

# THE HISPANIC AND LUSO-BRAZILIAN WORLD

## Latino, *eu*? The Paradoxical Interplay of Identity in *Brazuca* Literature<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** With the increase of Brazilian immigration to the United States, the “brazucas” have been questioning their position and inclusion in the Latino community, claiming a distinct identity and a singular voice. After briefly situating the Brazilian community as an ethnic group in the United States, this essay examines a series of *Brazuca* novels in order to discuss how and why Brazilians have been “a part apart” from the Latino group. The political and ideological consequences of this “in and out” movement are discussed not only within the Latino sociopolitical cultural space, but also within the broader context of American society as a whole.

**Key Words:** Brazilian literature, *Brazuca* literature, minorities, ethnic groups, identity, Brazilian immigration to the USA, Brazilianness and Latinity, prejudice, ideology

“Sendo assim pode o brasileiro dizer [...] que nada do que é hispânico-espanhol e não apenas português-lhe é estranho. O brasileiro é uma gente hispânica. Sua cultura é hispânica.”

Gilberto Freyre, *O Brasileiro entre os Outros Hispanos*

A large number of Brazilians left their nation and immigrated to the United States (and other countries) in the past few decades. In a television speech in 1990, Fernando Collor de Melo, then president of Brazil, begged his fellow countrymen not to leave their homeland: “Não saiam do Brasil, fiquem aqui, me ajudem.”<sup>2</sup> According to the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, more than one million Brazilians were already living abroad in 1995 (Martes 15). The migratory movement to the United States became more evident in the 1970s and escalated in the 1980s, which was a peculiar phenomenon for a nation whose tradition not so long ago was not of emigration but immigration.<sup>3</sup> The emigration to the US thus became a popular topic for the Brazilian press, which has frequently featured success stories of Brazilians who have emigrated to cities like New York, Boston and Miami.<sup>4</sup> Even the Brazilian group “Os Mutantes” told the story of a young man who emigrated to the USA and “encontrou seu sucesso algures além-mar” in their 1972 song “Cantor de Mambo.” In their lyrics, the mambo singer affirms he will not return to Brazil because he not only makes good money, but already has a Cadillac, is “sucesso” (14) and “o rei” singing mambo (15).

“Brazucas,” as the Brazilian immigrants in the United States call themselves, have also found in literature one more medium through which to share their experiences in the land of Uncle Sam. *Brazuca* novels are generally rich and important documents that discuss not only Brazilian immigration to the United States, but also the cultures of Brazil and the United States.<sup>5</sup> Turning to literature as a means of self-expression is always a natural choice for émigrés and exiled people. After all, as Theodor Adorno puts it, “in his text, the writer sets up house” and “for a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live” (87). Citing Adorno, Julio Ramos explains that “la casa de la escritura es un signo transplantado que constituye al sujeto en un espacio descentrado *entre* dos mundos, en un complejo juego de presencias y ausencias, en el ir y venir de sus misivas, de sus recuerdos, de sus ficciones del origen” (52). As Ramos suggests, this de-centered space is not only physical but also temporal, since these authors create a dialogical relationship between a Brazil seen from a geographical distance and with the authority of memory

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and a utopian vision of a new Brazil, created from expectations as well as influenced and legitimated by the immigrant perspective and experience. Some examples of these literary works are *Yes, Eu Sou Brazuca* by José Victor Bicalho (1989), *Aventureiros do Dólar* (1990) by Belchior Neto, *46<sup>th</sup> Street: O Caminho Americano* by Luiz Alberto Scotto, *Febre Brasil em Nova Iorque* by Norma Guimarães (1993), *O Berro do Cordeiro em Nova York* by Tereza Albus (1995) and *Clandestinos: Aventuras Verídicas de Um Guia de Imigrantes Ilegais nas Fronteiras Americanas* by Thales de Leon (1996).

Almost always written in colloquial language with modest constructions, these texts focus on descriptive fidelity and verisimilitude; in other words, the direct and objective representation of reality. Their characters are almost always based on real people, which is why their stories are often autobiographical or biographical. Antonio Candido once stated that “não há literatura sem fuga ao real, e tentativas de transcendê-lo pela imaginação” (Candido 26). If we agree with Candido, it will not be difficult to question the true literariness of these texts. They cannot be compared to the realist novels of the nineteenth century, which tried to legitimize their texts by appropriating historical figures and events, because those works still left enough room for creativity and the “imagination” that Candido treasures so. The *Brazuca* novels draw upon reports, autobiography and biography, testimony and journalistic texts. The complexity of this genre (or the transcendence of such a notion) is evidenced in novels such as *Yes, Eu Sou Brazuca*, which has two parts. The first is the fictional work *per se* and the second is the presentation of the results of actual research the author conducted in 1989 in the Brazuca community in Framingham, Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup> Another good example is *Pinceladas Brasileiras na “América”* by Marco Aurélio Pereira, which is essentially an instructional manual for the newly-arrived immigrant, providing information as diverse as it is useful, e.g., English expressions and how to get a job in the USA. In an interview for the ethnic newspaper *The Brazilians* in October of 1999, Sergio Vilas Boas, the author of *Os Estrangeiros do Trem N*, another *Brazuca* novel, stated that “qualquer semelhança entre ficção e realidade [na sua obra] não é mera coincidência” (*The Brazilians* 18). Boas explains that he interviewed over one hundred Brazilian immigrants in New York and collected information from books, newspapers, magazines, internet websites, photographs, debates and TV shows for his book (9). “Tudo que está escrito aqui é verossimil-realidade pressentida ou vivenciada,” he writes (9). It is not by chance that the Brazilian immigrants in Belchior Neto’s novel arrive in the US via Mexico and from San Diego they travel to cities such as Cambridge, Lowell and Fall River in Massachusetts, as well as to places in New York and New Jersey—some of the areas where the biggest Brazilian communities are located. The states of New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, together with Florida and California, are “home to perhaps two-thirds of the Brazilians currently living in this country” (Margolis, *Invisible* 3). Therefore, the novel confirms the assumption that most Brazilian immigrants come to the US via chain migration, that is, to areas where they have friends or family, or where they know there is a Brazilian community already established (Margolis, *Invisible* 41). “Um conterrâneo puxa o outro, uma cidade puxa a outra, assim sucessivamente,” says the narrator of *Yes, Eu Sou Brazuca* (Bicalho 10). Teresa Sales, based on the statements of the Brazilians she interviewed for her research, suggests that in the beginning Brazilians tended to get closer to the Portuguese, even if only for an opportunity to speak Portuguese (137). Nowadays, with the increase of Brazilian immigration and because Brazilians are attempting to make clear the singularity of their identity, they continue to distance themselves more and more from the Portuguese and to create their own communities. New York is the North-American city that hosts the most Brazilians. Boston has the second largest Brazilian population. In the state of Connecticut, Danbury, Waterbury and Bridgeport have large Brazilian communities. In Florida, Pompano Beach is called “the Brazilian immigrant capital of south Florida” and on the West Coast, the cities of Los Angeles, San Diego and mainly San Francisco all have growing Brazilian populations (Margolis, *Invisible* 4).

Some authors believe this migratory movement started with World War II. According to Maxime Margolis, the mining in the state of Minas Gerais of mica, which was an important material for insulation, attracted Americans to the region of Governador Valadares during that

period. Moreover, to protect the indispensable mining industry against the ravages of malaria, American personnel were sent there to set up a public health office (Margolis, *Invisible* 2–3). These Americans hired *Valadarenses*<sup>7</sup> as servants and paid them with American dollars. At that time the American currency was already worth much more than the Brazilian, which motivated some Brazilians to accompany their employers when they returned to the US at the end of the war (Margolis, *Invisible* 2–3). Perhaps this is why Minas Gerais is regarded as the state from which the highest number of Brazilians emigrates to the USA. Nevertheless, Ana Cristina Braga Martes found Brazilians from sixteen states in her research in Massachusetts in 1999 (17). In a scene in *Aventureiros do Dólar*, in which the narrator describes the euphoria of a group of emigrants that has just left Brazil, one can observe at once the regional diversity that Martes suggests and the emphasis on Minas Gerais:

Era uma batelada de brasileiros, todos jovens, oriundos de todos os cantos do país. Ali se misturavam, como em festa hilariante, paulistas e gaúchos, capixabas e catarinenses, goianos e cariocas, mineiros, nordestinos, sobretudo mineiros desenganados das Alterosas, onde mingua o cruzeiro e o emprego desaparecia. Rapazes do Oeste mineiro [...] vinham todos, como loucos, à procura de trabalho—qualquer que fosse—analfabetos de tudo que se referia ao país destinatário, gananciosos e esfomeados pelas cédulas verdes, mais promissoras que as esmeraldas de sua terra. (Neto 11)

This scene also suggests that the cause of the emigration is the economic crisis in Brazil. Although this might be the main reason for the phenomenon, family, love problems and the attraction that the Brazilian middle class has for American culture constitute some of the other reasons Brazilians have settled in other lands. In the words of Miro, a character in *Yes, Eu Sou Braçuca*, “poucos são aqueles que só buscam o dólar. Por detrás do dinheiro existem muitas histórias; muitas vezes o dólar é apenas uma justificativa, uma artimanha que possibilita um corte, uma mudança” (Bicalho 57).

According to the 1990 census, there were only 94,023 Brazilians in the USA (Martes 47). However, “the Brazilian government estimates that 500,000 Brazilians live in the United States, while *Veja*, a Brazilian newsweekly similar to *Time*, puts the figure at over 600,000” (Margolis, *Invisible* 1–2, 7). Two reasons might explain this lack of coherence between the official numbers. One of them is the fact that most Brazilian immigrants in the US are undocumented.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, they may have refused to participate in the 1990 Census fearing that they could be located by the INS. The other is the fact that the category “Latino” was not listed on the 1990 Census form, which is the case with most job application and other official forms in the US. Instead, there was the category “Spanish/Hispanic” as a substitute, which some Brazilians might have chosen incorrectly.

In the United States Brazilians are naturally classified as “Latinos,” which, as we know, is the term used to designate people who come from Latin American countries. Since the average American does not distinguish between Brazilians and other Latinos, *Brazucas* have questioned their inclusion in this group. Although aware of their Latin roots and that they share some important characteristics with other Latino communities in the US, *Brazucas* have insisted on marking their difference. For them, this difference is not only linguistic, but also cultural and, for some, educational. That is why Brazilians have positioned themselves “in and out” of the Latino community. This movement composed of simultaneous “entrances” and “exits,” as we shall see, becomes problematic in the broader context of the varied minorities in the United States.

One of the reasons why Brazilians do not accept the Latino category is that the term has been used as a synonym for “Hispanic,” a group that forms the absolute majority of Latinos in the United States. In a scene in *Os Estrangeiros do Trem N* (1997), Boas expresses how ignorant the average American is about this. The character Angél reveals his Brazilian nationality to an American after escaping from a prison where he was held because of his illegal entrance in the USA with a fake passport. Right away, “o Yankee introduziu uma segunda pergunta complementar, que muito americano faz: —Hum, so you speak Spanish, don’t you? Angél teve que explicar isso várias vezes durante o tempo que passou em *Elizabeth*. Exceto pelos hispanos, era

raro encontrar um prisioneiro que soubesse que no Brasil, como em Portugal, falamos português” (Boas 146). The narrator suggests that the feeling of antipathy Brazilians have towards the Hispanics might be tied to the historic relationship between Portugal and Spain. For him, that would be “uma indisposição semelhante àquele ditado português, que diz mais ou menos assim: ‘Da Espanha não vem nem bons ventos nem bons casamentos’” (147). Moreover, he proposes that it could also be a consequence of the position of isolation that Brazil occupies in Latin America: “Os brasileiros sempre ignoraram a América Hispânica. Em parte, isto explica a falta de identificação ‘assumida’ entre os imigrantes hispânicos e os imigrantes brasileiros” (Boas 146–47). Darcy Ribeiro discussed this Brazilian isolationism in 1969: “The Hispano-American countries sharing boundaries with Brazil are separated from, rather than connected with, that nation by the thousands of kilometers of unpopulated frontiers” (Ribeiro, *Americas* 188). Even after a number of advances in the commercial and political arenas, the interaction between Brazil and the rest of Latin America has not yet reached a satisfactory level, especially in the cultural field.

For Margolis, the confusion about language and ethnic group experienced by Brazilians in the USA is also a result of the image put forward by Carmem Miranda in the 1940s. Miranda “helped shape American perceptions of Brazil and Brazilians. [She] became the generic ‘Latina’ whose movies were set indistinguishably in Cuba and Mexico as well as in Brazil. She represented an undifferentiated ‘south of the border’ reality to many Americans,” an image that still remains today (Margolis, *Invisible* 101). Another important fact she calls attention to is that most Brazilian immigrants are young, middle class, and have finished at least high school, a profile a bit different from the other groups of Latinos.<sup>9</sup> Martes, on the other hand, would disagree, as her research within the Brazilian community in Massachusetts does not reach the same conclusions (52).

Racial diversity is also a point of difference. As we know, Brazilians are descendants, among others, of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch, Lebanese, Japanese, African, and indigenous peoples. For this reason, there are many Brazilians that do not fit into the Latino physical stereotype. The character Angél, for instance, “como bom descendente de polonês, [...] é branquelo, louro, olhos verdes” (Boas 62) e “a julgar pela aparência física [...] não tinha nada de latino” (Boas 145). We also meet Vianna in *Stella Manhattan* by Silviano Santiago, who is a character “pouco latino na sua beleza baby face” (Santiago 44) and Ana Célia, a character in *Febre Brasil em Nova York*, who is a “brasileirinha loira, de olhos tão azuis, que mais parecia uma alemã” (Guimarães 25).

Martes suggests that “os *Hispanics* são atualmente identificados como os imigrantes mais discriminados nos Estados Unidos” (71). Another possible explanation for the need to emphasize the difference is the Brazilians’ desire not to acquire the same labels and inherit the same prejudices associated with Hispanics. Teresa Sales explains that “Em relação aos hispânicos, os brasileiros se apropriam de alguns estereótipos previamente existentes na sociedade norte-americana, associando-os ao tráfico de drogas e a serem aproveitadores do seguro-desemprego. Usam esse artifício para se afirmarem, em oposição a eles, como povo trabalhador” (41).

According to Ramos, “el aura del exiliado familiariza la distancia, configurándola como una breve pausa o interrupción en el devenir de una identidad continua, e inscribe al sujeto en la ficción del retorno al país natal” (52–53). Although many *Brazucas* do seem to view their stay as temporary, their identity suffers more than an “interruption”; it changes. *Brazucas* keep national traits such as happiness, spontaneity and musicality, but they have been considered a hardworking people, which they believe is essential for survival in the USA, and which goes against the Brazilian stereotype of being relaxed. “Este negocio de ser brazuca é foda,” says Toni in *Yes, Eu sou Brazuca* (Bicalho 10). “O brasileiro só sai de casa para trabalhar, não estamos acostumados com isto, as pessoas ficam melancólicas, as ruas desertas” (Bicalho 30). A phrase that has become a kind of saying among *Brazucas* is “Da América você leva o ouro, mas deixa o couro” (Bicalho 36). The *Brazuca* is no longer the average Brazilian. Despite their attempt to reproduce Brazil in the United States (Sales 137), the immigrant is transformed and acquires a new identity: “A América modifica as pessoas, torna as pessoas mais duras, menos sensíveis,” says one character (Bicalho 18). *Brazuca* literature cannot be characterized by success and achievement stories. On

the contrary, in many cases these are tales of hard work, insecurity and failure: “Com poucos dias de América, acordou para sua realidade, desfez-se o sonho americano” (Bicalho 15). These texts are far from being *Bildungsromans* since their heroes are anti-heroes who hardly ever seem to gain wisdom or wealth, despite the fact that aspirations of financial success and cultural enrichment are what motivate many Brazilians to emigrate in the first place. *Brazuca* identity rejects Hispanic attributes, but neither assimilates the American nor totally retains the Brazilian. According to the character Miro, “O verdadeiro brazuca seria aquele que não mais conseguiria viver no Brasil, aquele que ficaria em um vaivém sem fim. Esta é a definição dele” (Bicalho 63). Miro arrives at a Christmas party, the “Natal dos Expatriados,” all wrapped up in an American flag and makes a speech:

A todos nós que vivemos sem pátria, perdidos, mesmo quando imaginamos ter encontrado o lugar certo. A todos aqueles que perderam sua pátria, que não mais conseguem voltar, que ficam num vaivém sem fim, perdidos em seu caminho. A todos aqueles que empunhando a espada da desesperança e desilusão, acabaram amputando suas raízes e agora, desgarrados, estão soltos no ar. A todos aqueles que acreditam, que se agarram à mais frágil esperança de um dia contarem com uma pátria, de viverem de forma digna e honesta, poderem trabalhar e amar sem medo. A todos aqueles que sonham, algum dia poderem, enrolados em uma bandeira brasileira, dormir com serenidade. (Bicalho 56)

Miro’s speech exposes the “expatriates” dissatisfaction with both Brazil and their immigrant situation. It also shows the temporary character of the immigration and the hope for a safe and financially-improved return to their homeland. “O legítimo brazuca, fruto do exílio econômico” wants to be in Brazil, but is unable to return because of the socio-economic problems of the country (Bicalho 53).

For Brazilians, nationality is a strong indicator of ethnic composition and cultural identity. The Brazilian people see themselves as unique, singular, which also explains how difficult it is for them to accept being included in other groups. Darcy Ribeiro comments that the Brazilian people “have arisen as a national ethnicity, culturally differentiated from their formative matrices, with a heavy racial mix, powered by a syncretizing culture and distinguished by the resulting redefinition of cultural traits. New also because they see themselves and are seen as a new people, a new human species unlike all others in existence” (*Brazilian* 1). Roberto DaMatta also explains that there is “uma realidade única que existe concretamente naquilo que chamamos de ‘pátria’” (14). According to him, there is “um estilo, um modo de ser, um ‘jeito’ de existir que, não obstante estar fundado em coisas universais, é exclusivamente brasileiro” (15). Foreign scholars who have studied the country agree with him. Joseph Page, for instance, uses the term “Brazilianess” to refer to “the unique character of the Brazilian people” (31).

Unfortunately, while attempting to differentiate their identity and, perhaps, avoid discrimination, Brazilians have also generated prejudice. This is clear in the following comment of the narrator of *Febre Brasil em Nova Iorque*:

A raça que começou a “sujar na estaca,” foi a protegida do titio—os porto-riquenhos, considerados os “bugs” (baratas) da América (ou “cucarachas”—hablando en español). Daí, todos os que chegam falando espanhol serem considerados “cucarachos.” Mas o americano não distingue muito o que é brasileiro do que é mexicano, argentino, peruano, colombiano ou porto-riquenho. Para ele tudo é ‘latino.’ Miou, é gato. E assim entramos também para o rol dos “bugs.” (Guimarães 47–48)

One can easily trace this explicit prejudice in several other scenes in the *Brazuca* novels. For instance, in *Os Estrangeiros do Trem N*, the Latinos are referred to by derogatory nicknames: “Formigão é o apelido que os brazucas dão aos nossos vizinhos latinos com feições indígenas. São aqueles de cabelo espetadinho, armado, a la Chitãozinho e Xororó. O tal formigão parecia uma arara com aqueles fios superiores pintados de vermelho.[...] Ele sempre passava debaixo da minha janela de camiseta de malha, e com um desconfiado olhar de lobo doido” (Boas 24).

In *46<sup>th</sup> Street: O Caminho Americano*, a Mexican who works at a porn shop is compared to a monster: “O mexicano tinha os cabelos da grossura de um lápis, lábios enormes, dentes apon-

tados para fora e em todas as direções. E dentro daquela caixinha... Nossa Senhora! O mexicano parecia um monstrinho asteca na embalagem” (Scotto 16). In another scene, Carlos, a Brazilian researcher, feels superior to his Peruvian colleague and reveals his frustration over the fact that the Peruvian is expressing his opinion so openly, a right which he believes the other, as a Latino, should not have. “Quem no mundo quer saber a opinião dele? É por isso que os latinos são tão desprezados,” thinks Carlos, who “sacudia levemente a cabeça em desaprovação” (Scotto 49). In *Brasileiros em Manhattan*, among those who come to the opening of the disco *Cathedral* in New York, are the “ralé” (scum), composed of “porto-riquenhos, negros e desabrigados.” who are described as starving to death and impolite (Athayde 107).

Although these texts separate Brazilians from the Latino group, as they reveal the Brazilian prejudice against Hispanics, they also place them in that community, as they acknowledge and even stress the similarities between the *Brazucas* and the other Latinos. In *Os Estrangeiros do Trem N* Plínio states that “Os *hispanos* são iguais à gente. Eles têm jogo de cintura” (Boas 180). Cecitéia, a Brazilian prostitute in Manhattan, exploits her Latino identity in an ad in order to attract more clients: “Ponha sua modelo latina onde você quiser e sofra as consequências por 50 dólares a hora” (Athayde 38). The narrator in Boas’s novel notes that “o espanhol é providencial para os brazucas que não sabem bulhufas de inglês. [...] Os brazucas fazem o possível para dar as costas aos colegas latinos. Metidos, dizem preferir os programas em inglês aos em espanhol. Mas quando realmente se interessam por algum acontecimento local ou nacional que vire notícia vão buscá-lo *en los canales hispanos*. Enfim, é onde se ‘sentem mais em casa’” (147).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, even the linguistic “difference” might turn out to be a “similarity,” if it is so appropriated by the *Brazuca*. It should come as no surprise to anyone to find a Brazilian who associates himself with Hispanics or acknowledges his or her “latinidade.” William Flores and Rina Benmayor remind us that Latinos “are a historical fusion or mixing of racial and ethnic groups, from indigenous native groups to African, European, and Asian” (Flores 1). This racial and cultural “fusion” characterizes both the Hispanics and Brazilians; after all, as Gilberto Freire notes, it was already one of the traits of the Portuguese and Spanish colonizers. In 1945, Freire pointed out that: “Spain and Portugal, though conventionally European states, are not orthodox in all their European and Christian qualities, experiences, and conditions of life, but are in many important respects a mixture of Europe and Africa, of Christianity and Mohammedanism” (*Brazil* 1). Freire also explained that “for eight centuries the Hispanic, or Iberian, peninsula was dominated by Africans. Arabs, and Moors left their trace there” (*Brazil* 2). That is why, he adds, that “though some of the modern Spanish and Portuguese thinkers (like Unamuno) would have Spain and Portugal Europeanized with all speed, others (like Ganivet) maintain that Spain and Portugal must look south, to Africa, for their future and for the explanation of their ethos” (*Brazil* 2).<sup>11</sup>

This “in and out” movement of the *Brazucas* in the Latino Community in the US can also be observed in *Stella Manhattan* by Silviano Santiago. Although not a *Brazuca* novel *per se*, since its theme is not immigration, Santiago’s work pictures vividly the relationship between Brazilians and the other Latinos in the United States. For instance, the Brazilian Eduardo, the protagonist of the novel, is friends with a Cuban named Paco, who is his neighbor. Paco alludes to his friend’s Latino soul repeatedly from their very first encounters: “na terceira ou quarta vez que toparam um com o outro le saludó muy simpaticamente en espanhol porque yo lo sentía aquí (e batia com o dedo no peito, ali no lugar do coração) que tú eras latino” (Santiago 30). But Eduardo dislikes the Latino behavior of the Cuban neighbor, which “deixa Eduardo perplexo e sem fala” (Santiago 30). This certainly suggests the existence of a cultural difference between them. The narrator states that Paco suffers an “ataque histérico” in the elevator when he hears Eduardo is Brazilian (Santiago 30). This is a caricature of the way many Brazilians see the Hispanics: scandalous, loud, exaggerated, and impolite. Paco’s nickname also reinforces such caricature: Lacucaracha (Santiago 30), a pejorative denomination for any Latino.

Brazilians are also inserted in the Latino community when the secretary of a real estate agency rents an apartment to Eduardo and Vianna, another Brazilian: “Quando eles saíram a judia

ficou pensando que tinha entrado numa enrascada, só podiam ser drug dealers, I bet. Latin-americans, they are all, that's why they come to this country" (Santiago 59). In this scene, Brazilians are victims of the same prejudice and discrimination other Latinos suffer in the US. A similar moment occurs when two FBI agents look for Eduardo in his apartment. When Eduardo takes a while to answer the door, the boss says: "Domingo pela manhã, é preciso dar tempo ao tempo. [...] Those latins, you know, that's all they think of, ele brinca, insinuando que todos os latinos são preguiçosos" (Santiago 209). On the other hand, while describing the reaction of the FBI agent after his talk with Eduardo, Santiago differentiates the Brazilians from other Latinos, placing them in a position of superiority: "O rosto do chefe se descontraí de verdade e deixa entrever simpatia pelo brasileiro, bem diferente dos outros latinos com quem tinha lidado. Especialmente os do Caribe" (Santiago 220).

It is important that the Brazilian community in the United States distinguish itself from the other Latinos, stressing its own identity as a singular ethnic group. After all, as Benedict Anderson suggests, "communities are to be distinguished [...] by the style in which they are imagined" (6). Ethnic newspapers such as *The Brazilians*, published in New York, have stated this need by encouraging Brazilians to identify their presence in the United States in the 2000 Census.<sup>12</sup> They have also been consolidating their communities by creating associations to help Brazilians to find jobs, understand their rights as workers, learn English, and the like. There are "Brazilian stores" and restaurants wherever a community has been established.<sup>13</sup> In some states Portuguese is used at schools, religious services and for business. Brazilians have celebrated national holidays such as their nation's Independence Day, *Carnaval* and *São João* all over the US. Not to mention that more and more Brazilian artists have come to the US to put on concerts for their compatriots. Moreover, there is an ethnic press, which is also very important in order to "create an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow readers" (Anderson 62). However, it is also necessary that they recognize what they share with the Latino group as a whole. After all, as Fernando Ainsa puts it, "speaking about Latin American identity does not imply referring to a uniform or homogeneous character, because the continent is essentially diverse and open to influences and exchange" (Ainsa 6). Freire proposes that these differences between "os outros hispânos" and the Brazilians "não anulam o essencial de uma unidade porventura mais forte do que a característica do mundo de língua inglesa e de cultura originariamente britânica; ou a do mundo de cultura eslava; ou a do mundo islâmico; ou a do mundo chinês" (*Brasileiro* xxxi). Ribeiro also acknowledges some level of unity amongst all Latin-American peoples. Although he admits there is neither a unified socio-political structure nor an interactive coexistence in the region, Ribeiro considers the "visão do mundo, modos de vida e aspirações" of the neo-American descendants "essencialmente idênticos" (*América* 17). He also points to the economic deficiency and the relationship of dependency with North America as common traits of Latin American nations (*América* 21). According to him, they share some of these mutual characteristics because they are all "o produto de um mesmo processo civilizatório—a expansão Ibérica" (*América* 22). For Freyre, Brasil is, in fact, "duplamente hispânico": "tendo sido exceção à formação especificamente espanhola de grande parte da América, não deixou de receber o impacto espanhol em dias decisivos de sua experiência pré-nacional. Recebeu-o. Recebeu-o menos ao lado que dentro da portuguesa. Mas recebeu-o" (*Brasileiro* xxxi). For this reason, "pode o brasileiro dizer [...] que nada do que é hispânico-espanhol e não apenas português-lhe é estranho. O brasileiro é uma gente hispânica. Sua cultura é hispânica" (*Brasileiro* xxxi).

As a new group of immigrants, Brazilians are struggling to find and conquer their own space. However, this should not occur at the expense of the Hispanics. Perhaps because the nature of their immigration is also different from other Latino groups, Brazilians have not participated in the "Latino" struggle to obtain "cultural citizenship," as Flores and Benmayor would put it.<sup>14</sup> One of the reasons is the temporary nature of their immigration.<sup>15</sup> Another is the prejudice that the group has shown towards the Hispanics, which has negative consequences for the entire Latino community, including for the *Brazucas* themselves.<sup>16</sup> While discriminating against the Hispanics, *Brazucas* "function" as a form of "Ideological State Apparatus" because, unconsciously, they

become intermediary agents of the ruling class (Althusser 146).<sup>17</sup> By appropriating stereotypes already existent in American society and using them as a mark of difference against the Hispanics, *Brazucas* consequently perpetuate the ideology of the dominant class, which favors only those who are in power and targets the maintenance of the existing social structure. Abdelmalek Sayad explains that “o imigrante põe em ‘risco’ a ordem nacional forçando a pensar o que é impensável, a pensar o que não deve ser pensado ou o que não deve ser pensado para poder existir; forçando-a a revelar seu caráter arbitrário (*i.e.*, não necessário), a desmascarar seus pressupostos; forçando-a a revelar a verdade de sua instituição e a expor suas regras de funcionamento” (274). Instead, *Brazucas* pose no threat whatsoever to the national order. In this sense they behave differently from their Latino counterparts, who have historically fought to restructure and reorder American society, which is, after all, a major characteristic of the immigrant struggle. *Brazuca* novels also differentiate themselves from other ethnic novels about immigration because the others generally expose prejudice in a didactic-political way, as a means of criticizing and fighting it, and not merely representing or reproducing it, as the *Brazucas* have done.

Another way to look at this phenomenon is to suggest that *Brazucas* are occupying what Erik Olin Wright has termed a “contradictory location within class relations” (113), but they differ from the other groups Wright cites, such as managers, supervisors and small employers, because they do not have any control over money capital, the physical means of production, or the labor of workers within production. Therefore, they have been “inocentes úteis,” a group that serves “aos interesses e objetivos de uma causa sem estar vinculada à organização política ou à ideologia dela.”<sup>18</sup>

It is true that “the State Apparatus contributes generously to its own reproduction” (Althusser 150). But one cannot forget that “each mass ejected *en route* is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfill in class society: the role of the exploited [...]; the role of the agent of the exploitation [...]; of the agent of repression [...]; or of the professional ideologist” (Althusser 155–56). *Brazucas*, therefore, have played two contradictory and opposing roles: the role of the exploited, for being (and being seen as) a minority, and the role of transmitter of the dominant ideology. In order to change this scenario, it is necessary that *Brazucas* become more politicized and educated and begin to realize the political-ideological dimension of the role they have been playing. Only then will they cease to be unconscious puppets in the hands of the hegemonic group, find their place in the Latino social-cultural space and in American society as a whole, as well as contribute to the development of a Latino, Brazilian and American consciousness.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this essay entitled “In and Out: *Brazuca* Literature and Latino Identity in the USA” was presented at the 118<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association of America in New York City in December 2002. A later version entitled “Latino, eu? The Paradoxical Interplay of Identity in *Brazuca* Literature” was presented at the Roundtable Studies of the Brazilian Community at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University in November 2003.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Margolis, *Little* ix.

<sup>3</sup>See Goza, Margolis, and Sales.

<sup>4</sup>I would like to thank Alexandra Montague for her comments.

<sup>5</sup>As far as I know, Rodolfo Franconi’s presentation “Ser Brasileiro nos States: Entre Ficção e Realidade” at the 2nd Conference of the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA) in Minneapolis, May 11–13, 1995, was one of the first studies to investigate this new genre.

<sup>6</sup>Part of Bicalho’s research is reproduced at the end of Belchior Neto’s *Aventureiros do Dólar*.

<sup>7</sup>A “Valadarense” is someone who is originally from the city of Governador Valadares.

<sup>8</sup>According to Margolis, “in a study of undocumented immigrants, Brazil is not even listed among the top fifty countries worldwide in the number of its citizens living illegally in the United States.” There are “countries with as few as 6,000 undocumented aliens” in the same list (*Invisible* 9), which proves that Brazilians have succeeded very well in maintaining their illegal status hidden and explains why they would refuse to expose themselves.

<sup>9</sup>See Margolis, Sales, and Vilas Boas.

<sup>10</sup>Let us not forget that in the lyrics of the 1972 song “Cantor de Mambo” by Os Mutantes, the Brazilian singer who emigrated to the US sings mambo and not samba.

<sup>11</sup>In the same text, Freire suggests that Brazil remains not only Portuguese but also "Hispanic, or Iberian" (Freire 1). Naturally, as Freire also notes, we cannot forget that the Iberian Peninsula also used to be called Hispanic Peninsula.

<sup>12</sup>*The Brazilians* #297, October 1999, 13.

<sup>13</sup>See Goza, Margolis, and Sales.

<sup>14</sup>As we have seen, Brazilian immigration was not a consequence of serious historical political issues with the U.S. as in the case of Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans.

<sup>15</sup>See Goza, Margolis, and Sales.

<sup>16</sup>Also see Renato Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism," *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, Eds. William Flores and Rina Benmayor (Boston: Beacon P, 1997), 27–38.

<sup>17</sup>As an ethnic group, they cannot be an Ideological State Apparatus, because they are not "institutions" per se. See Althusser 144.

<sup>18</sup>See *Novo Aurélio Século XXI: O Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*, 1114. The Brazilian expression, in fact, comes from Lenin's famous expression "useful idiots." For Lenin, these were people that the communist movement could use without their knowledge to promote the spread of their cause and their interests.

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