nas histórias em quadrinhos escritas pelo paulista Ivan

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<sup>30</sup> In fact, “many parts of the world, without access to Disney's films or television shows, know the Disney characters from the comics alone. Those too poor to buy a ticket to the cinema, can always get hold of a comic, if not by purchase, then by borrowing it from a friend” (Kunzle 15).

Saidenberg...e ilustradas pelo gaúcho Renato Canini, que abasileirou o personagem americano" (Navega 6). Through this process, the comics passed from a purely-American production, to an Argentine production through the comics of Luis Destuet, to a Brazilian-produced production through the work of solely-Brazilian artists, to a phase when José Carioca was "já imerso na cultura e na realidade do país, por obra de argumentistas, desenhistas e editores argutos e conscientes" (6–7).<sup>31</sup> By 1961, with the release of comic 479 of the *Pato Donald* series, entitled "Pato Donald apresenta Zé Carioca," the magazine "passa a ter alternadamente os números pares intitulados *Pato Donald* e os ímpares *Zé Carioca*, apesar de ser apenas no número 539, a Março de 1962, que a cabeça e o nome do pato desaparecerem para dar espaço totalmente a Zé Carioca como titular da revista" (Moura 170). While Walt Disney was not directly involved in this process—he had focused much of his attention on Disneyland and the forthcoming "Florida Project" during this period and then passed away in 1966—Disney's policy (which only changed recently) to not include authorial credits make it appear "como se fosse o próprio Walt Disney, presença fantasmática por detrás da sua assinatura em todas a produções, a exercer esse poder criacional" (Moura 167). Thus, as one critic decries about Disney's earlier political involvement, "the names of the Presidents change; that of Disney remains" (Kunzle 11). His persona was present throughout the period.

As José evolved into this starring role, the process of North American and Brazilian cultural hybridization came full circle. Like before, José became a representation of the Brazilian people to itself, but instead of a deliberate valorization of society, he served as a reflection of the commonplace of the Brazilian lifestyle. As a result, the difficulties of Brazilian life and

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<sup>31</sup> Roberto Elísio dos Santos traced this evolution, delineating four distinct steps, namely the "Fase Americana" [American Phase], the "Fase de Transição" [Transition Phase], the "Fase de Adaptação" [Adaptation Phase], and the "Fase de Assimilação" [Assimilation Phase] (6–7).

characters and themes from the Brazilian literary tradition began to intertwine with José's life experiences.

O ensaísta arregimenta um rol de personagens do imaginário literário brasileiro com o qual Zé Carioca aparenta algumas características, desde Jeca Tatu (*Urupês*, de Monteiro Lobato) a Macunaíma (da novela homônima de Mário de Andrade), passando pelo personagem "Amigo da Onça" de Péricles de Andrade Maranhão, ou a da telenovela Beto Rockfeller ou ainda o "Pedro Malasartes" das várias tradições orais. Preguiça, fanfarronice, falta de verdadeiros talentos ou aptidões, subdesenvolvimento, engano dos outros, "ojeriza ao trabalho", são algumas dessas características flutuantes dessas personagens, ocupando um menor ou maior grau nesta ou naquela personagem, mas convergindo em Zé Carioca. (Moura 178)<sup>32</sup>

In *Saludos Amigos*, Donald Duck was purely North American—representative of and created by North Americans—while José Carioca was a hybrid mix of North American creation and Brazilian identity. In the comics, José Carioca began as a North American creation (created by North American artists) but then became re-hybridized into his own culture through the artistic transition described by Santos and the thematic transition described by Moura (this re-hybridization also occurred thematically when in one of the first comic strips starring José, *A volta de Zé Carioca*, José lives for ten years as a Hollywood star and then moves back to Brazil). When this shift happened:

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<sup>32</sup> It is curious that Moura should mention Pedro Malasartes, a character in various stories of Iberian origin, as one who had inspired an aspect of the comic José Carioca character. This is because Érico Veríssimo, in his book *Gato preto em campo de neve*, holds dialogues about his experiences in the United States with a ghost who refers to itself as Malasartes. Thus another element of cultural hybridization resulting from the Good Neighbor Policy came full circle. While the original films intended to include characters that were “drawn from the folklore and animal life sketched and studied by Mr. Disney and his staff during their tour,” the folkloric aspect only came to full fruition through these comics (“Rockefeller and Whitney” 14).

Joe se tornou José. Mas a transformação final, que fez dele um autêntico Zé e verdadeiro carioca, ocorreu na década de 1979, quando . . . [dois brasileiros] . . . assumiram . . . os roteiros e os desenhos . . . [e em cujas] . . . mãos . . . o rei do calote ganhou primos com sotaques variados, um barraco cai não cai na Vila Xurupita, um figurino condizente com o calor tropical e, principalmente, uma personalidade que soma preguiça, vigarice, língua solta, cara de pau e um irresistível carisma. (Maffia 5)

His family also increased, including the creation of his girlfriend, Rosinha, and his family members who represent a regionalization of his character: Zé Paulista, Zé Queijinho, Zé Pampeiro, Zé Jandaia, Zé Baiano, Coronel Zé do Engenho, Zé Fornaça, Zé Catimba, Zico, and Zeca (Moura 183–84). While the José Carioca comics are various and treat a variety of Brazilian social issues, we will focus on but one—“Festa na roça”—to understand the way in which José Carioca is inserted into a more authentically Brazilian context and how his character is imbued with more authentically Brazilian hues.

“Festa na roça” takes place during a traditional *feira junina* celebration. José’s participation in one of these parties, most typical of the country’s Northeast (although celebrated across the country), along with his attempted escape from paying three months worth of back rent, places him in a role that is much more peripheral in nature than what he had taken on in *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros*. In the strip, Rosinha, Zé’s girlfriend, who only exists within the comic realm, sends their friend Nestor to invite Zé to the party. He wants to come, but is apprehensive that he was only invited to force him to repay his debts to her, while also admitting that he owes three months worth back debt to his landlord, Vascon Domínio.



Dressed as a *caipira*—a Brazilian hick figure—Zé arrives at the party, speaking in a stereotypical *caipira* manner: “Bá noite, pessoar! Voismecê dá licença de chegá?” (Saidenberg 90). While eating traditional foods, Zé takes note that Vascon Domínio is in attendance and hides in the jail that had been erected as a set piece for the party.<sup>33</sup> While Zé is in hiding, the rest of the group begins to play traditional games, in this case a variety of spin the bottle in which the person to whom the bottle points after spinning is asked a question that if they fail to answer correctly is sent to the jail for the rest of the party—unless they pay bail. Nestor is the first sent to jail, soon followed by Vascon Domínio who soon realizes that Zé is there in hiding. Zé, followed by Vascon, runs through the wall of the jail, and Zé quickly scales the nearby *pau de sebo*.<sup>34</sup> While on top, Zé acquires the \$500 cash prize while Vascon breaks the pole off of its base, causing Zé to tumble. Vascon, yelling, tells Zé that he better pay up when Rosinha interrupts: “Ele ganhou a prenda!” (95). In this twist of fate, Zé has money to pay his debts and is set free from Vascon’s grip. The party carries on, leading to the traditional fake marriage ceremonies that take place at this type of party. When Rosinha suggests that she and Zé could get married, Zé, the *malandro* he always was, replies: “É...só de brincadeira, não é?” followed by “Vamo lá, pessoar! Acende a fogueira, qui a festa tá isqentando! Vamo lá! Todo mundo dançando a quadrilha! O noivo cum a noiva, os home cum as muié!” (Saidenberg 96).

This singular example is evident of how Zé Carioca was placed within a more credible Brazilian context, in this case the traditional *feira junina* (involving his hick-like speech, the traditional foods and games, etc.), not only because the story and art were developed by Brazilian artists, but also in the way in which how his character responded to that context in a more

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<sup>33</sup> *Festa junina* festivities took origin in the *arraial*—a small, underdeveloped village—first in Portugal and later spreading to Brazil. The party space is thus set up to look like a typical *arraial* complete with a church, bar, and jail.

<sup>34</sup> A *pau de sebo* is a type of grease pole that one must successfully scale to acquire a prize, often monetary, placed on top.

culturally credible way. While in the films and the comics, his ability to manipulate situations—his *jeito*—allows him to overcome, and while his character form is still the same, that of a *malandro*, his environment is overtly different. This could occur now that Disney did not have the same political limitations as it did with the films. Such a shift requires the reader to have a keen familiarity of Brazilian culture in order to understand this new Zé. North Americans are consequentially not able to understand many of the nuances of the new character, not only because his dialogues are in Portuguese, but because he is no longer one of their own. Thus, the “‘Zé Carioca’, o novo astro de Hollywood” of a 1942 Brazilian newspaper headline and the “‘Zé Carioca’, cidadão norte-americano” of a 1944 Brazilian newspaper headline had become *Um brasileiro chamado Zé Carioca*—title of an anthology of Zé Carioca comic strips compiled by *Editora Abril*. Additionally, the new “monument” took on a new appearance as the primary artist of the Zé Carioca comic series, Renato Canini, reworked his wardrobe:

Embora os quadrinhistas brasileiros tenham modificado graficamente o personagem (hoje, em lugar do terno, da gravata borboleta e do chapéu palheta – roupa típica do malandro carioca da década de 1940 -, o papagaio veste camiseta, calça *jeans* com a barra virada e usa boné com a aba para trás e tênis nos pés), sua personalidade se mantém, mesmo que suas atitudes possam ser consideradas politicamente incorretas. (Santos 12).

Thus, the external brush in *Saludos Amigos* that originally brought José to life was replaced by a Brazilian brush that brought José’s authentically Brazilian existence to life. Ironically, however, and as Santos notes, the modern José Carioca wears American attire, whereas the original did not—evidence of the hybrid nature of his United States/Brazilian identity.

## North America Reclaims, Preserves and Re-erects the Original “Monument”

Just as the creation of a new “monument” led to the appropriation of meaning so as to be better understood by the Brazilian public, the original “monument” was set into a new context that made it better understood by the North American public beginning in the early 1970s. In the latter part of *The Three Caballeros*, José Carioca goes to Mexico and at least for his North American audience, never returned. While he retained his identity as a Brazilian, his world became much more Hispanic than it was Luso. This departure is markedly the point when the original “monument” began to lose its cultural authenticity. When viewed as two separate entities, the original “monument”—seen within its current North American context—provides evidence of the shift that occurred once Latin American artists took accounting of José Carioca as a character of a comic series. Leonard Maltin notes that despite its gains in the box office, *The Three Caballeros* wasn’t released a second time in theaters because it was decided that, “like *The Reluctant Dragon* and *Saludos Amigos*, it was too firmly moored to the 1940s,” but that, “frequent exposure on the Disney TV show kept its memory—and its characters Joe Carioca and Panchito—alive, and its availability for rental on 16mm, especially at a time when the major Disney animated features were unavailable, helped it foster a new reputation among cartoon buffs in the 1960s and 70s” (67). What further kept the original “monument” of José in the public square was his eventual insertion into Disney’s living space: its theme parks—first in the United States and then abroad.

Opening day of Walt Disney World’s Magic Kingdom Park on October 1, 1971, brought with it José Carioca’s first appearance at a Disney park.<sup>35</sup> From that day through September 14,

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<sup>35</sup> While this marked José’s first official appearance in a Disney park, he was present as early as “April 1969, when government and media officials gathered in Ocoee for a first glimpse at the long-awaited ‘Project Florida.’ Among the imaginative pieces showcased at the unveiling were concept artwork, a massive scale model of the master plan,

1980, the *Mickey Mouse Revue* attraction in Fantasyland showcased dozens of audio-animatronic characters from Disney's repertoire, including Donald Duck, José Carioca, and Panchito Pistoles on the *serape* with which they tour Mexico in *The Three Caballeros*. To the sounds of maracas, guitar, and the shots of a pistol, the trio was seen in different areas of the stage as they sang the film's theme song.<sup>36</sup> In this way the original "monument" was brought out of the vault and placed back in the public square as a representation of Latin America. That public square began to grow when the attraction closed in Florida and was exported to Tokyo Disneyland for its opening day on April 15, 1983, where it remained until May 25, 2009.<sup>37</sup> Since then the character has been placed before the public in all Disney parks, with exception—to this point at least—of the Shanghai Disney resort, which opened in June 2016.

The likenesses of Donald, José, Panchito were brought back to Walt Disney World in April 2007, finding a new home in the Gran Fiesta Tour Starring The Three Caballeros in EPCOT's World Showcase Mexico Pavilion. On December 4, 2015, the audio-animatronic figures of the three birds that had originated in the Florida park and then sent to Japan were returned to their place of origin and were installed to enhance the finale scene of the ride.<sup>38</sup> At Walt Disney World, José's likeness is also found at two of the resort's hotels: in the hedges and gift store of Disney's Coronado Springs Resort (which is Mexico-themed) and Disney's All-Star Music Resort where he appears with the other two *caballeros* on their *serape* in the center of

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figures from the *Tropical Serenade* attraction...and [the Three Caballeros]" ("After 35 Years"). The *Tropical Serenade* was what eventually became the *Mickey Mouse Revue*.

<sup>36</sup> This effect was done by putting a spotlight on different versions of the audio-animatronic figures placed in distanced areas on the stage.

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note once again that Brazil is home to the largest Japanese community outside of Japan itself, and there José Carioca was within Japan's capital city as a representation of a country with which many Japanese had a close connection. Participants in the *Dekasegi* would have had a notable connection with the character.

<sup>38</sup> During the period between the birds' removal from Tokyo and installation at EPCOT, "the figures made their next public appearance at Disney's Contemporary Resort as part of D23's *Destination D: Walt Disney World 40th* in May 2011, when the Walt Disney Archives curated a special exhibit honoring four decades of the Vacation Kingdom" ("After 35 Years").

swimming pool. Visitors can find him as a meet-and-greet character at the Tokyo Disneyland Resort, including the Tokyo DisneySea park and at seasonal events such as the recent *Crystal Wishes Journey*. Further framing of the José Carioca “monument” within a Mexican habitat came in 2008 when the “it’s a small world” attraction at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California received an upgrade that included the addition of Disney characters within the lands of the attraction that correlated with those of several films. José Carioca, along with his *caballero* companions, was included in the South American section of the ride, yet the notorious theme song is sung in Spanish and the scenery is much more depictive of Spanish Latin America than it is to Portuguese Latin America. José’s likeness had also began to be seen a few months earlier when the “it’s a small world” attraction debuted in Hong Kong, China with the opening of that resort. His image as a member of the Spanish-speaking Latin community was further elaborated when he appeared alongside Donald Duck, the Argentine gaucho and his flying donkey, and the Aurora Miranda *yayá* character from *The Three Caballeros* at the Disneyland Paris *Disney Dreamers Everywhere Gala Dinner Show* in May 2013 and yet again during the Halloween season at that same resort. He starred in the 2016 World of Color Season of Light show at the Disney California Adventure park, as he appeared along side his aviary companions during the “Feliz Navidad” segment of the spectacular. He can also be found seasonally with his aviary cohort at the Disneyland Resort during *Mickey's Soundsational Parade* at Disneyland Park. Perhaps of most heft, however, he performs during the Christmas-time event *Disney ¡Viva Navidad!* at Disney California Adventure park. While the scenery of this event is still heavily Mexican, the festivity includes sections of Brazilian music and dance. Most striking is the appearance of the *baiana* figure, played by women of notably dark skin. With this most recent rendition, Disney has inched its way closer to creating a scenery that takes the image of the

original “monument” out of Mexico and back into conformity with an authentically accurate context, but that still creates confusion when set against these depictions across the world. There are yet other examples in Disney’s parks and stores that could be examined.

While for many years, Brazilians were not frequent visitors to Disney’s parks and resorts, shifts within the country’s economy have changed that reality. As Brazil’s middle-class has grown, so too has its ability to travel abroad, and Disney parks—notably the four that currently comprise the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida—have become inundated with Brazilian visitors. In fact, in 2013, Brazilians accounted for an estimated 777,000 of Central Florida’s tourists, making them the largest overseas demographic to vacation in Central Florida, barely surpassing Great Britain (which accounted for 759,000 tourists that same year). The same chronicle reports that “since 2004, Brazilian travel to Orlando has exploded by 900 percent as rising affluence has given more Brazilians a taste for American theme parks, restaurants and shopping” (Stratton). Why they choose Central Florida as their destination comes from a variety of factors. First, the geographic distance between the major Brazilian cities that contain an international airport and Orlando is one of the shortest between the territories. Second, as Stratton also notes, “Florida prices...are two to four times lower than prices in Brazil,” leading many Brazilians to stock up on the latest goods at the outlet stores within the greater Orlando area. Third, a trip to Walt Disney World has become a type of rite of passage for the Brazilian middle-class. As one scholar notes:

Brazilians’ trip to Disney, whether as desire or realization, creates a virtual space akin to . . . a “common,” a space where consumers construct social relations and craft shared meanings. The middle class’s sense of pertinence to this common, which can appear, for instance, in the form of social media platforms, invites

Brazilian subjects to embody consumption values espoused by the richer  
'successful' Other—in this case, Disney, which functions as a synecdoche of the  
United States. (Barros 106)

In this sense, it can be said that the approximation between Disney and Brazil has reached a new level. Whereas before, Disney had gone South, Brazil is coming North, not only for entertainment purposes, but also for the economic opportunity such trips afford. Where the films had been available for repeated viewing in home viewing format, they were not the most sought after. Thus when José Carioca began to take up residence at Disney parks, the relatively small group of Brazilians that comes to Disney's parks is once again exposed to the original "monument".<sup>39</sup>

While many Brazilians will never have conditions to make the trip to Central Florida, an estimated 350,000 of Rio de Janeiro's residents received a visit from Disney in 2009. Entitled "Momentos Mágicos Disney," The Walt Disney Company Brasil, well aware of the country's draw to Walt Disney World, presented a parade along the streets off Copacabana Beach that was characteristic of the parades one would find within a Disney park—including music, characters, sets, and as grand marshal: Zé Carioca. The event was not only attended by the wealthy few who were already acquainted with the parks, but also by Brazilians of all classes. The parade was well received across classes. As one reporter notes:

Ao som de 20 canções que embalaram clássicos em todas as épocas, foi difícil conter as lágrimas e os sorrisos. "Estou maravilhada com o que eu acabei de presenciar aqui. É tudo muito lindo, muito perfeito...Devia ter esse tipo de evento

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<sup>39</sup> An additional explanation of the connection between Disney and its international audiences is that fact that "while most Hollywood-produced movies are released in Brazil with subtitles, Disney cartoons are promptly dubbed, and their release (as well as the accompanying merchandise) is preceded by much of the hype that also follows their release in the U.S.A." (Reis 90).

todo ano, porque para a gente que não tem condições de visitar os parques, vivenciar isso aqui, no meu Rio de Janeiro, é uma felicidade”, disse Orindina Maria dos Santos, de 65 anos, moradora da Favela do Vidigal, no subúrbio.

(Vianna)

The parade was then performed in Vila Velha and São Paulo, each drawing large crowds. It must be noted that like in the parks, the José Carioca who appeared in the parade was the José Carioca of the original “monument”. Hence, the event re-exposed an even larger number of Brazilians who are unable to visit Disney’s parks to Disney’s original “monument,” while inviting an even larger crowd to visit the resort where they would come into contact with the monument yet again.



## CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION

Early colonists in Brazil arrived unannounced, many times ignorant towards the peoples with whom they would come into contact. Disney, on the other hand, arrived in Brazil having already been known through his works, arriving with a desire to immerse himself among the Brazilian people. His attempt in doing so was not to enslave nor supersede the country's political power or social customs; he sought to sway the government's sentiments towards his 'crown'—the United States government—while living among citizens, learning their culture that he would then cast to foreign audiences. Many critique the films (including the way they were produced), and the comics they inspired, as imperially subordinating in nature, yet give credit to Disney for his pursuit of authenticity. One such critic notes that the studio employed “Latin American music, accents, performers, locales, artifacts, and modes of cultural expression more extensively than any previous Hollywood film,” while also denouncing the films as an “act of packaging Latin America for enhanced North-American consumption” (Burton 38). Though not entirely altruistic, at least in an economic sense, in joining the Good Neighbor Policy effort (his studio was floundering after all), the pains Disney took to comply with government leaders and create an uplifting representation of the Brazilian people show that lucre was not his sole driving force. While in some ways his actions cast him in the role of a colonial figure, in many ways, he acted differently from Brazil's original colonists.

While some had argued that animation was not a form of high art, others had begun to offer Disney a right of passage in that field. Mário de Andrade, for example, declared that *Fantasia* was “sem dúvida um dos mais ambiciosos esforços que a cinematografia já fez para se afirmar como uma das Belas Artes” and that it was “uma das realizações capitais [de] Arte”. An examination of animation's rise as a higher level of art is important because, while Disney's “monument” of a parrot may seem innocent and unassuming, it carries with it masses of social

construct. Burton-Carvajal argues that “precisely because of their assumed innocence and innocuousness, their inherent ability—even obligation—to defy all conventions of realistic representation, animated cartoons offer up a fascinating zone within which to examine how a dominant culture constructs its subordinates” (139). José Carioca was used to cement political allegiance, reinforce what would become one of the largest entertainment studios in the world, and represent culture to its own people and abroad. In this sense, José Carioca was undoubtedly successful in the first two categories by realizing both of the ends. The final category has been open for debate, and has led to a variety of interpretations. There is not a single interpretation that is more correct than another—it’s a matter of context and viewpoint—but it must be stressed that “consumers’ potential to make meaning...is restricted by how Disney manages the order and immateriality of signs around its products” (Barros 107). Nevertheless, while Disney was indeed drawn to Latin America to satiate financial loss and then build up the company’s coffers, “no one worked closer with Rockefeller’s Office...during those years than Walt Disney,” and that “he was their chief propagandist for the Good Neighbor policy” (Richard 273). Walt Disney went above and beyond what he was approached to do.<sup>40</sup>

While Disney did indeed “tour a foreign culture, come to understand it in just a short time, film it, and then bring it back home with him, all with the blessing and thanks of the culture he had visited” (Smoodin 141), he truly sought to understand as much as he could and worked with governmental and societal figures in order to present the most acceptable image of Brazil. Furthermore, it has been argued that “Disney’s approach in the 1940s could not ultimately

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<sup>40</sup> Beyond his Latin American films, Walt Disney worked in conjunction with the United States Government to create an entire series of World War II films that were used to instruct and inoculate citizens of North and South Americans about a variety of topics, including health and the war. Through these films, Donald Duck became the antithesis of Adolf Hitler. Films of this genre include *The New Spirit* (1942), *The Spirit of '43* (1943), *Education for Death* (1943), *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), and *Victory Through Air Power* (1943). For a detailed account of these efforts, see: Baxter, John. *Disney During World War II: How the Walt Disney Studio Contributed to Victory in the War*. New York: Disney Enterprises, 2014. Print.

produce films of mutual respect and solidarity, as any attempt at truly inter-American cultural exchange was foregrounded by the exploitation of ethnic and regional stereotypes for commercial gain,” yet we have seen how in the case of Brazil there appears to have been attention given to equilibrate commercial gain with authentic representation (Borge 165). While the segments’ representation was not acceptable by all, it gained the governmental allegiance it initially sought, and took on the cultural authenticity others desired through the adaptation of the original image.

Through this approach, Walt Disney avoided doing as early colonials did—obliviously taking over a territory—and commandeered colonial-like power through more sensitive means. As such, *Saludos Amigos* and its counterpart *The Three Caballeros* are hailed as “the two most successful inter-Hemispheric ambassadors of good will to come out of [Hollywood] during the Good Neighbor era” (Adams 293). Further yet, a recent article in *Time* magazine, referencing a popular photo of Walt Disney with his 16mm on a Rio de Janeiro beach during his goodwill tour proposed:

Today, almost a century after Walt and his older brother Roy founded what became, arguably, the most powerful pop-culture force on the planet, it’s somehow both jarring and heartening to see this single photograph of Disney in Brazil, and consider the man not as the familiar face of a multinational corporation, or the creator of a soulless marketing juggernaut, but as a filmmaker, an inventor, an artist. (Cosgrove)

Looking back, that’s exactly what he was, and he sought to create a representation of Brazil that was authentic, but not necessarily a character that was long-lasting and that would continue to bring profit to his enterprise.

Like monuments that are left exposed to shifts in societal trends, the original “monument” of José Carioca has been placed in settings that make it unfitting, unauthentic. Where Disney (through Brazilian artists) had gone to great lengths to change the image of José Carioca into making him much more representative of the people he meant to represent, the double image created by re-erecting the original “monument” conflicts with those efforts for those who read the comic series or who come to Disney’s parks. This ambiguity possibly surged through Disney’s creation of new José Carioca-themed media that contrasted with the original “monument.” Néstor García Canclini’s exposes what he calls “a *game of echoes*,” of which he elaborates: “The commercial advertising and political slogans that we see on television are those that we reencounter in the streets, and vice versa: the ones are echoed in the others. To this circularity of the communicational and the urban are subordinated the testimonies of history and the public meaning constructed in longtime experiences” (212). The original “monument” in the context of its creation can thus be arguably different from how it’s interpreted today. As readers of the José Carioca comic series and visitors of Disney’s theme parks (the comics and parks correspondent to Néstor García Canclini’s “commercial advertising and political slogans”) become audiences of *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* (the character of José serving as a “monument...in the street”), the representations of Brazil in each are echoed with varying degrees of authenticity.

The Disney Company had figuratively dismantled the José Carioca “monument” from within the public square and returned it to the United States. Known for recycling characters and material, the company propped the “monument” back up, omitting the scenery that earlier had encompassed it, and often placing it into a context that was much more familiar to that audience: Mexico. In this way, the original “monument,” as many see it now, has new meaning inscribed

into it based on its erroneous context. When one reads the comics and sees Zé interact with other Brazilian social figures, they see the lack of such within the environment of the original figure. When one experiences a Disney park and witnesses José within the Mexican portion of a ride or sees him surrounded by dancers who are authentically Brazilian in appearance, they see the original figure as either more or less authentic than what they are then witnessing based on which image they are witnessing at any given moment.

In this light, we see that Disney's original representation of Brazil was not insincere nor did it invalidate his earlier efforts; said representation became so when Disney retained and then re-erected the original "monument" in an imperial-like way that did not necessarily give heed to what it supposedly represented, all for mere economic gain. The original "monument" was adapted, and although it did accrue revenue (Disney is, after all, a corporation), it was left to Brazilian hands, taking the North American cultural imposition element out of the equation and resulting in a bona fide adaptation. Néstor García Canclini's theory of hybrid cultures thus works well within the aims and arguments of this study. Not only does the theory highlight how modern social views conflict with the engravings on the original "monument," it casts light on the hybrid nature of his identity on both continents. Resultantly, José Carioca remains a strong figure in Brazilian popular media and continues to be the only Brazilian representation of the Disney franchise within the United States and abroad. Through this set of developments, Disney's "monument" still stands as his artists depicted it, unlike those of his earlier, European predecessors. In recent years, José Carioca's persona has lent inspiration to the creation of additional *papagaio* characters representative of Brazil, including Blu in Carlos Saldanha's *Rio* and *Rio 2*. Even when directed by a native Brazilian, the film lends itself to stereotypes that call into question the authenticity of the representation it displays. While Disney's "monument" is

tacitly remade and modernized in the films, it has yet to be replaced with another big-name character that surpasses its authenticity.

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