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CARNIVAL IN THE CREOLE CITY: PLACE, RACE, AND IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

DAPHNE LAMOTHE

In both the popular and literary imaginations, carnival music, dance, and culture have come to signify a dynamic multiculturalism in the era of globalization. In an October 2010 article on the Colombian pop sensation Shakira, for example, Jon Pareles depicts the singer as moving with ease “from culture to culture, role to role and language to language” (16). Noting the impact of the singer’s Colombian heritage and her musical influences, which span the spectrum from rap-infused merengue to electronica dance music to Colombian cumbia to folk-rock, Pareles portrays Shakira as a cultural and musical hybrid whose global reach and many influences stem from the specific nature of the locale from which she originates. Her 2010 album *Sale e Sol*, he notes, presents a more authentic portrait of the musician than her previous electronica (i.e., not-Latin influenced) album: “The music hopscotches across hemispheres, at times looking back to the music Shakira loved while growing up in Barranquilla. ‘Barranquilla is the cradle of Carnival in our country,’ she said. ‘All the stuff from the islands and from those neighbor countries, all that music got to [the coastal city of] Barranquilla.’” Shakira’s association with the carnival traditions of that creole city forms the backdrop for Pareles’s analysis and endorsement of her drawing from multiple musical influences and traditions.

For Pareles, Carnival signifies a utopian multiculturalism and hybridity. The article signals its idealism fairly explicitly by following the performer from morning news show appearances to the United Nations, where she announced the formation of Colombians From Birth, an initiative to improve early-childhood education. The interview continues in a conference room at the UN, ending with Shakira reflecting on her feelings of responsibility, when