

Geographies of Relation

Diasporas and Borderlands
in the Americas



Theresa Delgadillo

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To my family

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Introduction

Geographies of Relation

This project began many years ago as I was working on my PhD, in an era before streaming and just as Spanish-language channels were becoming widely available, when I collected DVDs of older Mexican movies to send to my mother, who loved the movies and longed to see some Spanish-language films. I came across the 1948 film *Angelitos negros* starring Pedro Infante, Emilia Giui, and Rita Montaner. This melodramatic narrative of passing, racial exclusion, maternal abnegation, and social injustice raised so many questions for me about Black Mexicans, performance cultures, motherhood, film, and *mestizaje*. It reminded me of the question posed by Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands / La Frontera*: “Which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?”¹ and resonated with Anzaldúa’s powerful revision of *mestizaje* that combines critique of gender normativity with critique of racialized hierarchies. Anzaldúa’s alternative term “darkskinned” offers a capaciousness term for thinking relationally about Black, Indigenous, and mestizx subjects whose borderlands experiences, histories, and unique cultural inheritances might be obscured by ideologies of racial purity and white supremacy or ideologies of *mestizaje* that perpetuate investments in whiteness.² In my research, I began to follow the circulation of “Angelitos Negros,” the film’s title song, among a diverse set of artists. This work revealed artists from the African diaspora giving voice to the hemispheric networks that brought them into contact while also responding to the unique cultural, social, and political contexts of their specific locations and time periods (movements for civil rights, Black Power, and transnational and diaspora connection) and bringing into focus the centrality of gender intersecting with race and ethnicity in voicing a diaspora consciousness.³ This book turns to mapping diaspora and borderlands convergen-

ces in expressive and literary cultures in this hemisphere that embody the struggle to dismantle colonial racial and gender ideologies as they also reveal multiple diaspora networks.

This book's inquiry into a set of media, literary, and performance texts that span the past century in the Americas proposes that reading through the lens of *geographies of relation*, a term I use to encompass the overlapping space and methods of diaspora and borderlands, reveals silenced histories of interrelationship and opens reflection on the combination of racial/ethnic and gendered relationality in the Americas in ways that prompt us to reconsider our frameworks for thinking hemispherically. This work is animated by the growing body of work in ethnic studies on thinking race relationally or sideways as well as feminist, diaspora, and borderlands theorizing. In reading Latin American, Latinx, and African American texts that are also deeply transamerican texts, I explore new directions in theorizing the relational by examining diaspora and borderlands as geographies of relation in conversation with each other that foreground race/ethnicity and gender.

As conceptual spatializations of subjects and culture in formation, diaspora and borderlands embody disparate though not unrelated histories of dispossession and relation. Borderlands theory imagines the subject who inhabits the space between nations that exclude her and exploit her labor based on race/ethnicity, linguistic repertoires, gender, and sexuality and who seeks to construct a new cultural consciousness in relation with other marginalized subjects. Diaspora theory imagines the cultural and social formations that arise among African-descended peoples globally who share a history of dispossession and yet whose labor has been fundamental to capitalist and western economies, and who endeavor to create new communities of cultural and social persistence, resistance, and revolution with each other and with marginalized others. I suggest that as geographies of relation rather than of territory, diaspora and borderlands theories prompt us to query the terms of relation that they embody, and I take that a further step by considering borderlands and diaspora texts in relation *to* each other, rather than exclusively in relation to a nation or a dominant culture, to illuminate both the interplay and tensions inherent to constructing relation. In proposing that we read diaspora and borderlands as geographies of relation, I consider how these conceptions bring distinct marginalized peoples and cultures into relation with each other and examine how and where these conceptions overlap in ways that further a radical relational project of attending equally to race/ethnicity and gender in the cultural sphere. In fact, this work

proposes that diasporas and borderlands, as geographies of relation, are as constitutive of the Americas as its imagined nations.

Reading in this way brings together borderlands and diaspora theorizing to read relationally, across minoritized difference, an approach grounded in women-of-color feminist theory as, for example, when Gloria Anzaldúa proposes a “new mestizaje [that] eschews the racial hierarchies inherent in older mestizaje”⁴ or when M. Jacqui Alexander speaks of the need “to move away from living alterity premised in difference to living intersubjectivity premised in relationality and solidarity.”⁵ I consider, therefore, how Latinx, Latin American, and African American texts recall and imagine histories of cultural and social interconnection or conflict, racial and gender formation, as well as critically question the significance and consequence of skin color and phenotype in gendered ethnic and national subjectivities.

As an alternative to empire and nation (formations that perpetuate ideologies of exclusion) geographies of relation, embodied in conceptions of diaspora and borderlands, bring distinct and marginalized peoples into relation with each other across the hemisphere in ways that prompt critical inquiry into the “we” of cultural formations and critical awareness of histories, experiences, and ideologies that impact the possibility of community. In considering how these geographies of relation are portrayed and queried in Latinx, Latin American, and African American literatures and cultures, this study focuses on understudied sites and figures of African diaspora across the Americas that convey an urgency to interrogating the relational bond between different diaspora groups, between diaspora and borderlands subjects, and between diaspora and mestizx figures in both Latin American and US contexts in ways that advance a decolonial dismantling of interconnected ideologies of racial and gendered exclusion. This is what I term *radical relationality*: the exploration of racial/ethnic relations among marginalized groups that also attends to the analysis of gender and gender subordination.⁶ In reading radical relationality in a set of diaspora and borderlands texts that span the last century, this study recognizes an ongoing literary and cultural conversation among raced and gendered subjects excluded from full belonging in nations of the Americas that creates networks of affiliation amid difference. These texts reveal not a singular and essentialist diaspora or borderlands experience, but instead fluid and dynamic diaspora and borderlands cultures engaged with each other across the hemisphere, where the violence of empire and of nations must be continually negotiated alongside other marginalized subjects.

This study begins in the 1930s with an examination of the strategies through which Veracruzana Toña La Negra brought Mexican African diaspora and its important circum-Caribbean networks of actors and musicians to the fore in her decades-long film and musical career, creating a popular appreciation for and consciousness of Black and darkskinned Mexican cultures and peoples. Toña La Negra deftly makes the uniqueness of African diaspora in Veracruz a central axis of her career, one that opens up greater investigation into Black Mexico that unfolds in interesting ways in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Sandra Cisneros, whose texts this study takes up in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I offer an extended assessment of Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 revision of Latin American notions of *mestizaje*, situating this revision within the context of the Chicana experience in the United States, and linking this to a reading of Sandra Cisneros's interrogation of racial and gender ideologies in *Caramelo* (2002). In the latter text readers are introduced to the popular culture of early and mid-twentieth-century Mexico, an era in which Toña La Negra figured prominently. This volume turns, in Chapter 3, to Black Puerto Rican and African American texts set in New York from the middle and late twentieth century to explore how these texts imagined the interrelationship of these disparate diaspora groups. This chapter examines Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* (1967), James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), and Marta Moreno Vega's *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* (2004) as well as Barry Jenkins's 2018 film version of Baldwin's novel and Ava DuVernay's 2019 docudrama *When They See Us*. In engaging with difference in diaspora, these works reveal the diversity of diaspora cultural expression and the significance of attention to gender in bridging these differences across shared anticolonial legacies. In Chapter 4, I turn to another understudied site of African diaspora in the Americas: the Peruvian-American borderlands. The interrelated tension between race/ethnicity and gender especially in relation to the revision of *mestizaje* that Anzaldúa opens up in 1987 unfolds further in this chapter through readings of Daniel Alarcón's short-story collection *War by Candlelight* (2005), Alarcón and Sheila Alvarado's graphic novel *City of Clowns* (2015), and the dance documentary *Soy Andina* (2007) by Mitch Teplitsky and featuring Cynthia Paniagua and Nélida Silva, and where Black Peruvian cultural forms take center stage. Chapter 5 returns to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to consider the overlapping diasporas of Black working-class and female subjects in the Florida-Caribbean region and their centrality in the struggles to end colonialism and resist US empire through an examination of José Martí's later speeches,

James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Evelio Grillo's *Black Cuban, Black American* (2000), José Yglesias's *A Wake in Ybor City* (1963), and María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno's *Revita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century* (2000). This chapter examines how these texts advance a framework of radical racial relationality in the struggles against dictatorship and for Black freedom. The book concludes with a discussion of Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* (2003) as a text that makes the twinned concerns of gender subordination and racist exclusion central to the exploration of diaspora tensions among Dominican, African, Haitian, and Dominican American characters, ending the volume with a circular gesture of return to Caribbean networks that the first chapter considers. Each chapter, therefore, considers the textual engagement with or juxtapositions of gendered diasporic differences in conversation with ideologies of mestizaje and/or new mestiza consciousness that unfolds across this archive in the borderlands of the Americas. This study, therefore, reveals how the frames of diaspora and borderlands become conduits for the negotiation of interrelationship. In offering this reading of radical relationality in geographies of relation in the Americas, this study explores Black creative agency and innovation as well as new mestizx subjects engaged in the difficult work of building futures free of the colonial ideologies that have exerted influence for centuries.

INTERSECTING DIASPORAS AND BORDERLANDS

This study takes seriously Stuart Hall's discussion of the conceptual dangers of "diaspora" as a term that can lead to preoccupations with authenticity (indeed, this preoccupation surfaces often in scholarship, perhaps more significantly in particular disciplines) and nationalism (which can be a form of essentialism). However, for scholars of cultural studies the concept of diaspora opens the possibility of recognizing multiple interconnections, for, as Stuart Hall tells us, "In the diaspora situation, identities become multiple."⁷ Indeed, Hall calls us to examine the "routes" of diaspora rather than focus obsessively on the "roots" of diaspora, given that "far from being continuous with our pasts, our relation to that history is marked by the most horrendous, violent, abrupt, ruptural breaks."⁸ Following Hall's call, this study explores the dynamic processes of Black creativity that generate diaspora networks as well as distinct and disparate diaspora forms while also revealing Latinx mestizx subjects grappling with the legacies of anti-Black and anti-

Indigenous racisms in Latin American and US discourses as they seek to redefine this relationality. This border crossing is not new, as Hall observes, taking up the work of Paul Gilroy: “Cultures have always refused to be so perfectly corralled within the national boundaries,” and yet “speaking Africa” is also speaking about hemispheric racial ideologies.⁹

For Black and non-Black authors and artists alike in this study, speaking Africa in Hall’s terms is necessary to understanding oneself and one’s society both within and beyond the frame of the nation-state. These conversations forge new convergences among the borderlands and diaspora subjects who engage in them, yet they also create unique and different cultural formations, the repetition with difference that Hall observes.¹⁰ As he insists, “The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”¹¹ More recently, Brent Hayes Edwards expands on Stuart Hall’s discussion of repetition with difference in suggesting that “black modern expression takes form not as a single thread, but through the often uneasy encounters of peoples of African descent with each other” in international settings.¹² As Gilroy notes, the sometimes “fragile” connections among disparate diaspora peoples requires our attention yet often “confound[s] the protocols of academic orthodoxy.”¹³ This study examines several literary and cultural engagements with uneasy encounters and fragile connections among peoples of African descent in the Americas, and between peoples of African descent and other minoritized and mestizx subjects in the Americas, also revealing where mestizx affords racial privilege and where it does not.

A hemispheric framework for understanding Blackness in the Americas is not new to Black diaspora scholarship or creativity, though it remains less well known than scholarship on the African American experience. For example, from James Weldon Johnson’s coining of the term “Aframerican” and discussion of several Latin American Black poets in his 1922 anthology titled *The Book of American Negro Poetry*¹⁴ to Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah’s coedited *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, Black studies scholarship has included figures and events from the wider Americas. More widely known for its hemispheric scope is Katherine Dunham’s early to mid-twentieth-century research and performance work in the Americas, which has been of enduring import in

the creation of Black dance and performance throughout this hemisphere and which this volume takes up in Chapter 4 as African American and Afro-Peruvian consciousnesses converge in the development of Afro-Peruvian consciousness and movement. This volume is particularly indebted to Richard L. Jackson's groundbreaking work on the literary and cultural movements of Black subjects in Latin American locations, which, over three monographs, has included analysis of Black Latin American literary movements, analysis of the representation of Blacks in Latin American literatures, and an exploration of contemporary African American writers influenced by travel to Latin America.¹⁵ Jackson's examination of the "commitment to blackness" in Latin American literature by Black authors involves a consideration of varying kinds of consciousness about race in circulation in the Americas, particularly in countries beyond Brazil and the Caribbean, which he notes are better known as sites of diaspora, as well as the dynamism of diaspora in creating new cultural formations.¹⁶ Jackson's discussion of *mestizaje* as "an indisputable fact of the black experience in Latin America" and his delineation of both a "*mestizaje positivo* and *mestizaje negativo*" as ideas and practices that either embrace racial difference or seek to erase it recognize a distinction between elite and nonelite discourses in Latin America.¹⁷ I continue this discussion of varied meanings that attach to "mestizaje" in specific contexts with a particular focus on the distinction between the Latin American and the US context, and how Chicana authors grapple with these racial paradigms in Chapter 2.

Gloria Anzaldúa's theorization of the borderlands is important throughout this work for the way that it illuminates how populations inhabiting the space in between nations do not merely exist in a disempowered space of marginality, but also create places through transculturation and transformation that critically reconstruct their relationship to inherited and imposed knowledges. Inhabiting the borderlands, therefore, is not only exclusion from nation but also an alternative endeavor in building relationships and consciousness, bringing the theory of the borderlands into conversation with theories of diaspora. In her last and posthumously published volume, she tells us that "our uncertain positions as mestizas compel us to negotiate the cracks between worlds."¹⁸ Anzaldúa's reading of the borderlands as an embattled hemispheric space traversing borders in the Americas that the excluded and unwelcome hold and maintain against the material and discursive violence of empire and nation is particularly useful for considering the encounters of diaspora and borderlands subjects represented in the lit-

erature, film, and performance in the Americas that this study takes up. Anzaldúa tells us,

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. . . . the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.” Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens—whether they possess documents or not, whether they’re Chicanos, Indians or Blacks.¹⁹

Her discussion recognizes both the affective and the generative dimensions of this place of not-belonging that is also a possible belonging in relationship with others who fall outside of or openly challenge idealized national subjects and canonized national cultures. In this way, the borderlands resonates with conceptions of the African diaspora, also generative and hybrid as discussed above, yet also a sign of an original and repeating condition of unprotection and of the necessity of creating one’s own protection, in part, through cultural community. Anzaldúa names cultural communities that coalesce under the sign of “Chicano,” “Indian,” or “Black,” in this formulation yet these signs also rewrite the disparaging nationalist and white supremacist epithets of racial mixture that precede them and apply to all of them, indicating that these terms interanimate each other and do not signal exclusive or “pure” racial categories. In recognizing a shared condition of racialization in subordination to whites, Anzaldúa does not collapse the distinctive lived experience and positionality of individuals who may identify as “Chicanos, Indians or Blacks” into one, but instead calls readers to deepen their knowledge of the histories, worldviews, and cultures of and within these groups as well as their interrelations.²⁰ The above passage highlights how the demarcation of the nation creates some as devalued racialized subjects, yet the passage also signals to this reader not only a shared condition but the possibility for an alternative geography of relation.

By initiating a consideration of interrelation among Black, Indigenous, and Chicana, Anzaldúa’s theorization of the borderlands subject challenges both racial binaries and hierarchies. Chapter 2 elaborates on Anzaldúa’s foundational contribution to rewriting *mestizaje* in the context of twentieth-century US racial discourses impacting Chicana. As historian Neil Foley finds, Mexican Americans have long inhabited “the ethnoracial borderlands

between whiteness and blackness” in the United States, underscoring the saliency of the borderlands framework for thinking about racialized subjects who fall outside of a Black/white binary as well as the indeterminacy and subordination of Mexican and Chicax in the US racial order, a condition that propels the relational thinking and revision of *mestizaje* that Anzaldúa’s work advances.²¹ Anzaldúa’s groundbreaking work in *Borderlands/La Frontera* opens a path toward a critical *mestizaje* that can more fully account for difference within Chicax and invites readers to deepen this work. This project, therefore, brings to the fore Chicax revisions of “*mestiza*,” “*mestizo*,” and “*mestizaje*” to more fully recognize the critical decolonial intervention of Anzaldúa in revising the Vasconcelian racial ideology that has been so foundational in Mexico (and Latin America), and that had been revised earlier by the Chicano movement.

In the readings undertaken in this volume, these aspects of both borderlands and diaspora are in play across multiple texts throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.²² The fluidity of masculinity and femininity, of gender and sexuality in diaspora as in borderlands also comes into play; indeed, in several chapters of this study, questions of gender and sexuality are central to diaspora and borderlands expressions. This analysis considers the “ongoing problem of Black exclusion from social, political, and cultural belonging,” as well as the “paradoxes of blackness” that emerge in representation to remind us, as Christina Sharpe observes, of the ongoing living in the wake of “the still unfolding aftermaths of Atlantic chattel slavery.”²³ But this work also considers how Latinx authors who are not Black explicitly wrestle with the histories of Black exclusion that define their particular cultural experience, and find ways to question and challenge these histories en route to creating the new *mestiza* and decolonial consciousness that Anzaldúa theorized.

This study’s focus on alternative geographies of relation embodied in conceptions of diaspora and borderlands also looks beyond the crossing of borders to consider relational thinking in transamerican texts, recognizing the ways this also unfolds in parallel fields of study.²⁴ *Geographies of Relation* embraces the “relational comparative analytic of women of color feminism and queer of color critique” advanced by Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, an analytic that seeks to illuminate “what has been rendered unknowable through normative comparative method.”²⁵ As Hong and Ferguson note, this analytic is particularly valuable for “understanding how the creation of categories of value and valuelessness underpins contemporary racialized necropolitical regulation.”²⁶ The creation of categories of “value

and valuelessness” that attend to national frameworks, which are the basis for traditional comparative study, therefore, come under contestation in this project’s focus on alternative geographies of relation.²⁷ This relational analytic also resonates with the work of Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih, who suggest that we might “look sideways to see lateral networks that are not readily apparent” otherwise in order to consider “transversal,” “minor-to-minor” networks among minority literatures.²⁸ Looking sideways is also a vein in David Luis-Brown’s study of prominent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers and thinkers in that it focuses on ideas and attempts to enact “interethnic alliance as a practice of hemispheric citizenship in the shadow of empire.”²⁹ In examining geographies of relation in reading film, performance, and literature in the Americas, this study, therefore, considers the connections crafted and gaps made visible in texts about African diaspora that emerge from the in-betweens of the borderlands of the Americas rather than from claims on citizenship in any particular nation.³⁰

I am drawn to the texts in this study because they challenge what Gloria Anzaldúa terms “the ignorance we cultivate to keep ourselves from knowledge so that we can remain unaccountable,” work that has long been central to woman-of-color feminism in spite of the difficult and complex terrain it forces us to traverse.³¹ Thinking about race and gender relationally here reveals Black creativity, power, voice, and belonging in new contexts and centers the negotiations of racial and gendered hierarchy undertaken by African American, Latin American, Chicanx, and Latinx subjects and characters who challenge anti-Blackness and gender subordination, especially as they intersect with economic and political interests. Examining gender subordination as it intersects with racial and ethnic difference remains a priority throughout this study because, as Anzaldúa reminds us, “Women (and cultural others) are still the old standby receptors for projections, still demonized as malinches.”³²

In examining those challenges, I am especially interested in gesture, quotidian practices, and/or minoritized discourses that disrupt elite discourses and racial ideologies and unfold among the working class, darkskinned, and gender subordinated who are always building alternate places of belonging. For example, while some cite the anti-Black policies of the Dominican Republic to suggest that Dominicans don’t know they are Black, Silvio Torres-Saillant, who notes that 90 percent of Dominicans are Black, insists that Dominican workers and artists have long affirmed the centrality of African diaspora cultural practices and ethnic and racial fusion as key to Domini-

can identity.³³ Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa's use of *mestiza* as a self-identifier and her theory of new *mestiza* consciousness have been critiqued for replicating elite discourses of nationalist *mestizaje* common in Latin America without attention to the ways her work proposes an alternative borderlands challenge to such notions from the position of working-class, darkskinned, and gender-subordinated publics in the United States.³⁴ Latin American studies scholars have more recently begun to take note of the discrepancies between Latin American elite discourses of race with which many scholars are familiar and working-class, Black, and Indigenous self-understandings and cultural histories in those same locations,³⁵ finally recognizing that *mestizaje* in Latin America is not the same as Anzaldúa's new *mestiza* consciousness. In that vein, this volume considers several texts where popular understandings among working-class characters and subjects of their sense of self, communal life, and interrelation to other racialized and gendered subjects stands in contrast to dominant and elite discourses. Chapter 1's discussion of the significance of *Toña La Negra*'s appeal among Mexico's darkskinned majority populations also contributes to thinking about where and how the nonelite shape cultural change. Exchange among diaspora and borderlands subjects is not necessarily captured by the elite discourses that have been the focus of much research, nor should we look to them exclusively for understanding how diaspora and borderlands subjects exist.³⁶

In offering a horizontal reading of literature, film, and performance by gendered and racialized subjects that contests racism and gender subordination, I map alternative networks, movements, and dialogues of interrelationship. In this way, conceptions of diaspora and borderland cultures richly elaborated in scholarship allow us to see the dynamism of cultural formation in movement³⁷ and to consider the interrelationships it manifests or posits among diaspora subjects not only as shared racialization but also as a shared "historical or political consciousness or a social tradition," as Cedric J. Robinson suggests.³⁸ Movement and displacement reverberate through hemispheric diaspora histories in multiple migrations and exiles of those not afforded the protections of nation in the borderlands spaces they inhabit.

RELATIONAL GEOGRAPHIES

In examining the ways that Latinx, African American, and Latin American writers and performers seek to construct worlds of belonging in literature,

film, and performance for both African diaspora subjects and new mestizx subjects, in the North and South American borderlands,³⁹ I embrace Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of "new mestiza consciousness" to designate those who discard anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, antiwoman, and anti queer ideologies (discussed further in Chapter 2), and I attend to the ways that these diverse texts give expression to the specific colonial, imperial, and global conditions that shape cultural lives in particular historical moments to reveal the critical and creative construction of diaspora and new mestizx subjectivities built on the recognition of radical relationality. This volume does address the significance of Caribbean African diaspora literatures and texts in this frame, but perhaps its bigger contribution is to bring these into conversation with African diaspora performance and texts from lesser-known and studied sites of engagement with and by African diaspora subjects, namely Chicana literature, Mexico, and Peru and Peruvian American texts. Taking up the dialogue between Black Latin American texts and African American texts across the hemisphere is equally important in considering the diasporic difference of Black Latinx cultures and subjects that traverse the Americas.

The tensions inherent to building interrelationship remain vital in this study of how a radical relational Americas takes shape in performance, literature, and film, especially given that, while this relationality exceeds national frameworks, it also remains marked by the racial and gendered violences of nation-building. These radically relational Americas exploit spaces of inclusion in the national frame to build networks and connections beyond the nation, to creatively turn the repeating conditions of not-belonging, unprotection, and non-normativity on both racial and gendered grounds into borderlands and diaspora spaces of cultural creation and affiliation. They negotiate their interrelationship in the shadow of national and global geopolitical landscapes. Each of the chapters in this study considers this consciousness of difference as it emerges in texts that reach across borders to forge new communities of belonging. These radically relational Americas, in contrast to the tendencies of nation and nationalism, are not a monolith or a conquered territory but instead a web with interlinked nodes of mobile subjects enacting affiliations, subjects who recognize difference among themselves and struggle to construct relationships across that difference that can simultaneously avoid dominant designs on them and allow them to persist in this hemisphere. As this study demonstrates, what the process of building radical relationality yields varies across the Americas in the legacies claimed, affiliations enacted as well as turned away from, and consciousness achieved. In

other words, this analysis reveals that solidarities are hard-won rather than given, more fleeting than fixed, and yet, nonetheless, accumulate to enable new visions of belonging and radical relationality to emerge and to enter the realm of practice.

Of necessity, this volume focuses on literatures and film that have an investment in querying interethnic (African American and Puerto Rican, for example) and intraethnic (Indigenous Andean Peruvians, Black Peruvians, and mestizx Peruvians, for example, or Indigenous Mexican, Black Mexican, and Chicax) relations as well as gender and racial ideologies. This study proceeds in this examination while also revealing the many differences that exist under the umbrella terms of “Black Latinx” or “Black Latin American.” For the most part, I employ the more contemporary term “Black” over “Afro” to signal African diaspora-descended groups and identities and couple it with specific regional, ethnic, or national identities in this volume’s discussion of the multiple diaspora differences that these texts reveal in the Americas. In this way, my use of “Black” represents a contemporary terminology equivalent to an earlier 1960s and 1970s use of the prefix “Afro-,” rather than an imposition of a term that would advance binaries and essentialisms and flatten differences. I, therefore, view these terms as interchangeable; however, in some chapters where working with sources that employ the “Afro-” prefix more commonly, such as “Afro-Peruvian” or “Afro-mestizaje,” I incorporate this equivalent term in my analysis. Both “Black” and “Afro-” appear as interchangeable terms of self-naming for disparate diaspora populations in the Americas throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁴⁰

For several decades in the twentieth century, the African diaspora experience in Latinx literature in the United States was viewed primarily with respect to Puerto Rican / Nuyorican / Boricua literature; writers such as Piri Thomas, Nicholasa Mohr, Miguel Algarín, and Victor Hernandez Cruz wrote Black Puerto Ricans into the everyday consciousness of Puerto Ricans and Latinx through literature and poetry and spoken word, while anthologies such as the 1995 *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings*, edited by Roberto Santiago, presented Black Puerto Rican voices and concerns as integral to self and group definition in memoir, fiction, and poetry.⁴¹ As the twentieth century turned into the twenty-first, Dominican American writers joined the Latinx and US literary landscape as voices who also addressed Black *latinidad* from a Dominican perspective, often layering on the exploration of historical legacies to existing Black Latinx literatures. This includes writers such as Julia Alvarez, Loida Maritza Perez, Nelly Rosario, Junot Díaz, and Elizabeth

Acedo. Black Cuban Americans, too, began literary explorations of their experiences, including Evelio Grillo and Nilo Cruz.⁴² Latinx literary studies scholarship has primarily focused on these texts within their discreet ethnic/national context, illuminating the unique historical, social, linguistic, and cultural dimensions of literature by and about Puerto Ricans / Boricuas, Dominican Americans, and Cuban Americans while expanding the US literary canon by augmenting our knowledge of the creativity of distinct and multiple Latinx populations within the United States. Yet several of the above texts also address the histories of interaction and interrelationship between African Americans and Latinx.

In focusing on texts from across the Americas that engage with other racialized minorities from distinct ethnic/national backgrounds, this study reveals a long history of hemispheric exchange and exploration of the convergences and coalitions (not similarities) that emerge among distinct racial/ethnic populations across the Americas. This work, therefore, departs from excellent US-centered examinations of multicultural literature, which focus on minority-majority/white relations,⁴³ or studies that have centered exclusively on the Caribbean region as an analytic for understanding Black Latinx literatures, including those that expand this analytic by bringing Anglophone and or Francophone literatures from and about the region into this conversation,⁴⁴ as it also departs from traditional comparative frameworks that center national identities and canons or the transhistorical study of formal elements of literature across national canons. Instead, this study is grounded in diaspora and borderlands historical, cultural, and social contingencies operating in distinct local places and periods across the Americas. In reading this difference as constitutive of an Americas diaspora and borderlands cultural landscape, this study interrogates the genealogies we claim and the meanings these texts may hold for readers inhabiting contemporary racialized and gendered spheres.

Many of the texts I examine are written from or set in a particular national location, but it is one that prompts ambivalence, one to which the authors do not fully belong, one to which they must repeatedly stake a claim, and, often, only one location among others to which they relate. For example, this emerges in Chapter 1's examination of Toña La Negra's film and performance career in early twentieth-century Mexico, a career that, as the chapter shows, simultaneously works to uplift and make visible a Black Mexican gendered experience while also repeatedly performing an affiliation with a broader Caribbean and hemispheric diaspora. This borderlands condition of

existence, of simultaneously belonging and not-belonging to a particular location or state or nation is, in part, what motivates a narrative of seeking, questioning, struggling, and affiliating with others to achieve both freedom and belonging.⁴⁵ By examining this set of texts that represent, embody, or articulate a relationality to other minoritized groups navigating the borderlands and diasporas of the Americas, this work contributes to greater knowledge of the specific shape and significance of African diaspora in distinct locations and illuminates the varied routes of migration, cultural exchange, and movement that animate each work's engagement with African diaspora. I strive to engage the complex variations of diaspora experience across the Americas as these negotiate "local, national, and global imperatives" at specific moments.⁴⁶ These cultural productions engage the multiple worldviews and cultural practices created through the diasporas and borderlands of the Americas that emerge as critiques of a racialized, normatively gendered, and overrationalized order.

This work also makes another important move in that it considers not only how racialized hierarchies and racial ideologies of varied kinds circulate in the Americas, impinging on life for any subject who is not white, but also how the marginalized alter, revise, and/or challenge these racial paradigms. In this sense, considering anti-Blackness prompts an examination of the racial and gendered matrices in which it is embedded at any given moment in history. What meanings and significance do mixed-race or mestizx characters and subjects give to their status as mixed-race or mestizx subjects? What kinds of consciousness do they cultivate or subscribe to in relation to other racialized and gendered characters and subjects? What kinds of consciousness do Black characters or figures cultivate in relation to mestizx figures or mestizaje? In short, how, in literature, film, and performance, do characters of color see and think about each other? Where do the ethnoraacial borderlands that mixed-race and gendered characters or peoples inhabit give way to either racial and gendered binaries or racial and gendered hierarchies? In some locations, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous ideologies merge, as I suggest in my reading of Sandra Cisneros's novel *Caramelo* in Chapter 2, while in others we can trace a history of Black-Indigenous relations forged in shared historical circumstances through performance repertoires in Mexico and Peru, taken up in Chapters 1, 2, and 4. In some texts, such as James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, discussed in Chapter 3, African Americans and Black Puerto Ricans face the same oppressions; in others they face the same kind of oppressions though from different cultural spheres, as in Vega's

When the Spirits Dance Mambo, also discussed in Chapter 3; and in some texts they occupy different rungs on the ladder of racial hierarchy, as in Barry Jenkins's film adaptation of Baldwin's work. This study, therefore, resists the conflation of one diaspora or borderlands context for another in carefully analyzing unique histories, cultural environments, and racial dynamics that are both context and setting for texts discussed in each chapter. With this approach, I explore both the significance of heterogeneity across the African diaspora while also providing readers with a sense of the interrelations among racialized and gendered subjects who inhabit borderlands across the Americas. Thinking through these moments, I am mindful of George Lipsitz's discussion of the agency of racialized working-class subjects in creating "diasporic intimacy," when he asks: "Which kinds of cross-cultural identification advance emancipatory ends and which ones reinforce existing structures of power and domination?"⁴⁷ In answering this question I agree with Rafael Pérez-Torres's suggestion that "one must understand a different history in order to understand the modes of exchange within different cultural communities."⁴⁸ For this reason, thinking about specific places in specific historical contexts that inform textual production as well as the representations enfolded in those texts remains a significant point of analysis in each chapter.

While this work covers cultural expression across a century and in multiple sites in the Americas, it is not a comprehensive rendering of cultural expressions of African diaspora throughout the Americas, which is an encyclopedic project, and, therefore, does not provide any in-depth discussion of cultural expressions among US peoples descended from the diaspora populations of Haiti, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, or other Latin American locations, or among diaspora populations in those particular locations, and their ongoing interrelationships, on which there is already significant and excellent scholarship in many fields, and more in progress. However, this work is indebted to the extensive and pathbreaking scholarship on African diaspora in literary and cultural studies, including that of Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Earl Lewis, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Simon Gikandi, and Brent Hayes Edwards, tracing the routes of cultural exchange and influence that emerge among diaspora peoples as well as the multiple differences within diaspora these generate and the gaps these reveal.

Through this approach, this volume contributes to a study of geographies of relation in literature and culture that can account for the cultural expressions of racialized and gendered subjects who do not fully "belong" in

national frameworks, as it also critiques conceptions of *latinidad* and Latin Americanness as closed conceptual paradigms that foreground a static European/Indigenous mestiza/o subject and/or perpetuate anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racisms. For these reasons, I place conceptions of the borderlands and diasporas into operation in these analyses as pivotal to understanding the alternate routes of affiliation that this study explores in transamerican texts. I examine negotiations of diaspora and borderlands as they play out across space, time, and social difference, animated by the ways that these texts seek, borrowing the language of Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, “not to erase the differentials of power, value, and social death within and among groups, as in a multiculturalist model, but to highlight such differentials and to attempt to do the vexed work of forging a coalitional politics through these differences.”⁴⁹ This volume’s attention to secondary literature produced outside of the United States and in those other contexts, on these questions, also forms part of this volume’s radical relational intellectual praxis, contributing in this small way to deepening our engagement with the scholarship of our peers in Latin America.

In the texts I have selected, revealing diverse diaspora communities and challenging conceptions of mestizaje invested in anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity emerge as counterpoints to the discourses of the whitening Hispanophilia that Lorgia García Peña and Silvio Torres-Saillant have also addressed⁵⁰ while expansively opening *chicanidad* and *latinidad* to recognize “the possibility of a Latinidad that is compatible with blackness,” as Petra R. Rivera-Rideau, Jennifer A. Jones and Tianna S. Paschel have argued is necessary.⁵¹ My discussion of these texts examines the ways they engage the conceptual, representational, and practical grounds for alliance with other minoritized subjects in hemispheric contexts as the work of Lisa Sánchez-González, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, Sonia Saldívar-Hull, and Rosa Linda Fregoso, among others, has explored,⁵² while also containing and conveying the critical awareness of position and relationality that women-of-color feminism has definitively advanced.⁵³

The project joins a significant strand in Chicanx and Latinx studies literary and cultural studies scholarship—including the deeply influential and important work of Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Ramón Saldívar, José Limón, Rafael Pérez-Torres, Frances R. Aparicio, José David Saldívar, Claire F. Fox, and Mary Pat Brady among others—that has illuminated the significance of the transamerican, transnational, and hemispheric frame as it intersects with the local and specific, so necessary for understanding the cultural work of Chi-

canx and Latinx literature and film. Kirsten Silva Gruesz's theory of transamerican literature produced by writers from marginalized groups engaging each other across borders has been important in furthering this line of inquiry,⁵⁴ as has José David Saldívar's assessment of the centrality of "cross-cultural comparative focus" in Chicana cultural studies that defies borders of both disciplines and nations,⁵⁵ and, more recently, David Luis-Brown's focus on "decolonizing discourses of hemispheric citizenship" enacted as a response to the denial of rights by US imperialism among those illuminating or advancing the agency of the disempowered in the Americas.⁵⁶

In creating this volume, I also build from and contribute to an ever-growing body of scholarship in Black Latinx literary and cultural studies. In this area the questions and directions of research on African diaspora literary and performative cultures in the Americas have been multiple. Historian Nancy R. Mirabal broke new ground in researching the history of Afro-Cubans in Florida and New York.⁵⁷ Frances R. Aparicio's *Listening to Salsa* (1998) is pathbreaking in researching and documenting the influence of African heritage musical forms in the Americas as well as the racial, class, gender, and national identities embodied in these forms.⁵⁸ Marta Moreno Vega's nonfiction volumes *The Altar of My Soul* (2001) and *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* (2004) as well as her 2012 coeditorship of the anthology *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latina Diaspora*, with Marinieves Alba and Yvette Modestín, brought Black Puerto Rican women's experiences to a wider audience. William Luis's *Dance between Two Cultures* (1997) significantly takes up both Afro-Caribbean traditions and "interaction with the . . . nondominant cultures" of African Americans and other Latinx in the literature that Luis examines.⁵⁹ In performance, Anita Gonzalez's *Jarocho's Soul* (2004) and *Afro-Mexico: Dancing between Myth and Reality* (2010) advance the scholarly study of African diaspora cultural expression in the Americas, and are resources in Chapter 4 of this volume.⁶⁰

More recently, work by Lorgia García Peña, Yomaira Figueroa, Antonio López, Dixa Ramírez, Jill Toliver Richardson, and Melissa Castillo-Garsow has expanded scholarship in Black Latinx studies, particularly with respect to Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban contexts, in important new directions, providing greater depth of analysis to the ways that Black Latinx and Black Latin American subjects have been perceived and have fashioned themselves under distinct economic and political regimes; building an archive of Black creative expression and experience; and analyzing the imagined futures that emerge in that archive. García Peña's *The Borders of Domini-*

canidad reveals the elite Hispanist influence in Dominican literary canon construction. Her innovative adaptation of Anzaldúa's work in her conceptualization of "rayano consciousness" in the Haiti-Dominican Republic borderlands places her within new directions in relational comparative literary and cultural studies that this volume also participates in.⁶¹ Ramírez's work brings the visual and iconic to the fore in her examination of gender and race in Afro-Dominican literature and popular culture, while Figueroa brings literature from Equatorial Guinea into the picture as part of the Afro-Atlantic Hispanophone diaspora in work that explores Afro-Atlantic worldviews in literature.⁶² Jill Toliver Richardson explores the transnational dimensions of Afro-Puerto Rican, Afro-Dominican, and Afro-Cuban literatures.⁶³ Antonio López's examination of multilingual Afro-Latino identities, cultures, and politics in Afro-Cuban texts across the twentieth century also considers African American and Latin American critical paradigms.⁶⁴ New anthologies such as *¡Manteca! An Anthology of Afro-Latin@ Poets* (2017), edited by Melissa Castillo-Garsow, also reflect expansion of the category to include not only Black Puerto Rican, Nuyorican, and Dominican poets, but also Afro-mexicana/o, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Panamanian poets.⁶⁵ *Geographies of Relation* contributes to the above and ongoing Black Latinx literary and cultural studies project by foregrounding the Americas as a space of African diaspora that informs both Black Latinx life and new mestizx Latinx life. This book also joins in the Black Latinx studies project of making known the obscured cultural legacies of diaspora peoples, artists, and performers engaging each other and each other's work in the Americas in order to construct challenges to colonial racial and gender ideologies and communities of survivance.⁶⁶

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

As these chapters reveal, the relations made evident among borderlands and diaspora subjects in the Americas through cultural expression in literary, performative, and cinematic texts unfold through confrontations with anti-Blackness in this hemisphere, yet the bonds themselves are hardly uniform. Instead, these relations are sometimes fragile and tenuous, sometimes deeply embedded in local histories that require our attention, and, at times, they are bonds impelled by hemispheric geopolitics. This study, therefore, centers literary, visual, and sonic expression from a constellation of interlinked

locales even if these links are not in any way uniformly expressed in the works I examine. These diaspora and borderlands texts open the possibility for readers to explore the routes by which diaspora and borderlands populations come to know each other—the migrations, networks, and cultural ties that unite and divide them.

Chapter 1, “Toña La Negra’s Performance of Mexicanidad and Black Diaspora Consciousness.” This volume opens with a sustained examination of a key figure in Mexican cultural production of the early to middle twentieth century: Toña La Negra, née Antonia del Carmen Peregrino Álvarez (1912–1982). This chapter focuses on Toña La Negra’s groundbreaking work in the Mexican film and music industries in advancing not only the recognition of Black Mexican Veracruzans as constitutive of Mexicanidad but doing so by representing a gendered Veracruzana diaspora difference informed by its Caribbean location and networks. I suggest that the relational networks and histories embodied in this location as represented in film signify not the foreign within Mexico, as some critics have argued, but instead both Mexico’s inter-American and hemispheric prominence in the early and middle twentieth century and its Blackness. This chapter offers, for the first time, a detailed consideration of Toña La Negra’s performances across the more than twenty films in which she appeared coupled with an examination of the dynamic diaspora networks of sonic performance in the circum-Caribbean that both give rise to her career and which she supported through her career as a singer and actor. Through these early to mid-twentieth-century networks, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans engaged in building new diaspora cultural forms and expressed their diaspora and borderlands subjectivities in both subtle and vivid gestures and performances. At times these diaspora connections are intertextual, as when Toña La Negra performs “En Mi Soledad,” a song that echoes Billie Holiday’s “In My Solitude,” while at other times they are actual, as when Toña La Negra performs alongside Veracruzana and Caribbean musicians in film and concert tours.

In considering Toña La Negra’s multiple performances in film as well as her multidecade recording career, this chapter identifies the ways that she critically alternates between the roles of glamorous singer and Veracruzana *jarocho* to open up a space for the recognition not only of Black Mexico and its diaspora connections as a distinct site of belonging but also for a Mexican multiracial and working-class populace in the capital city in ways that evade her reinscription into stereotypes of Black women. In considering her enduring cultural imprint, this chapter also takes up recent Mexican studies of

Toña La Negra to support my reading of her powerful negotiation of early to mid-twentieth-century film and music industries to create a space for Black Mexico that would survive her and could be recovered to narrate another Mexican story: a Black Mexican story, one that contemporary cultural producers and critics have increasingly engaged. This chapter contributes, therefore, to rethinking Toña La Negra's significance in Mexican national and hemispheric imaginaries and the ways her films reveal diverse working-class Mexican populations in affiliation as they disrupt conceptions of mestizaje invested in whiteness by emphasizing the Veracruzian diaspora as constitutive of Mexicanidad.

Chapter 2, "Cultivating Consciousness of Race and Gender in the Chicana and Mexican Borderlands." While Chicana literature frequently references a situation of shared discrimination with African Americans, as, for example, when Mary Helen Ponce describes segregated movie theaters in mid-twentieth-century Pacoima, California, in her 1993 autobiography *Hoyt Street*,⁶⁷ in general this literature emphasizes the more predominant Indigenous ancestry, whether immediate or in the historical past, of Chicana peoples. For this reason, the engagement with African diaspora in both Gloria Anzaldúa's work and Sandra Cisneros's novel *Caramelo* stand out as significant, especially since both go beyond referencing shared discrimination to explore the enduring impact of colonial legacies of white supremacy on contemporary social relations.

This chapter reconsiders the significance of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera* (1987) in theorizing a decolonial subjectivity and new mestiza consciousness that can challenge white supremacy and dismantle anti-Black and anti-Indigenous ideologies in the Americas, before turning to an analysis of the critique of anti-Blackness and anti-Indigenous discourses that permeates Sandra Cisneros's 2002 novel *Caramelo*. I situate Anzaldúa's groundbreaking revision of mestizaje from the actual borderlands she inhabits (as well as theorizes) in relation to both elite Latin American discourses of mestizaje and US discourses of marginal mixed-race peoples to underscore the significance of her 1980s revision in advancing a conception of mestizaje that rejects the gendered and white-aspiring meanings that attach to this term in Latin America.

This chapter offers an approach to the novel *Caramelo* not previously pursued: how the novel works to recognize Black Mexico as well as Indigenous Mexico while interrogating gender subordination, enacting Anzaldúa's call for a different kind of mestiza consciousness that calls us to deepen our

knowledge of our Afro-mestizajes as well as our critique of racial and gender ideologies. *Caramelo's* treatment of racial ideologies in the Americas has received some attention, which this chapter builds on by focusing on its allusions to and representations of Mexico's African diaspora history and experience, examining how the novel tries to reincorporate Black Mexican experience into the historical imagination while also addressing the racial posing of its Mexican and Mexican American characters. In this novel, we witness another kind of coming-to-consciousness story, one in which the narrator and protagonist Celaya struggles to reconcile the slowly gained understanding of the behavior of her extended Mexican family toward Indian and Black Mexicans as one grounded in ideologies of white supremacy and women's subordination with her deep and enduring love for her Mexican father and relatives. A counterpoint to her Mexican family's and father's experience and their influence on her throughout the narrative is that of her Mexican American mother's experience and narrative, which reveals a different context for considering geographies of relation. Through the posing of this thorny dilemma, *Caramelo* thereby activates the approach to enacting decoloniality that Anzaldúa offers in *Borderlands* as its narrator and protagonist Celaya questions inherited racial and gender ideologies and works to reimagine her relation with other racialized subjects.

Chapter 3, "An East Side, Downtown, and Greenwich Village Story: Puerto Rican and African American Diaspora Discoveries in New York City." As the title of this chapter indicates in juxtaposing itself to *West Side Story*, an overlooked racial and ethnic interrelation in New York City is that among the diverse African diaspora populations of African Americans and Puerto Ricans. This chapter examines a set of literary and cinematic portrayals of the intimate interrelationships among African American and Puerto Rican characters in the urban space of New York over the span of several decades from the mid-twentieth to twenty-first century, including Piri Thomas's autobiography *Down These Mean Streets* (1967), Marta Moreno Vega's memoir *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* (2004), James Baldwin's novel *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), Barry Jenkins's 2018 film adaptation of Baldwin's book, and, briefly, Ava DuVernay's 2019 docudrama *When They See Us*.

Vega's text grounds the coming-to-consciousness of its autobiographical protagonist in knowledge gained about her African diaspora subjectivity through both shared dialogue with African American counterparts on multiple levels and the cultural realms of religion and music. Her narrative provides a vision of disparate diaspora networks being activated to create com-

munity in ways that accept difference as constitutive of diaspora and borderland being. Though she may have grown up in the United States and integrates into African American communities, her memoir portrays Black Latinx diasporas as distinct from those of African Americans, yet also deeply invested in thinking through the interrelationship to African Americans, just as we see African American characters similarly engaged in thinking through their interrelationship to Puerto Ricans in James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974).

Rather than focusing on the comparability of African American and Puerto Rican statuses with respect to dominant white society, this chapter reveals the difficult work that each of these texts does to bring readers to recognize difference and relationality across disparate diaspora formations. This chapter contrasts the work that Jenkins's film undertakes in 2018 to address the carceral state and enduring police violence with Baldwin's decolonial vision of interrelationship with Puerto Ricans in New York. Considering these texts in relation to one another and, indeed, as deeply engaged with one another illuminates portrayals of geographies of relation among African Americans and Black Puerto Ricans in New York at mid-twentieth century, when neighborhoods were altered by massive migrations of both African Americans from the South and Puerto Ricans from the island. This consideration of the historical interrelationship among ethnically different diaspora populations in New York attends to the ways these texts parse the tensions and similarities that emerge among heterogeneous Black peoples and the varied gendered, civil rights, nationalist, and decolonial strategies they pursue to construct a more effective interrelation.

Chapter 4, "Centering Peru's Black Diaspora While Querying Dominant Cultures in the US-Peru Borderlands." This chapter examines Peruvian-American author Daniel Alarcón's collection of short stories *War by Candlelight* (2005); Alarcón and Sheila Alvarado's 2015 graphic novel *City of Clowns* (based on a short story in the 2005 collection); and Mitch Teplitzky's documentary film *Soy Andina* (2007), revealing the significance of Caribbean, Latinx, and African American discourses of race, gender, and diaspora in the development of movements for Black Peruvian cultural recognition. This chapter takes up previously unstudied Peruvian and Peruvian American critical engagements with constructions of Blackness and *latinidad* in texts that also disclose the experiences, cultures, and histories of Black Peruvians for wider publics. The unique colonial legacies and historical antecedents for Black cultural life in Peru figure prominently in this chapter's analy-

sis of how Alarcón's and Teplitzky's texts are responding to those legacies in the contemporary period. I suggest that the significance of Black population and cultural history in both Lima and in more remote areas of Peru undergirds each text's engagement with Black characters and Black cultural forms. In challenging anti-Blackness and anti-Indianness, each text also reveals the inseparability of gender and racial ideologies in any real movement toward change. This chapter considers Alarcón's short story "City of Clowns," about Oscar, an upwardly mobile mestizo protagonist wrestling with cultural, ethical, and ideological inheritances from his recently deceased father and the newly "discovered" second family his father maintained. Oscar has actually known of the existence of the other family for some time, but it is only upon his father's death that he meets them. Yet Oscar is deeply troubled by the solidarity and companionship that his mother and his father's Black second wife establish in the wake of the man's death, which leads him into an extended exploration of displacement and belonging that inevitably brings him face-to-face with racial and gendered ideologies. My reading of *Soy Andina* explores the film's two women protagonists, Cynthia Paniagua and Nélica Silva, as figures who instantiate borderlands and diaspora spaces of belonging that can contest those legacies. Indeed, by analyzing the film's focus on Cynthia Paniagua, a Puerto Rican–Peruvian subject, in her quest to learn Black Peruvian dance forms, this chapter reveals both a history and a present to African American and Black Peruvian interrelationship. This chapter's consideration of the mid-twentieth-century revival of Black Peruvian cultural forms, in which Paniagua seeks an education, makes visible the power of diaspora cultural networks in the Americas in allowing Black cultural forms to both persist and change through new cultural crossings. Across a century, women traversing both borders and gender norms establish what is culturally valuable. These texts and film reveal the slow crumbling of dominant racial and gender ideologies in ways that echo Anzaldúa's critical questioning, taken up in Chapter 2, and center the work of women performers and characters who don't/can't belong as equals in gendered and raced nations.

Chapter 5, "Black Cuban Life in Movements and Fictions of Social Change." This chapter offers a reading of Cuban, Cuban American, and African American texts that center on the historic struggle to end colonialism in our hemisphere and the ongoing struggle to construct socially just societies free of white supremacy. This chapter explores literature that addresses the twin needs to eliminate colonialism/coloniality and racism over the past

century in order to recognize anew women's participation in Black social movements that effected historic change in the Americas. The first part of the chapter centers on the site of Ybor City, Florida, and the turn-of-the-century struggle for both the independence of Cuba from Spain and the abolition of slavery in Cuba as these events are addressed and referenced in literary texts from varied periods, including the speeches of José Martí in the late nineteenth century, James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), and Evelio Grillo's *Black Cuban, Black American* (2000). This chapter foregrounds overlapping diasporas in the cosmopolitan Florida-Caribbean space and examines the centrality of Black Cuban workers both in Cuba and in the United States in ending colonialism in this hemisphere. By considering Martí's later essays in light of his travel to Ybor City as well as the histories of Black self-organization among Cuban cigar workers, this chapter departs from the hagiography around José Martí to recenter Black workers in the fight to end colonialism in Cuba. An analysis of *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and *Black Cuban, Black American* with respect to the events of ending colonialism and slavery allows for an exploration of the overlapping diasporas of the Florida-Caribbean region that unfolds in and across these texts to reveal the significance of interrelation among Black, diaspora, and working-class communities that enabled the persistence of these communities and nurtured their struggles for social change. In the chapter's second section, I examine two texts that take up the Cuban revolution of 1959: José Yglesias's novel *A Wake in Ybor City* (1963) and María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno's *testimonio Reyíta: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century* (2000). Here I extend the consideration of Ybor City as a historical site of significance for Black Cuban community and anticolonial struggle by examining the ways that Yglesias's novel reactivates that history in portraying Black and white Cuban characters either mobilizing around a new struggle for independence from the Batista dictatorship in 1950s Cuba or resisting that mobilization and alliance with Black Cubans. Contrasting this fictional portrayal with Reyíta's *testimonio* of the radical genealogy of Black activism against slavery, colonialism, and dictatorship of which she is a part, not only through her family history but also through her own participation in the hemispheric Garvey movement of African diaspora peoples, emphasizes the significance of Black mobilization in eliminating the Batista dictatorship in Cuba. It also makes known Reyíta's ongoing struggle to combat imposed racial and gender norms in favor of creating a more capacious and liberating gendered diaspora subjectivity.

“Conclusion: The ‘Interdependency of Different Strengths.’” This closing discussion builds upon the insights of Castillo Bueno’s narrative by considering how Nelly Rosario’s novel *Song of the Water Saints* (2003) explores the inseparability of the struggles against racism, colonialism, and gender subordination. Largely set during the early twentieth-century US occupation of the Dominican Republic (which parallels the US occupation of Veracruz in the early twentieth century, home to the young Toña La Negra, née Antonia del Carmen Peregrino, discussed in Chapter 1), Graciela’s story in *Song of the Water Saints* explores the tensions and convergences among different diaspora characters amid US occupation and then US-installed dictatorship with equal attention to the crushing effects of gender subordination associated with occupation and nationalism. Reyíta’s *testimonio* and Rosario’s novel, both texts that span a century, bring ongoing geopolitical struggles in the region to the fore, juxtaposing Black freedom with US intervention and instantiating geographies of relation. Their work reveals cosmopolitan diaspora experiences of heterogenous Black life dedicated to creating more just worlds where Black women play significant roles in the ongoing struggle for freedom from both racial and gender subordination. In this way, these texts carry forward an emphasis on the combined interrogation of gender and race/ethnicity in liberatory ideas and practices in ways that also acknowledge and embrace difference in diaspora.

This study is deeply invested in the distinct local and regional contexts for understanding and unpacking the diverse texts in this study, eschewing any notion of transhistorical formal elements, universal and singular diasporas, or homogenous borderlands spaces or subjects in favor of close readings that attend to the specific histories, divisions, tensions, concerns, and influences that give rise to specific texts addressing the intersections of race and gender in relation to distinct diaspora and mestizx experiences at specific moments. In trying to think relationally, or continually reimagining the “tree of ourselves,” as Gloria Anzaldúa put it, this work attends to the varied dimensions of the local in conversation with the regional and global.⁶⁸ These readings also illuminate the ways that misogyny, anti-Blackness, and anti-Indianness continue to shape what, who, and how we read, which has been a secondary concern throughout the volume, whether revaluing Anzaldúa’s work on *mestizaje*, critically reexamining Martí’s speeches, or foregrounding the work of Black women writers Reyíta and Nelly Rosario and especially Toña La Negra’s performance career as sites where geographies of relation unfold to disrupt dominant racial and gender ideologies.

Guided by an interest in literature and film about the diasporas and borderlands of Latinx, Latin American, and African American characters who struggle to discard or redefine inherited racial and gender ideologies while also negotiating local and hemispheric geopolitical interests, this study examines literature and film across the span of a century. This breadth, though not a comprehensive picture of the century or of the hemisphere, provides a consideration of how performers, writers, activists, filmmakers, and revolutionaries engaged geographies of relation in varied periods and places in the quest for greater freedom and social justice, revealing an ongoing and unfolding project that continues despite the difficulty it entails.

CHAPTER ONE

Toña La Negra's Performance of Mexicanidad and Black Diaspora Consciousness

La historia de las personas africanas y afrodescendientes que formaron parte y contribuyeron económica, social y culturalmente en la construcción de la sociedad mexicana ha sido negada y menospreciada por la historia oficial.

The history of African and African-descended peoples that formed part of Mexican society and contributed economically, socially, and culturally to its construction has been denied and diminished by official history.

—MOVIMIENTO NACIONAL POR LA DIVERSIDAD CULTURAL DE MÉXICO¹

Over several decades in the twentieth century, Mexican film and recording artist Toña La Negra, née Antonia del Carmen Peregrino Álvarez, created a body of work that asserts the presence and participation of Black Mexicans *en lo mexicano* while also enacting a Caribbean and African diaspora-informed consciousness.² Toña La Negra deftly made the uniqueness of African diaspora in Veracruz a central axis of her career, one that opens up greater investigation into Black Mexico that continues today. She expanded venues for Black musicians in Mexican film and performance and crafted a presence on screen as a modern Mexican subject, a successful career woman who is nobody's fool and nobody's caretaker. This study, therefore, examines Toña La Negra's role in bringing Black Mexican life into the national imaginary and her simultaneous participation in the cosmopolitan circum-Caribbean migrations and movements of performers, musicians, and artists in the early twentieth century that creates a dynamic new sonic landscape in the region, one that eventually extends far beyond it, as it instantiates diaspora net-

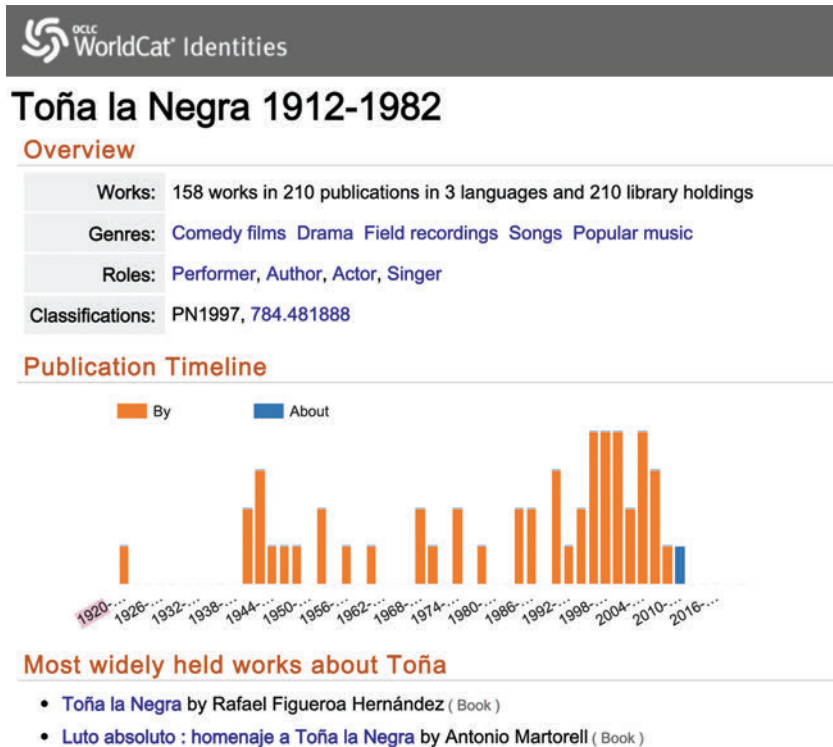


Figure 1. WorldCat Identities–generated graph of publications by and about Toña La Negra, accessed 8 July 2021.

works and consciousness across and in between national boundaries. This research suggests that she was received by darkskinned and mixed-race working-class subjects in Mexico City and beyond as one of them, and this analysis considers how her films appealed to these audiences, bringing distinct geographies of relation into conversation with each other in ways that echo the union and working-class solidarities of her childhood neighborhood La Huaca in Veracruz.

There has been little critical attention to *Toña La Negra* despite her appearance in over twenty Mexican films between 1934 and 1951, a prolific stage and live performance presence, a robust recording career, and later in life, also a television career. The few extant studies of her work have focused on the ways that Mexican film stereotypes Black characters or narrates them off the screen through death or departure, suggesting that her influence was

greatly circumscribed (see Figure 1).³ However, rather than ask how a national film industry represents Black subjects, I ask how Black actors, musicians, and performers engaged Mexican film, and how these films might reveal geographies of relation that are as constitutive of the Americas as nations. This chapter, therefore, contributes to a more complete assessment of Mexican performer Toña La Negra's oeuvre, one that is only possible, however, by shifting the terms of our questions and considering the diversity of audiences she addressed.

A key figure in Mexican cultural production of the early twentieth century, a consideration of Toña La Negra's cinematic and musical career reveals both deep contradictions in the reception of Black Mexicans and her power in negotiating to create a space for Black Mexico that would extend beyond her. Mexican film's exploration of the social and cultural dimensions of intrahemispheric exchange prompted by modern industrial expansion and neocolonial political arrangements in the Americas as well as post-1910 discourses of multiculturalism in Mexico contribute to the possibility of her success. The question of modernization and the competing tensions of Mexico's "revolutionary *ethos*" versus its "growing engagement with an international economy," as Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado suggests, is at the core of Mexican golden age cinema.⁴ This chapter proposes that these tensions crack open a space where performers and artists of the African diaspora in the Americas can, indeed, enact new border-crossing relations that embody and enact diaspora consciousness, an analysis that follows earlier work in examining efforts "to create space for African heritage and mixed-race citizens both nationally and hemispherically" in film, literature, and music in ways that disrupt "the assumed coherence of nation-states and normalized racial projects that sustain them" as they also register an increase in networks of transamerican cultural production.⁵ This chapter, therefore, provides a new analysis of the interactions among differently racialized subjects in Mexican film and the work of Black actors and performers in these films by considering the racially heterogeneous working-class populations who were the audiences for these performances in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Latin America in a twentieth century marked by increased diaspora consciousness and networks among African-descended diaspora peoples in the Americas.

Toña La Negra rose to stardom rapidly as a vocal artist of *son* and bolero forms. In 1930 she began her professional career in theaters and radio in Veracruz, alongside Ignacio Uzcanga and her brother Manuel Peregrino.⁶ At that time when *son* music and *danzón* movements were de rigeur not only in Veracruz but also in the capital, as evidenced by the 1920 opening of the

famous dance club Sal6n M6xico in Mexico City.⁷ At her Mexico City performance debut she was listed as number thirteen on the program of entertainers, but so popular were her performances that she moved up to the number one spot within three days.⁸ She quickly became composer Agust6n Lara's favored singer, as Lara himself also cultivated a performance identity grounded in Veracruz, which I discuss further below. Rafael Figueroa Hern6ndez observes that the famous Politeama Theater in Mexico City was known for drawing a cross section of the city's population, who cheered for performers they enjoyed and jeered those they disliked; Toña La Negra so inspired audiences at the Politeama that her show ran for nearly a year.⁹ As early as 1934, the weekly *Vea* lists Toña La Negra among the ten best-known artists on Mexican radio.¹⁰ This popularity and renown, I suggest, would matter in her ability to shape her image on screen.

The musics of *son*, *danz6n*, *guaracha*, *preg6n*, *bolero*, and *rumba* were widely popular in this era. One member of Son Clave de Oro, the musical group to which Toña La Negra belonged in her early career, describes the 1940s and early 1950s as the "era of *son*" in Mexico, one that brought immigrant Cuban musicians to Mexico. Nearly every Cuban artist who arrived in Mexico in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s experienced significant professional success,¹¹ and for some, such as D6maso P6rez Prado and Celia Cruz (both originally from Matanzas, Cuba) this success propelled them into the United States, where their fame, as well as diaspora networks, grew.¹² While some of these forms, particularly *rumba* and *mambo*, were associated with hypersexuality in media and popular discourses, D6maso P6rez Prado counters these associations with a description of *mambo* as a dance that emerged organically from the people enjoying themselves on the dance floor.¹³ Indeed, *rumba* originates as a communal and participatory form of music-making and dancing associated with free Black communities in Cuba that was characterized by a significant degree of improvisation.¹⁴ P6rez Prado's description actively contests the discourse of hypersexuality and insists instead on ordinary pleasures and organic innovation, insists, that is, on Black creativity at the core of the genre, in ways that align with the reported robust enjoyment of audiences at the Politeama, one of many places where Toña La Negra and Son Clave de Oro performed for what they knew were mixed audiences and varied publics.

The Black innovative creativity of Toña La Negra in Mexico of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, as well as that of her fellow musicians and performers in the era, creates a space for Black Mexico in the twentieth-century Mexican imagination, opening a road for a deeper exploration of Black Mexico in

Figure 2. Toña La Negra accompanies Rafael Hernandez on his February 12, 1943, debut on Station XEW with Wello Rivas. Photo courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City: Fondo Enrique Díaz, Delgado y García, Cronológico, Programas y Estaciones de Radio, EDDG8419.



Courtesy of Archivo General de la Nación

later generations. Local and global events informed this twentieth-century moment, including Mexico's post-1920 efforts to unify the nation through the cultural celebration of varied regions.¹⁵ Indeed, Veracruz officially recognized its historic African population in 1932 when it renamed the village of San Lorenzo de los Negros to Yanga in honor of the leader of escaped Black slaves who founded the settlement.¹⁶ Toña La Negra's extensive film and media presence from the 1930s onward may have also been influential in more indirect ways when we consider that major Mexican intellectuals and artists who engaged in the study of Afro-Mexico in varied forms were individuals who "came of age in the 1920s and 1930s," at the very moment when the early twentieth-century Black innovative creative movements in which Toña La Negra participated took center stage, shifting paradigms about Mexicanness and opening the road for the further study of Black Mexico.¹⁷

SEIZING A SPACE FOR BLACK MEXICO IN VISUAL CULTURE

Many of Toña La Negra's roles and performances in film occur in the genre known as *rumbera* films, a genre that choreographs, narrates, and stages a contradictory and racialized national project. Considering how Toña La

Negra inhabits and projects Blackness as well as how she exists in relation to other characters coded as Black, *mulata*, or *mestizx*¹⁸ suggests a cultural moment in the first half of the twentieth century when new regions of the country were hailed into the national imaginary as the circulation of Black cultural production signaled a new, cosmopolitan imaginary in Mexico that corresponded to hemispheric and global economic shifts. The intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in the genre of the *rumbera* films in which Toña La Negra often appeared, though not as a *rumbera* dancer herself, remain significant given that these films feature characters who are dancers, or purported dancers, and stage performances of forms of dance influenced by the choreography and aesthetics of African diaspora cultures in the Americas.¹⁹ Much film criticism focuses on the light-skinned actresses who play *rumberas* in these films, while there has been little sustained attention to the Black actors and performers in them. As Dolores Tierney suggests, while these films are often taken by critics to project an “external (i.e., Cuban) other rather than an internal other,” such readings perpetuate a “nationalist disavowal” by not taking “into consideration Mexico’s Afro-Mexican population.”²⁰ Tierney suggests that if, instead, the existence of an Afro-Mexican population is a consideration, then some of these films might be read as “open[ing] a space for marginalized groups (Mexico’s disavowed Afro-Mexican population)” wherein “music and dance work to undermine the dichotomies of the film.”²¹

This chapter, therefore, strives to consider what these roles and representations may have meant for Black actors and musicians involved in this work as well as the diversity of audiences who viewed it within the context of a multi-racial and multiethnic Mexico, to locate not only their movements on screen but to understand the movements and dialogue on screen as symbolic of the opportunities and limitations available to Black performers and other dark-skinned subjects. This work examines cinema, radio, and recording archives as well as biographical, social, and critical contexts to offer an analysis that departs from a focus on the genre’s stereotypes or foreignness, readings that emphasize the othering of Blacks through exoticization, and even in some cases fault Black artists for the perpetuation of stereotypes of the “exotic” and “savage.”²² These interpretations, with the exception of the latter, cogently take Mexican cinema to task for projecting the idea “que en nuestro país no existen los afrodescendientes” (in our country there are no African-descended peoples).²³ Yet, as film critic Leopoldo Gaytán Apáez notes, the film-viewing public is not a monolith but heterogenous, and this heterogenous public interacts with film from a diversity of social positions.²⁴ This work contributes

to further unpacking an understanding of that heterogenous multiethnic and multiracial public as it considers the varied venues for Toña La Negra's performances, her presence in Mexican media as a figure of celebrity, and her work in representing Black Mexico through film and song.

Well known as an interpreter of Agustín Lara's compositions, Toña La Negra was at the center of the Mexican sonic imaginary for several decades in the twentieth century, though, in truth her musical repertoire extended beyond Lara's compositions. As a star, costar, or featured performer across twenty Mexican films between 1934 and 1951, she worked with fourteen different Mexican directors and varied casts of leading and secondary characters. Indications that she quickly became a national and international figure representative of Black Mexico include the first of numerous national tours to Mexico's northern provinces in 1933, less than a year after her debut performance in Mexico City, as well as a feature story on her and African American dancer Josephine Baker under the title "Africa Rules" in August of that year in *Jueves de Excelsior*.²⁵ By June 1934, she had a half hour radio program on the powerhouse station XEW for a six-month run (with Son Clave de Oro also getting their own radio program later that year) and she would, in the decades to follow, appear in numerous programs on this and other radio stations, including her 1945 radio program, whose title symbolizes her stature as a Mexican national figure, *La hora de México* (The Mexican Hour).²⁶ As a Black Mexican singer and actress, her presence in the booming Mexican radio and film industries of the early and mid-twentieth century is significant and telling of the ways that Mexican media sought to represent all of Mexico in this period while also delimiting the space that the darkskinned could occupy in the national imaginary. Nonetheless, I read Toña La Negra as a figure disruptive of the white-aspiring mestizo imaginary proposed by Vasconcelos in 1925 with his treatise on the *raza cósmica*, revealing an early challenge to that treatise that does, indeed, carve out a space for Black Mexico, albeit a precarious one. If recent reappraisals are any indication, her success in establishing this beachhead in the past opens a road in the present to a greater appreciation of African diaspora in Mexico.

THE RACIAL APORIAS OF MEXICAN CINEMA

To consider what Toña La Negra achieves in film and music, it is important to consider what she labors against. The diaspora consciousness that Toña La



Figure 3. Multiracial working-class patrons of the Siete Mares Club in *Konga roja* (1943, dir. Alejandro Galindo). Photo courtesy of the Colección Filmoteca UNAM.

Negra embraced in her vocal and cinematic repertoires stood in contrast to the actions and words of some of her light-skinned costars who sought to distance themselves racially from the characters they portrayed and/or interacted with on the screen. For example, both Amalia Aguilar and Rosa Carmina spoke pejoratively and condescendingly about Africa diaspora cultures and peoples, and not surprisingly neither was very good at representing diaspora-influenced dances on screen.²⁷ This racism was also evident on screen for, as critics have noted, Mexican cinema in this period does not shy away from stereotypes with respect to Black characters. In the 1943 film *Konga roja*, Toña La Negra plays singer Marta the Mulata, a character who exits the film about halfway through, having lost the affections of her romantic partner. This departure might be read as cinematically reinscribing the erasure of Black Mexicans; however, the visuality of the film and of Toña La Negra's presence on screen throughout her career is more complex. Toña La Negra appears prominently in the first half of *Konga roja* both in the film's action and in performance on stage with Son Clave de Oro (see Figure 6),



Figure 4. In *Konga roja*, Marta the Mulata, played by Toña La Negra, on the left and Rosa, played by Maria Antoineta Pons, on the right. Photo courtesy of the Colección Filмотeca UNAM.

while wide shots of the multiracial groups of people gathered in the club where she performs suggest Black and mestizx diversity, intermixture, and exchange (see Figure 3).

In the opening credits Toña La Negra receives costar billing with the film's mestizo protagonist played by Pedro Armendariz, which is further emphasized by scenes of interaction between them on film in facing, equal positions. Yet a stark visual representation of a racialized conception of citizenship and nation that situates Marta the Mulata in the borderlands space of not-belonging emerges in a dressing room scene, with the dancer Rosa positioned on the right alongside the image of the Mexican flag imprinted on the beaded screen while Marta the Mulata holds the left side of screen where masks, gourds, and religious images appear in the background (see Figure 4). A fleeting black border appears between them—made more visible in the Figure 4 by isolating a still shot from the film—that furthers this divide and prompts us to consider the film's treatment of Marta and its Black and mestizx characters. These contradictory cinematic representations work simultaneously to write Veracruzán populations into the cultural history of Mexico and to delimit their participation. Given the celebrity and popular-

ity of Toña La Negra and Son Clave de Oro in this period, their appearance in the film likely generated wide appeal, including among Black and mixed-race Mexicans, while Toña La Negra's crafting of a tripartite cinematic presence through costume over the life of her career effectively contests this particular film's visual projection of a stark border between Black and Mexican, but first let us consider her biography and recording career.

NEW CRITICAL APPRECIATIONS OF TOÑA LA NEGRA

Though best known for her collaboration with Agustín Lara, we know little about their working relationship or correspondence, in contrast to his working relationships with other interpreters of his compositions. And while many books on other performers of the era have appeared, only recently has Toña La Negra received similar critical attention.²⁸ This work, therefore, joins in contemporary Mexican efforts to reconsider the work of Toña La Negra as well as the ways she has been recently recovered in the popular culture of Mexico through documentary and biographical projects.

Recent cultural criticism on Toña La Negra and her work include projects aligned with Mexico's Third Root initiative, launched in the 1980s, to recognize its African-descended populations as well as projects undertaken to educate contemporary audiences about important cultural figures from the nation's past.²⁹ Emmanuel Jiménez Portilla's 2020 documentary *Toña La Negra, "La sensación jarocho"* announces itself as a part of the former project, while Armando Pous's 2022 book on Toña La Negra's performing and recording career subscribes to the second project, though not without attention to race and ethnicity. Rafael Figueroa Hernández's 2012 biography and filmography, *Toña La Negra*, straddles the two by emphasizing the significance of African descent and a Mexican Black culture in the development of this important figure of Mexican popular culture.

Rafael Figueroa Hernández's 2012 biography inaugurates a new appreciation of Toña La Negra with several key assertions: she enjoyed a national presence as a performer who represented the Veracruz region of Mexico; her musical repertoire both included Agustín Lara's compositions and extended beyond these; and while the dominant view of her is merely as an interpreter of Lara indebted to him for her fame, in fact, their collaboration was mutually beneficial.³⁰ Her collaborations with Son Clave de Oro, Cuban pianist Juan Bruno Tarraza, and then later Pepe Arévalo speak to the transculturative musical processes through which indigenous, African diaspora, and Spanish sonic and

performative cultures, and later Caribbean and Mexican cultures, morphed into distinct Veracruzán forms that she then popularized.³¹ Cuban immigrant musicians and performers were influential in the states of Veracruz and Yucatán in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³² However, Toña La Negra's performances in Puerto Rico suggest more to explore in terms of Puerto Rican–Mexican cultural influences,³³ and the biographical fact that her grandfather Severino Peregrino was a nineteenth-century Black immigrant from Haiti, descended from enslaved Africans,³⁴ suggests yet another vector of exchange and influence in the formation of Veracruzán cultures deserving of further study. The musical and dance cultures of Veracruz and the diasporic Caribbean enter into a wider popular imagination with the migration of musicians and musical groups to the capital, Mexico City, where Black, and Black and Indigenous Afro-mestizo, forms take center stage in the capital's nightlife, and center stage in the national imaginary via Mexican cinema in an era when Mexican film and radio industries enjoyed a significant hemispheric reach.

Jiménez Portilla's *Toña La Negra* overtly emphasizes the significance of Mexico's "third root" in African diaspora by beginning her story in the colonial era enslavement of Africans who were brought to Veracruz in the sixteenth century, and offers importance context for understanding the singer's career, yet it differs from Figueroa Hernández's biography in its interpretation of Black Mexico.³⁵ While the latter biography informs readers of the musical talents of her mother and father and their regular participation in the musical events of their neighborhood, including *comparsas*, indicating a vibrant cultural life among the residents of La Huaca, the neighborhood where Antonia Peregrino grew up, the documentary film, through dramatic reenactments, suggests that the childhood singing/performance career of Antonia with her brother Manuel was more akin to poor children singing on the streets for income. The latter narrative about the singer is one perpetuated on sites such as *AllMusic*, where she is described as having come from an "impoverished family" and lacking "any formal musical training."³⁶ While she did, as a child and a young woman, sing at some establishments and private parties, these opportunities followed her success in local festivals and competitions, which, in addition to the musical atmosphere of her home, was nurtured by practice and performance in duets with her friend Celia Pacheco, whose father was a professor of music in Veracruz and a *danzón* musician, as Figueroa Hernández notes. She was soon joined by her brother Manuel in performance and made her professional debut at the age of seventeen.³⁷ Figueroa Hernández's biography, in contrast to the documentary and other sites, situates Toña

La Negra in a place and time that is rich in musical culture and practice. In revealing the musical and cultural milieu from which Toña La Negra emerges, he grounds her and her talent in the musical cultures and practices of Veracruz, not only recognizing the creativity and innovation of Black Veracrucans, but also making her representative of both a population formed in diaspora and a population of a region of Mexico.

Nonetheless, all sources emphasize how her career was also always a family affair since she performed alongside her brother Manuel early in her career—Manuel also accompanied her to meet Agustín Lara at his house in Mexico City³⁸—and after she debuted in Mexico City in 1932, her husband Guillermo Cházaro launched the band *Son Clave de Oro* in 1933 to accompany her. The band that included cousins as well as additional Mexican and Cuban musicians, touring with the singer wherever she traveled to perform.³⁹ In addition to her brother Manuel, nephews Pablo and Serafín Peregrino often played with her, as did Toño Peregrino. The fact that *Son Clave de Oro* was composed of family members and other Mexican and immigrant Cuban musicians, and that this band always accompanied her on all tours, prompts us to reconsider the significance of her on-screen performances with the band.⁴⁰ In its composition and in its repertoire, *Son Clave de Oro* also simultaneously embodied both Mexican subjectivity and Caribbean diaspora consciousness, reinforcing these dual associations for audiences. Toña La Negra enjoyed a significant national and international performance career, as well as the high regard of her fellow musicians, voiced by her long-time Mexican accompanist Pepe Arévalo, who described her as of an era before “millionaire performers and all that,” an era defined by the an ethos of “el entregar del talento” (giving of one’s talent) and loving what you were doing, which is something he learned from Toña La Negra. Her career lasted well into the latter half of the twentieth century when in 1981, one year before her death, she was contracted for a thirteen-episode television series. In one of her final performances, she sang, “Veracruz . . . vibras en me ser” (Veracruz . . . you vibrate in my being).⁴¹

TOÑA LA NEGRA AND SON CLAVE DE ORO AS AMBASSADORS OF VERACRUZ

Toña La Negra and *Son Clave de Oro* came to represent Veracruz in performance, film, radio, and recording, making her a well-known Mexicana art-

ist.⁴² We see Toña La Negra on stage with Son Clave de Oro backing her in films spanning a fifteen-year period, including *Payasadas de la vida* (1934), *María Eugenia* (1942), *Konga roja* (1943), *Humo en los ojos* (1946), *Cortesana* (1947), *Amor de la calle* (1949), and *Amor vendido* (1950), although the band doesn't always receive screen credit for its appearances in these films. Since Toña La Negra's rise to fame and singing career were well known in her day—as media coverage from the era reveals⁴³—many viewers of her films would have known that the band included several immediate and extended members of her Veracruz family, making their joint appearance on screen appear to be a gesture of regional inclusivity and diversity on the national Mexican cultural scene. In one of many national tours of Mexico in 1936 with Agustín Lara and Pedro Vargas, she performed in Guadalajara, Tampico, Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua, Durango, Mazatlán, and Hermosillo,⁴⁴ continuing to build her stature as an important Mexican cultural figure.

That Toña La Negra was and remains known as *neta jarocho*, as her character declares in the dialogue of *La mujer que yo amé* (1950), speaks to the regional, cultural, and racial diversity of Mexico that she, alongside Son Clave de Oro, represented in the national imaginary at the beginning of and throughout her extensive career. As Anita González notes, “Jarocho, once a derogatory term for poor Black field workers, now describes a music and dance tradition that blends elements of Spanish, Native American, and African cultures,” yet the meaning of *jarocho* requires attention to the specific context of its utterance.⁴⁵ Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas suggests that *jarocho* was a term of denigration used by the Spanish against the largely Afro-descendant peoples of Veracruz but that these peoples “through resistance, work and creativity, subverted the derogatory label. Currently, *Jarocho* is the name of all the Veracruz people.”⁴⁶ That *jarocho* and *jarocho* have morphed from terms identifying African diaspora subjects to terms signaling cultural expressions deriving from cultural mixture and all inhabitants of Veracruz suggests not only that Black, Indigenous, and mestizx interanimate each other but also demonstrates how Black Mexicans came to be recognized in this period.

Toña La Negra and her musical family embodied *jarocho* and *jarocho* identity in early and mid-twentieth century, bringing it to the fore in ways that many appreciated and that continues to reverberate. The song “Homenaje Peregrino,” composed by Jorge A. Barrientos Silva, who launched the group Recuerdos del Son in the 1980s, honors the contributions of the Peregrino

family to the diversity of Mexican music as it reinscribes the significance of *son* rhythms in which they worked into more contemporary soundscapes.⁴⁷ Appearing on a *Recuerdos del Son* album distributed by Pentagrama records, the song pays tribute to Toña La Negra and her nephew Pablo Peregrino, who often played in the band alongside her:

En la historia del son
 Una familia surgio
 Para mi enseñanza
 Por eso te canto, mi sol
 Asi es, oiga usted
 Asi es, oiga usted
 Para Pablo el Negro Peregrino y Toña La Negra canto yo

A los Peregrinos canto yo, una gloria de mi son
 A los Peregrinos canto yo, una gloria de mi son

Óyelo bien, la familia Peregrino, Mexicana de verdad.⁴⁸

The song's verses assert that the Peregrino family is "Mexicana de verdad" and calls listeners to pay attention, while the choruses praise the Peregrinos as creators of *son*. Today, in downtown Mexico City, *son* aficionados who prize Afro-Mexican cultures regularly gather in the park on Saturday afternoons for music and dancing.

Recent biographies and documentaries shed light on the singer's childhood neighborhood and offer some hints on why Mexican cinema embraced Veracruz so enthusiastically in early to mid-twentieth-century film. Perhaps one motivation for the latter was that Veracruz had been the target of US invasion and occupation, first in 1914 and again in 1916, events that solidified Mexican nationalism and patriotism with respect to a besieged Veracruz, as they represented expanding US commercial interests in the region and global trade. Since her father was a founder and leader of the Dock Workers Union, the working-class life of La Huaca may have imbued Antonia Peregrino with an understanding of the power of collective action, undoubtedly heightened by a significant neighborhood rent strike in her younger years.⁴⁹ Both the union organization and the rent strike also index Veracruz's increased incorporation into hemispheric and

global political and economic networks as an important port city that mattered to the entire nation, in ways that are suggestive of the significance of the region to Mexico, and, therefore, to Mexican cinema of this period, which was known as the “Spanish-language Hollywood” to Latin America.⁵⁰ A strong collective sensibility emerges in the sources on Antonia Peregrino’s social environment, one we might read as continuing in her collaboration with Son Clave de Oro across multiple films and performances, sharing in the film and recording credit.

As an ambassador of Veracruz, Toña La Negra’s repertoire embodies the aesthetic and sonic fusions of a unique Caribbean diaspora population, recognized by several critics as transculturated Mexican musical and dance forms that emerge from the peoples of Veracruz,⁵¹ and by others as reflecting linkages to African diaspora-influenced forms, including “*Samba, Rumba, Bomba, Tango, Danzón, Candomblé, Cumbia, and Punta*.”⁵² Although he places greater emphasis on the Afro-Cuban origins of some of these forms, David F. Garcia, nonetheless notes that since the late nineteenth century, “Afro-Cuban *habanera, danzón, rumba* and bolero” entered, circulated within, and became a part of Mexican culture; Garcia offers both a discussion of varied forms of *danzón* in Veracruz, Yucatán, and Mexico City and a reading of Son Clave de Oro’s performance in *Salón México* (1949) as one that evidences the Mexican instrumentation (“flute, trumpet, *tres*, piano, bass, *timbales, guiro, claves*, and conga drums”) versus Cuban instrumentation (flute, violins, piano primarily, with occasional trumpet and *tres*) in the *danzón*,⁵³ thereby revealing the processes of exchange and transculturation that his work addresses, and which Mexican cinema evidenced.⁵⁴

Indeed, Toña La Negra’s discography suggests a more complex set of engagements among Caribbean diaspora peoples than merely the adoption of Afro-Cuban forms. It speaks, instead, to the circulation and exchange among Black diaspora subjects in the Americas in the first half of the twentieth century that was significant hemispherically. In addition to the circum-Caribbean routes of exchange, Mexico had been, in many ways, a site of refuge and renewal for African American artists, performers, writers, and athletes fleeing the segregationist United States in the early and mid-twentieth century, reminding us of the ways that African Americans also inhabit borderlands subjectivities throughout the twentieth century and prompting us to consider the ways that Black Mexicans similarly experienced the borderlands.⁵⁵

TOÑA LA NEGRA AS THE VOICE OF VERACRUZ
AND BLACK MEXICO

Toña La Negra sustained a decades-long career as the voice of Veracruz, a sonic identity that constituted an assertion of Black Mexican histories, experiences, and cultures as well as a claim for Veracruz's place in the national imaginary. Indeed, Mexican singer Pedro Vargas, her peer, casts her as epitome of the region when he describes her as "la mujer que en su voz contenía los maravillosos sonos de Veracruz" (the woman who in her voice contained the wonderful *sones* of Veracruz).⁵⁶ Her early association and decades-long collaboration with Mexican composer Agustín Lara cemented both of their reputations as representatives of Veracruz, yet myths about this collaboration that cast Lara as the person who "discovered" Toña La Negra circulated for decades and even continue today in some quarters, influenced perhaps by the fictional storyline of the film *La mujer que yo amé* (1950), featuring Lara and Toña La Negra, where the composer's character "discovers" the singer's character. However, even Lara himself set the record straight in a radio interview, stating that he needs to be truthful with the Mexican people, implying a correction to popular myths, and proceeds to describe a scene where a determined Antonia Peregrino arrives at his home with her family and insists on seeing him, launching their collaboration.⁵⁷ The version of how Lara and Antonia met offered by her brother Doroteo, who accompanied her, also differs dramatically from that offered by Lara's former wife, Angelina Bruschetta. In the latter, Antonia is poor, trembling, pleading figure. Yet, as Doroteo notes, it was Antonia and her fellow musicians who sought Lara out at home and insisted on being heard, a version of events also confirmed by Lara biographer Andrew Grant Wood.⁵⁸ These accounts establish Antonia Peregrino as purposeful in relocating to Mexico City to pursue a performance career and purposeful in seeking out a collaboration with the composer. Lara, who came from a modest Mexico City background but claimed Veracruz as his place of origin, became, alongside Toña La Negra, even better known as a native son of Veracruz.⁵⁹ Antonia Peregrino's initiation of a collaboration with Lara, who was already a known composer in the early 1930s, suggests that she saw herself as an important part of the cultural and sonic landscape of Mexico.⁶⁰ After their initial meeting, Lara immediately set to work composing a series of songs that Toña La Negra famously performed and that also cemented Lara's fame as a Veracruzano and as a

composer, including “Lamento Jarocho” in 1932; “Noche Criolla” and “Palmeras” in 1933; “Oración Caribe” and “La Cumbancha” in 1934; and “Veracruz” in 1936.⁶¹ It is noteworthy that their collaboration in creating new music drew musicians and performers from other parts of the Caribbean to Mexico, a regional movement of Afro-Antillean sound in which Toña La Negra was a leading figure.⁶²

Her performance and recording of this set of songs have become key cultural texts of the state and city of Veracruz, its inhabitants, and its cultures, indelibly casting Toña La Negra as a representative of Veracruz. Yet her performance often deviates from the written lyrics in small but telling ways, as she adds her own voice to the representation. “Lamento Jarocho” openly addresses itself to the “raza Jarocho,” and this race is identified in the lyrics as a “raza de bronce, que el sol quemó” (bronze race burned by the sun), and then later the speaker identifies herself as “alma de jarocho que nació morena” (*jarocho* soul who was born Black).⁶³ Throughout the 1920s, the phrase “bronze race” acquired currency in both poetry and discourse as a signifier of the darkskinned mestizo or mixed-race peoples of Mexico and Latin America, but Toña La Negra’s lyrics write an African diaspora consciousness into these signifiers as well. The lyric places Veracruzans squarely within this paradigm, while the singer’s self-identification also explicitly includes Black Veracruzans in the national imaginary. Although the written lyric have this singer describing her own voice as one expressing a painful grievance held by an entire race—“boca donde gime la queja doliente / de todo una raza llena de amarguras,” Toña La Negra replaces “donde gime la queja doliente” (moans its painful grievance), with its connotations of pity for the subject, to “donde llora la queja doliente” (cries a painful grievance), imbuing the verse with greater assertiveness.⁶⁴

“Veracruz” is perhaps the best known of the series of songs through which Toña La Negra comes to represent the region in the national imaginary, and it appears on many albums featuring Lara’s compositions, as it also appears alongside “Lamento Jarocho,” “La Cumbancha,” and “Noche Criolla” on a few collections of Lara’s best or greatest hits.⁶⁵ The speaker of “Veracruz” laments his distance from the place of his birth and praises the beauty, music, and women of Veracruz. When singing Lara’s verse “y nací con alma de pirata / yo he nacido rumbero y jarocho / trovador de veras” (“I was born with a pirate’s soul / born a *rumbero* and *jarocho* / a true troubadour”),⁶⁶ Toña La Negra never changes the masculine noun endings to female, and so the song remains an assertion of Lara’s adopted Veracruz identity sung by her. These opening lines are usually rendered rather seriously and dramatically;

then the song quickly moves into a more festive register with mambo and marimba sounds entering the composition. Toña La Negra's rendering of the verses about her hometown Veracruz's beauty and longing for Veracruz carry an emotional depth that is unmistakably hers. Indeed, speaking of Lara's compositions, she states that while she "could not have written any of the songs he composes," she is "certain that she has interpreted them with the spirit with which he wrote them for me," attributing their successful collaboration to a shared "interior communication."⁶⁷ "Lamento Jarocho" and "Veracruz" are viewed by many as "virtual state anthems" and have been interpreted by many artists since then,⁶⁸ underscoring how closely Toña La Negra and Agustín Lara were seen as cultural ambassadors for her home and his adopted state, respectively.

Andrew Grant Wood's biography of Lara nods to the pivotal role that his collaboration with Toña La Negra had in the composer's growing fame, quoting one early critic recognizing her as "truly a jarocho"⁶⁹ when stating that "Lara's rise to fame in the early 1930s came through his collaboration with a variety of talented vocalists. In August of 1933, he met a determined young singer from the Port of Veracruz named María Antonia Peregrino Álvarez (1912–1982)."⁷⁰ A stronger picture of her importance emerges in Wood's unmasking of the popular mythology of Agustín Lara as a native of Veracruz, a claim that merged nicely with official efforts in the era to delineate the unity and diversity of Mexico through specific regional identities, often linked to "romanticized images" of regional cultures, including the *jarocho* identity of Veracruz.⁷¹ However, Lara was actually born in Mexico City in 1897 to a father from Puebla and mother from the state of Mexico.⁷² As a developing composer, he was attracted to the fusion of Cuban, Colombian, and Argentinian sound in Veracruz, a sound and genre highly influenced by the "rhythmic traditions of the African diaspora."⁷³ Claiming a Veracruzian identity enhanced Lara's "growing reputation as an artist by providing him a specific regional and cultural locus" as well as important "nationalist credentials" given that the urban, cosmopolitan, and transculturated sound he cultivated was a departure from musical genres considered uniquely Mexican, such as the corrido or ranchera.⁷⁴ Lara claimed an origin in the fashionable town of Tlacotalpan in the state of Veracruz, a place with a strong history of French and Spanish families that provided Lara with the "respectability" of whiteness while also linking him artistically to "Cuba, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic world at large."⁷⁵ Lara's mythmaking about his own origins was quite powerful and featured in a number of publications about him.⁷⁶ As his biographer states: "The legend eventually proved so compelling that it prompted

the mayor of Tlacotalpan to issue a fictive birth certificate for Lara in April of 1941 that claimed he had been born in the city in 1900.⁷⁷ Officials in Veracruz added to the recognition of Lara as a son of the region when, in 1953, he semiretired to the port city of Veracruz and received not only the keys to city from city officials but also a house built specifically for him on the oceanfront by Veracruz governor Marco Antonio Muñoz Trumbull.⁷⁸ By demonstrating the fictiveness of Lara's Veracruzian origins, Wood reveals how central Antonia Peregrino as an actual Veracruzian was to the whole project of bringing Veracruz into the national imaginary. Despite her knowledge of Lara's myth-making, and after a long period of collaboration with the composer, Toña La Negra hails Lara as a paisano when, in tribute to him she declares, "Yo le quiero contar la version de que Agustín Lara no era Veracruzano, aunque sí señalo ¿como no ser de Veracruz quien tan bellamente le cantara al Puerto heroico?" (I want to share the story that Agustín Lara was not Veracruzian, although I ask: How can someone who sings so beautifully to the heroic port [of Veracruz] not be from Veracruz?).⁷⁹

Agustín Lara and Toña La Negra with *Son Clave de Oro* together represent Veracruz not only sonically but also cinematically in an era infused with a consciousness of the global networks of relations it represented and its importance to the Mexican nation.⁸⁰ This emerges not only in the discography discussed above but also in her performance of Lara's Veracruzian songs on the big screen, often in traditional Veracruzian costume, including "Veracruz" in *Humo en los ojos* (1946), "Oración Caribe" in *Revancha* (1948) and *La mujer que yo amé* (1950), "Veracruz de Mis Sueños" in *En carne viva* (1950), and "Lamento Jarocho" in the films *Humo en los ojos* and *Revancha*. These on-screen performances are significant, as Leopoldo Gaytán Apáez suggests in his analysis of African diaspora-informed music of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, because Black musical expression can sing another history, make another reality known that counters the dismissal of Black cultural expression as merely "representaciones folclóricas enfocadas a un turismo promocional" (folkloric representations for promoting tourism).⁸¹

Gaytán Apáez's analysis cues us to consider the ways that Black diaspora subjects participate in the space of the cinema, how Black diaspora performance and song might be enacting something other than what is scripted on the screen or how knowledgeable Black and mixed-race audiences might apprehend what is on the screen differently. Paul Gilroy's analysis of the oppositional anti-modernity of Black musics and the role these play in countering racial terror and instantiating gesture and dance as modes of commu-

nication alternative to speech and text, which were violently denied to the enslaved and their descendants, is also crucial to viewing and listening to Black performance in Mexican film.⁸² These perspectives prompt us to consider the significance of the varied parts that come together in the collaborative project of filmmaking, and suggests we might try to see and hear the person and peoples in the performance both beyond what or who the film suggests they are and exactly how and what the film suggests they are, to decipher not only stereotypes but also contradictions.

Gaytán Apáez notes the significant loss of early recordings of Caribbean music due to technological changes, which leads him to underscore for us the significance of Mexican film in recording and presenting a wide range of African diaspora informed Caribbean music:

Por toda la cuenca caribeña la películas mexicanas inundaban las pantallas y presentaban a figuras de la region de excelente calidad musical como Ignacio Villa (Bola de Nieve), Rita Montaner, Kiko Mendive, Daniel Santos, Pedro Vargas, Toña La Negra, Los Panchos, Miguel Aceves Mejía, Jorge Negrete, Pérez Prado, La Sonora Matancera, Consejo Valiente Roberts (Acerina), Enrigue Jorrín, El Trío Caribe, Arturo Núñez, Benny Moré, Lucho Macedo, Luis Carlos Meyer, La Billos Caracas Boys, el Gran Combo, Pedro Infante, Celia Cruz y muchos más.⁸³

Throughout the entire Caribbean basin Mexican films inundated movie screens and presented figures from the region of excellent musical quality such as Ignacio Villa (Bola de Nieve) . . .

Through its screening of African diaspora musics of the Caribbean and incorporation of Cuban musicians and performers, Mexican *caberetera*/rumbera films appear not only to have created a valuable archive, as Gaytán Apáez notes, but also to have contributed to the emergence of new sonic collectivities of diaspora performers, and perhaps of audiences as well, throughout the hemisphere.⁸⁴

DIASPORA CONSCIOUSNESS IN TOÑA LA NEGRA'S DISCOGRAPHY

While her repertoire of songs about Veracruz simultaneously hailed an African diaspora consciousness and a Mexican national imaginarity, Toña La Neg-

ra's discography includes several songs that convey her sense of relation to other parts of the African diaspora in the Americas, linking Veracruz and its peoples with other networks of diaspora-descended peoples engaged in preserving Black social traditions.⁸⁵ Lara's "Oración Caribe" (Caribbean prayer) is one of these, as it invokes a unique Black prayer to the sea in a veiled reference to Yemaya,⁸⁶ as it calls for mercy, light, and warmth "en nuestras vidas" (in our lives), overtly expressing a desire for the protection of Black life.⁸⁷ The dolorous repetition of "piedad" in the lyric might suggest a person in need of rescue, yet *piedad* also functions as a call to devotion that gives the subjects of the lyric yet another, and more active, meaning. "Babalu," written by Margarita Lecuona, is another in this set of songs performed by Toña La Negra that appeals to an orisha of healing, Babalú Ayé, reminding listeners of alternative religious systems in the Americas and diaspora communities. "La Cumbancha," written by Lara, explicitly honors the Caribbean musical instruments of the clave and the bongos as integral to a unique sonic and emotional landscape. Songs such as "Reina Africana" (African queen) by Eliseo Grenet, and "Oración Negra" (Black prayer) more overtly challenge prevailing racial hierarchies.⁸⁸ The singer of "Reina Africana" is a Black woman who resists a white man's bid for her love; he promises to make her his African queen, but she insists on her love for her Black man. "Oración Negra" proudly claims the speaker's Blackness and invokes the sacred Lucumí tradition. Counterintuitively, this song's lyrics cast African diaspora-influenced spiritual practice as primitive and savage, yet the singer's emphatic embrace of these cultural forms conveys something other than passive acceptance of a stereotype, creating a rounder and fuller affective picture of what it means to be Black and Mexican. Given the US occupation of Veracruz in the early twentieth century and the ways that US occupiers were known to have devalued and outlawed African diaspora worldviews and practices,⁸⁹ Toña La Negra's repertoire of songs referencing African diaspora-inspired worldviews gains another layer of significance as a refusal to abandon Black social traditions.

In at least one television appearance, Toña La Negra also openly embraced diaspora worldviews further lending credence to the above readings of her musical repertoire. She appeared in a 1958 show titled "Un Bongó en Tormenta," which centered on the Santería tradition, alongside her nephews Pablo and Serafín Peregrino, entering the stage "in trance."⁹⁰ The 2020 documentary discussed earlier mentions this aspect of her life as in accord with practices of the "brujos and spell-casters of Catemaco," conflating what may

be aspects of African-diaspora philosophies and worldviews that may have been a part of Toña La Negra's life with other practices, as it also evinces how these remain illegible to many Mexicans. Catemaco, located in the state of Veracruz, dates to 1615 and is an ancient Olmec sacred site where sacred religious ceremonies of Indigenous and African peoples were practiced, including more than forty healing specialties that have been identified in the region: *curandero*, *huesero*, *sobador*, shaman, *yerbero*, *partera* (healer, bone setter, masseuse, shaman, herbalist, midwife), and so on. It has been derided as a land of witches, shamans, and spell-casters, yet Professor Sagrario Cruz Carretero of the University of Veracruz clarifies that words such as “witch and witchcraft carry a negative colonial connotation,” when in reality these are merely “non-Judeo Christian, non-Catholic ancestral magico-religious practices.”⁹¹ Nonetheless, her 1958 appearance, together with her recording repertoire, suggests that Toña La Negra appears to have enjoyed a more holistic understanding of the value of African diaspora worldviews throughout her life.

Toña La Negra performed and recorded a song that emerged in the movement for Black civil rights in Venezuela and later circulated throughout the hemisphere: “Angelitos Negros.”⁹² The song is based on Andres Eloy Blanco's poem protesting discrimination against Blacks and was performed by Pedro Infante, Eartha Kitt, and eventually Roberta Flack in ways that indexed the emergence of movements for Black civil rights in Venezuela, Latin America, and the United States in the twentieth century, as well as the movements of Black diaspora artists in the hemisphere to build relations with each other.⁹³ Her version of “Angelitos Negros” participates in this hemispheric circulation of the song through its appearance on multiple album rereleases—including *Angelitos Negros* (2020), *La Sensación Jarocha* (2019), *La Inmortal* (2016), *Mi Cuba Bella* (remastered 2016), *La voz* (remastered 2014), *RCA 100 Años de Música* (2001), *Lo Mejor de lo Mejor* (1998), and *Best of the Best* (remastered 2020).

She gestures toward an affinity with African American women in her recording of “En Mi Soledad,” which echoes the 1934 Duke Ellington composition “Solitude” with lyrics by Eddie DeLange and Irving Mills famously sung by Billie Holiday,⁹⁴ signaling her recognition of geographies of relation. A bolero and not a jazz song, Toña La Negra's “En Mi Soledad” on *La Sensación Jarocha* (remastered 2019)⁹⁵ mirrors “Solitude” in topic, theme, and setting, yet also differs markedly.⁹⁶ Similar to “Solitude,” the speaker is alone with her memories of a lost love, one whose absence prompts sadness and even despair, a despair from which the speaker is not sure she will recover. As

in “Solitude,” the speaker of “En Mi Soledad” remains enmeshed in love and longing but also demonstrates hints of rebelling against this state. Both songs dwell in the sadness of a woman’s unrequited love yet don’t remain exclusively there, hinting at the other emotional registers—of love of life, of self-care—that will bring the singer back from despair. Toña La Negra’s “En Mi Soledad” thereby steps away from the self-effacing erasure of a woman pining for a man to center the emotional depths of a woman who will also eventually move on from “waiting and crying.”

Holiday’s art as a singer and composer often turned love songs into more complex meditations on love itself. This is not unrelated to ways race and gender shaped her life experience in the era in which she performed,⁹⁷ and critics have noted that her singing makes visible “the social interplay of meeting expectations and defying them”⁹⁸ as her voice underscores “what it sounds like to be an African American artist who triumphs over adversity and appropriation.”⁹⁹ Toña La Negra’s choice to record “En Mi Soledad” enters into a conversation with Holiday on that more complex question of love and self-love, particularly given similar circumstances as a Black female performer. Farah Jasmine Griffin reminds us of the whiteness and male domination of the professional circles that Billie Holiday inhabited, adding yet another resonance to her songs about aloneness.¹⁰⁰ For Toña La Negra, the professional space was white and mestizo dominant as well as male dominant, and her occupation of it in Mexico was singular. Although they are completely different as singers, just as Billie Holiday’s singular musical genius is widely recognized, so, too, was Toña La Negra’s by her peers. Her longtime accompanist Pepe Arévalo describes her as “una decidora muy chingona, un rubateo muy especial, un color de voz muy especial. . . . los decidores a diario cantan diferente, esa es la magia y Toña era así” (“a hell of a witty, gorgeous woman with a very special rubato, a very special tonality in her voice . . . singers with that kind of vocal eloquence can sing differently every day. That’s the magic and Toña had it”).¹⁰¹ Arévalo joins many in casting her as a musician of the voice rather than a vocalist, with a phenomenal ability to alter the tempo of musical notes, and the ability to change how a song is sung in every performance.¹⁰²

Two other songs in Toña La Negra’s repertoire also situate her within a network of artists engaged in diaspora dialogues, namely “Lamento Borincano” and “Lamento Cubano.” The first, written by Puerto Rican songwriter Rafael Hernandez in 1937 and later sung by a series of performers known for their socially conscious music including Chilean Victor Jara,

Mexicana Chavela Vargas, and most recently Puerto Rican Marc Anthony on his album *Valio La Pena* (2004), narrates the *jibaro's* desires on his way to market and his disappointments on the way back to the countryside. Interestingly, Rafael Hernández served with the US Army Harlem Hell Fighters¹⁰³ band during World War I, then later moved to Mexico in 1932, where he enjoyed a prolific composing career in Mexican cinema for fifteen years.¹⁰⁴ His biography reflects the kinds of diaspora border crossing that this study examines. In portraying a small country farmer who eagerly goes to market with dreams of success but returns home defeated because the townspeople are too poor to purchase anything from him, the song voices poor and working-class concerns about economic changes affecting agricultural ways of life and worries about sovereignty and family.¹⁰⁵ Toña La Negra's performances of both songs appear on multiple albums in the twentieth century. For example, "Lamento Borincano" appears on the 1964 album titled *Toña La Negra interpreta a Rafael Hernandez y Pedro Flores*, released by Orfeon in the United States, Mexico, and Venezuela,¹⁰⁶ and again on the album *Grandes exitos de Toña La Negra*, published by Orfeon in 1975,¹⁰⁷ while a shorter version with only the first half of the song appears on the album *Cancionera nació*.¹⁰⁸ Spotify presents "Lamento Cubano" on an album cover titled *Toña La Negra: "La sensación jarocho,"* and with the second subtitle, "con el acompañamiento del Conjunto Pablo Peregrino" (with the accompaniment of the Pablo Peregrino Band), and the album features a photo of her from early in her career and a photo of the Conjunto, suggesting that it is a part of her repertoire early in her career.¹⁰⁹ The song proclaims love for a beautiful homeland that continues to suffer and experience turmoil, which the lyric questions, wondering why so much suffering occurs. Toña La Negra's performance of it in the 1930s or even the 1940s, amid movements for unionization and reform on the island and freedom from US intervention, would likely have carried a different meaning to listeners than later performances of these lyrics by other artists. Both "Lamento Borincano" and "Lamento Cubano" acknowledge the political and social realities of the region as they also sonically invite listeners to ponder these realities together. The inclusion of these songs in her regular repertoire places Toña La Negra in the company of a network of performers and entertainers in the Americas who heard and saw each other in the borderland and diaspora spaces they inhabited and who did not shy away from expressing this through song. Their wide musical appeal did not eclipse their social conscience.

WHEN WHAT YOU WEAR TELLS A STORY: TOÑA LA NEGRA'S COSTUMES AND DRESSES

On film, Toña La Negra cultivated a tripartite visual identity that reinforced the diaspora consciousness and Veracruzán identity of her vocal repertoire in ways that appealed to working-class and darkskinned subjects as it also contested the borders and racism by which Mexican cinema attempted to delimit her influence. The costume and dress styles that Toña La Negra wore throughout her film career performatively disrupted citational practices of both gender and race in early and mid-twentieth-century Mexico in several ways.¹¹⁰ As a Black Mexican woman, she inhabited the role of Mexicana par excellence when appearing in Veracruzán dress (see Figure 5), the role of cosmopolitan and diaspora subject when appearing in modern versions of Caribbean-inspired dress (see Figure 6), and the role of glamorous and modern female performer when bedecked in beautiful evening gowns or smart daytime ensembles, representing an image of a diverse and hemispherically important Mexico (see Figure 7). Her frequent appearance in film in traditional Veracruzán costume positioned her as representative of the region, and, therefore, as resolutely Mexican, while the glamour and stylishness of her modern dresses and gowns worked to situate her as part of modern Mexico rather than part of its colorful past.¹¹¹ Just as elegant and glamorous dress were a key aspect of performing power, social standing, and upward social mobility for Hollywood stars and African American women blues singers,¹¹² so, too, is it for Toña La Negra. These three forms of dress characterize her on-screen performances across more than twenty films.

Across several films, she appears in versions of the traditional white Veracruzán costume: a full and diaphanous skirt, ruffled bottom edge, small dark and embroidered apron overlaying the skirt, and a shawl-like top with a flowered headdress. This is the version she wears in *Música de siempre* (1956), where she appears as herself surrounded by a group of *jarocho* musicians, including those playing harp and the *jarana jarocho* (small, guitar-shaped stringed instrument), and in a rare on-screen moment, briefly performs a folkloric dance. As a visual anthology of Mexican talent, her appearance in *Música de siempre* indicates her national stature. In *En carne viva* she appears as Mercé in a version of the traditional white Veracruzán costume for her first performance (see Figure 8). In this case the main dress is white with a tiny geometric print overlaid by a white lace apron and shawl-like capelet held in place by two metal brooches. A darker, woven scarf, in the style of indige-



Figure 5. Toña La Negra appearing in traditional Veracruz dress in *Humo en los ojos* (1946, dir. Alberto Gout). Photo courtesy of the Colección Filmoteca UNAM.



Figure 6. Toña La Negra on stage with Son Clave de Oro in the role of Marta the Mulata in the film *Konga roja*.



Figure 7. Toña La Negra performing with Pedro Vargas and Agustín Lara at the piano in *Revancha* (1948, dir. Alberto Gout). Photo courtesy of the Colección Filmoteca UNAM.

nous textiles, is draped over her arms. Cinematically, this mise-en-scène of Mercé on stage suggests her public presence as a representative of Veracruz and Mexico, while the film's later scenes of her in modern daywear highlight her as a consummate professional. The traditional Veracruzian costume positions her as an authentic daughter of Mexico just as it does for Mexican film star María Félix when she appears in it in *María Eugenia*. Traditional costumes also characterize her attire in *La mulata de Córdoba* and vary between those with Veracruzian elements and those with a stronger Caribbean flair.

Her appearance in dress styles more reflective of the Caribbean dress are distinct from the Veracruzian costume in that the former generally feature print or colored fabrics, more ruffles on skirts and tops, and more elaborate headpieces. In contrast to the nearly all-white Veracruzian costume, Caribbean traditional styles from the Cuban Bata to the Haitian karabela dress to the Panamanian *gala pollera* to Puerto Rican traditional dress feature ruffles and flounces on full skirts that are embroidered or beribboned. In Cuba dresses come in all colors, in Puerto Rico colorful prints are often the norm, while



Figure 8. Toña La Negra in an all-white version of traditional Veracruzian costume in *En carne viva* (1950, dir. Alberto Gout). Photo courtesy of the Colección Filмотeca UNAM.

in Panama these are usually white and embroidered in colors. In *Revista musical* (1934), directed by Arcady Boytler and set at a large performance theater, Toña La Negra appears as the lead amid a group of rumba dancers, singing her version of the lyrics to Agustín Lara’s composition “La Cumbancha”—“Oiga usted, conoce el clave, conoce el bongo” (Listen, hear the clave, hear the bongo)—wearing a rumba-inspired costume with more Caribbean flair than is typical of Veracruzian dress as well as a dark headscarf covering her entire head of hair. The white, full-length gown features three rows of ruffles crisscrossing the bodice to form a V-neck over a full skirt with laced ruffles along the bottom of the skirt in a style that is more reminiscent of Panamanian traditional dress than Mexican. The dancers behind her sport bikini tops and bottoms to which long ruffled trains have been attached, and while she is equally bedecked in ruffles, she is much more covered up than the dancers behind her. Although she will wear headscarves, bands, or bows with other Caribbean costumes throughout her career, these always reveal her hair at least partially, making this the only

film performance in which Toña La Negra wears a complete headscarf. In *Konga roja*, she appears in a costume that more subtly hints at Caribbean affinities: a long-sleeved dress with small polka dots, five rows of small ruffles at skirt's edge and three rows of small ruffles on the sleeves with a bright, solid-colored flowered belt and an eye-catching hairpiece/structured bow. In *Revancha* (1948) Toña La Negra appears as herself, a cabaret performer in a high-class club, joined by Pedro Vargas and Agustín Lara in a film that narrativizes Lara's lyrics. As she sings "Oración del Caribe" (Caribbean prayer), she wears a floor-length dress made from a bright polka dot print, contrasting print scarf, and an apron made of shimmering fabric; however, later in the same film she wears a glamorous gown, emphasizing both her Caribbean connections and her modernity. This material and sonic versatility in performance draws our attention to the contemporaneous fusions of diaspora-inflected performance as it reveals an awareness of Toña La Negra's professional stature and networks beyond the screen.

Since she frequently played herself or someone like herself, her dress on the screen signified cinematically to suggest her character and standing, and to situate her in the public imagination in specific ways. In her first appearance in *Konga roja*, Toña La Negra wears an elegant and modern long-sleeved, floor-length gown printed with bold white flowers and bearing a modest V-neck and a natural waistline. Toña La Negra's hair is coiffed in an updo and the small geometric-shaped earrings she wears complement the gown. Her dress here, as in all her films, is important. It contrasts with the stage outfits worn by Rosa in this film and by other rumbera dancers in other films, in its emphasis on the modern, urbane, cosmopolitan. In contrast to the revealing outfits of the rumberas, Toña La Negra rarely shows much skin on film, which is why the elegant spaghetti strap dress she wears while performing in an upscale club in *Amor vendido* (1950) is notable.¹¹³ While Toña La Negra sways or sometimes makes slight dance movements in films, we rarely see her dance on film with the exception noted above. Her dress and movements contrast with those of the dancers, which are both more revealing and either more frenetic, in the case of bad dancers, or more-accomplished, in the case of good dancers. Toña La Negra's movements are generally limited to swaying rhythmically with her body or head to the tempos and beats of the songs she performs.¹¹⁴ Always stylish, Toña La Negra is also almost always dressed in ways that are form-fitting and glamorous but not overly revealing, representing a subdued and understated grace and beauty. In this sense, Toña La Negra conveys her sense of the context of her

performance and her audience: she can be read as a modern and modest Mexican subject who participates in contemporaneous hemispheric and regional exchanges. In fact, when Marta the Mulata exits the town in *Konga roja* after losing her romantic partner, it is her previous appearance in elegant dress and her contemporaneous daywear that contributes to the sense that, despite heartache, Marta will endure, whereas we know that former romantic interest Armando will not.

When her character is offstage or away from work in both *En carne viva* (1950) and *Konga roja*, as in other films, Toña La Negra wears typical modern daywear for the era, often consisting of cinched waist A-line dresses or matching blouse and skirt outfits. We get several scenes of her dressed in this way in *En carne viva*, where she plays Mercé, a cabaret singer who becomes the adoptive mother to her coworker Maria Antonia's child, left orphaned by her mother's suicide after the father of the child, Fernando, abandons her. As her guardian, Mercé raises the child in collaboration with Miguel, the neighbor whose unrequited love for Maria Antonia still burns, played by Dagoberto Rodríguez. That child, Laura, played by Rosa Carmina, becomes a successful dancer, enjoying greater fame than her mother, and working alongside Mercé. When she meets her biological father and his new family, dilemmas ensue.

Immediately after Maria Antonia's suicide, Miguel suggests that he raise Laura, but Mercé rejects this, reminding him that it was Maria Antonia's request that she raise the child and she must complete this duty for her friend. This bit of dialogue directs viewers to read Mercé as guardian and not nanny, disrupting prevailing normative assumptions about Black women as nannies. The film furthers this disruption by presenting her on screen always near the child or looking over the child but not holding the child or touching the child. It is, in fact, Miguel who is most often cast in demonstrative and affection exchanges with the growing Laura. This attention to proximity and gesture in performance underscores the difference between the role of a nanny and the role of guardian, and in her modern daytime outfits—she never appears in an apron or with any accoutrements of household duties—Mercé can hardly be read as a nanny. In assuming guardianship over Laura, who rises to acclaim in major performance venues rather than in cabarets, Toña La Negra's role amplifies notions of Mexican family to be inclusive of Black Mexicanos because Laura is raised by a Black woman, her mother's friend and coworker, and eventually also Laura's coworker. When Laura's biological father later offers to take her away, she insists on staying with

those who have loved and cared for her all her life, Mercé and Miguel. In this way the film casts mestizo Miguel and Black Mercé as more loving and reliable guardians than the lighter-skinned and now upper-class mestizo Fernando, played by Crox Alvarado. While this does not necessarily upset racial hierarchies, it suggests a recognition of shared conditions and value in relationships among darkskinned and working-class subjects.

Viewers would not have missed Toña La Negra's fashionable daytime ensembles on film, or what it signaled about her professional success and knowledge of modern urban social circles. As Mercé in *En carne viva*, she rehearses with the band in the film's small working-class club in a scene where her striking dress contrasts with the humble setting. Wearing a chic long-sleeved, form-fitting dress with an asymmetrical contrasting color and pattern design that ends just below the knees in a slight flounce, she leans on the piano with her hand on her hip, conveying in both gesture and dress her command of self and performance as well as her allure.

The glamour and stylishness of her dress often contrasts with the setting or background of the fictional club or cabaret in ways that some conservative critics found disturbing but that signal her off-screen professional standing. When performing on screen, Toña La Negra is usually the primary focus of the camera though at times the camera alternates between her and the band or her and club scenes or dancing performances, but she is always, to borrow a phrase from Mamie Smith, "becomingly gowned."¹¹⁵ As Kimberly Mack notes, Mamie Smith's choice in dress was driven by her audience's expectation for her to appear in glamorous dress in contrast to that of other Black blues singers.¹¹⁶ In conservative Catholic Mexico of the midcentury, critics who viewed the rumbera films as morally deficient felt the actresses should be dressed accordingly rather than alluringly, including one critic who questioned the "'vestuario tan elegante' de Toña La Negra in *Konga Roja*" given the "sordidness" of the patrons of the club where she performs¹¹⁷—in other words, people like Toña La Negra should not appear glamorous in film. Perhaps more threatening to critical voices such as these are the portrayals of women leading independent lives or disruptions of normative masculinities.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, Toña La Negra wears glamorous gowns in several films set in small working-class clubs located in port towns, including *En carne viva* and *Konga roja*.

In *Payasadas de la vida* (1934), directed by Miguel Zacarías, Toña La Negra makes a cameo appearance early in the film as the singer, backed by Son Clave de Oro, in a spacious cabaret club. As she performs Ernesto Lecuona's

bolero-son “Quiero,” she wears a light-colored, modern, floor-length gown in a shimmering fabric with a fitted bodice and slightly fuller skirt. Her wardrobe reflects the film industry’s use of metallic, beaded, and sequined gowns, as well as satin and chiffon frocks, in this era, to immediately signal a character’s glamour and standing, and they worked to achieve the same effect for Toña La Negra who, after all, often played herself in film.¹¹⁹ Her dress in this film contrasts with the two rows of dancers performing with her who sport rumba costumes of bikini tops and bottoms covered by sheer, ruffled long trains. While the club is the scene of shady activities involving the female protagonist, Toña La Negra only appears in this one scene of the film as the featured performer, distancing her from the shady activities. Similarly, in *Revancha*, Toña La Negra remains distant from the shady activities of several characters, encouraging protagonist Rosa (played by Ninón Sevilla) to extricate herself from her sordid arrangement in a scene where her elegant floor-length gown in a shimmering fabric with decorative sparkling brooches at the neckline mirrors her authority.

Her participation in early twentieth-century economic networks and musical cultures circulating regionally and hemispherically also manifests in her attire in *Mujeres en mi vida* (1949), which features Agustín Lara as the womanizing composer Armando Lujan. Toña La Negra performs in a nightclub alongside Pedro Vargas as herself for two numbers composed by the character Lujan, and they are joined by Los Panchos for a third of his songs, “Maria de Alma.” The gowns that she wears include a white sequined gown with cap sleeves and an elegant black gown with rhinestone-studded sleeves. As she and Vargas sing, the camera reveals worldly scenes of international locations on the club’s walls, indicating not only the success and appeal of Lujan the composer but also of the performers.

Her dress and movement in the more high-toned club of the film *Amor de la calle* (1949), effects an interesting disruption of the racist stereotypes surrounding her. The club where she and Queta, played by Mercedes (aka Meche) Barba, work caters to a middle-class clientele. Its walls are decorated with an odd combination of racist caricatures of Black people, images of cocktails and drink, musical notes and instruments, and farm animals, but in this film Toña La Negra is even more elegantly dressed than in other films, in a pointed refutation of the images on the club’s walls (see Figure 10). Dressed in a glamorous black satin halter dress with a flounce over the top portion of the skirt, a sheer white shawl draped across her back, and silver brooch and sparkling earrings on both the tops and bottoms of her earlobes,

Toña La Negra sings the film's title song, which paints a sad portrait of a woman who has lost love but seeks comfort in selling her kisses, while strolling around the club's dance floor. She noticeably quickens her pace to pass the racist caricatures on the wall behind her (see Figure 9), though she pauses slightly before the last racist scenario, facing the camera, as she sings the song's last verse about unrecognized pain, a gesture that subtly conveys critique of the racist image and the history it embodies. As the song's performer, she is the voice of wisdom, and this, coupled with her glamour, positions her above the scenes depicted in the club's decor and, indeed, above the woman addressed by the song, Queta, who has in desperation agreed to work at the club as a dancer rather than fall victim to her violent and scheming landlord but loses her boyfriend as a result. Every second of Toña La Negra's performance of the song "Amor de la Calle," which ends back in front of the Black band members as she bows to the crowd's applause before leaving the stage, conveys both pity for and distance from the figure of the light-skinned Queta, whom the film repeatedly cuts to in the dressing room as she prepares for her role on stage, because it is Queta who runs the risk of becoming the figure portrayed in the song.

Another contrast between Black talent and stereotype emerges when Queta, driven by economic necessity, initially arrives at the club looking for work as a rumbera. The Black choreographer Jimmy teaches her the dance routines she will perform, and generously praises her progress in learning during a break by telling her, "Te pasaste, Negra" (You've more than got it, Negra), before continuing to demonstrate the moves as the drummers begin playing again with an exuberance that slyly demonstrates for an inside audience how much Queta (Meche Barba) lacks in dance skill. Queta's revealing costumes for performance include one outfit consisting of a shrug of large, ruffled sleeves and transparent skirts and another, worn while in blackface, of gold lame bikini top and boy shorts. Since Queta is forced into this employment by the evil and scheming owner of the club, Don Victor, who lusts after Queta and is later revealed to be a murderer, here, as in other films in this genre, the suggestion of danger and criminality is associated with the same space where Black characters also labor, but there is also a significant distance between the caricature, whether on the club's walls or in the person of Queta as rumbera, and the actual accomplished Black choreographers, musicians, and singers included in the film, whose talent and presence serve as a counterweight to the stereotyped appropriation displayed in the film. Their creative and innovative talent



Figure 9. Toña La Negra in a glamorous black satin gown with white wrap as she performs in a nightclub scene from *Amor de la calle* (1949, dir. Ernesto Cortázar). Photo courtesy of the Colección Filmoteca UNAM.

cannot be erased from the film. Toña La Negra's performances, as do the performances of her peers in the film, create a miniature space of negotiated freedom, a presence that gives the lie to the stereotype, and this is underscored by the derisive comments of two women patrons in the club who identify Queta's appropriation as fake when one says, "The rumberas are all exotic now" and the other adds, "Yes, all they do is this little shimmy and think it's that great." Their comments reinforce the gap between the caricature and the real, and neither the blackface dancers nor the club's painted walls can compete with the elegant Black singer and accomplished Black musicians and choreographers. The contrast between the accomplishment and elegance conveyed by Toña La Negra as herself or as characters who are performers in film with the limited or deficient dancing skills of light-skinned actresses playing rumberas plays out repeatedly and strikingly across several additional films, including *Cortesana* (1947), *Amor vendido* (1951), and especially *En carne viva* (1950).

The costumes and script for *La mujer que yo amé* (1950) go even further in



Figure 10. Toña La Negra, wearing sequined gown, in nightclub scene from *Amor de la calle*. Photo courtesy of Colección Filmoteca UNAM.

subtly centering Toña La Negra in the Mexican national imagination. *La mujer que yo amé* is a fictionalized version of Agustín Lara's life that portrays his rise from entertainer in a brothel to major international composer. He is also scarred by his unrequited love for Rosa, the daughter of his original employer. Discarded by Rosa and attacked by her date, Lara is left for dead near a river not far from the beach, ocean, and sun. He is rescued by Toña, who nurses him back to health. She describes herself as "neta Jarocha" to the composer, who notices her beautiful singing and asks her to return to Mexico City with him to become a singer, which she does. The film then cuts to a scene of Toña La Negra performing in a club amid the staged backdrop of a clearing in the forest at night, with active dancers and drums. Toña La Negra, however, wears an elegant black gown with square neck and short necklace around her neck. She performs to a full house, and the applause when she is done is thundering, which leads Lara to congratulate her on her angelic voice. She responds that her voice is that way "porque en ella libra todo el

dolor de mi raza” (because in it all the sorrow of my race finds expression). The manager runs up to her with shouts of “Bravissimo” and declares, “That’s what singing is!” To this, Toña La Negra responds, “Aumentame el sueldo y dejaté de piropos” (Leave the flirting behind and give me a raise). This exchange in the club underscores that we are to understand Toña La Negra’s character as compassionate rather than servile in caring for Lara back in Veracruz, and shrewdly understanding of her position in the entertainment industry in Mexico City. It draws our attention to her efforts to combat patriarchal and/or racist treatment that would limit her income in keeping with documented instances in her life when she defied racist and sexist conventions of the period, to insist on equal treatment and a greater share of income from her performances.¹²⁰ Later in the film, as she sings a ballad about separated lovers as commentary on the break between Lara and Rosa, who has spurned his love, Toña La Negra wears a beautiful white gown, the bodice overlaid with sequined lace and a skirt fringe at the hips that curls around and descends down the back of the gown, creating a train, as she holds a dark scarf in her hand in the style of chanteuse. The white gown, subtly suggestive of bridal dress with its lace and train, powerfully signals her virtue and stands in contrast to the deceptive and scheming Rosa. She remains Lara’s faithful friend throughout the film, but in these details, the film suggests she might represent more to the Mexican public. Throughout her career, Toña La Negra’s on-screen performance costumes alternated between the regionally specific Veracruz traditional outfit (or an updated version of it), the Caribbean-inspired prints with more ruffles and flounced skirts, and modern and glamorous gowns or outfits, suggesting that she crossed multiple borders in visual appearance, revealing overlapping diaspora and borderlands subjectivities.

VISIONS OF BLACK LIFE IN MEXICAN FILM

While her real-life fame and success influence how viewing audiences receive her on screen, race and gender combine with the affective demands of melodrama to foreclose particular storylines for Toña La Negra and the characters she plays. The impossible romances or dilemmas of women deceived or coerced into relationships in several rumbera films turn protagonists into self-sacrificing martyrs and reinforce patriarchal ideologies as they imprison women in particular roles.¹²¹ Toña La Negra, though she appears in rumbera

films, never plays a rumbera who is the desired protagonist, nor does she play a character who must subordinate herself to another or be rescued by another. Instead, in her supporting or featured roles in films she does not follow the above gendered scripts. On the contrary, she is sometimes the character who advises the rumbera to leave her captivity behind, as she does in *Revancha* in telling Rosa, played by Ninón Sevilla, that she needn't sacrifice herself to a gangster to pay her father's debt. In a few films, Toña La Negra's character is married or romantically involved; for example, she comedically plays a long-suffering wife to husband Chon in *Humo en los ojos*. In *En carne viva* and *La mulata de Córdoba* she plays a guardian to motherless children as well as a representative of important cultural communities and performance. However, her most frequent role is as herself, a successful performer, or as a character like herself, as in *En carne viva* and *Konga roja*. Therefore, while race and gender combine in melodramatic scripts to delimit her desirability, she inhabits roles that foreground independence, success or standing, and relationships with others.

La mulata de Córdoba (1945) is the most explicit in dealing with racial hierarchy and division of all the films in which Toña La Negra appears. The title refers to a Veracruz legend about a much-sought-after, young, Black woman healer who, after rejecting a prominent suitor, faces retaliation from him in the form of an investigation by the Inquisition and imprisonment and/or death sentence. However, in her jail cell, she uses a piece of charcoal to draw an enormous ship and, with the jailer as witness, jumps into the ship and sails away, escaping. The jailer's witness is important since his words appear necessary to effecting her escape.¹²² The legend, therefore, involves state and religious suppression of African diaspora and Indigenous worldviews in the history of Black life in Veracruz, as it speaks to the ways that patriarchal and racist power over Black women was not merely passively accepted. That the *mulata* escapes captivity by fleeing across the sea is reminiscent of the tales of enslaved Blacks able to flee back to Africa across the sea before or in death that emerge in literature by African American authors Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison, and this legend of extraordinary escape is one to keep in mind when viewing this Mexican film.

The 1945 film centers a story of racial intermarriage that results in tragedy for the progeny of that marriage. Set on a sugar plantation, the drama revolves around the young *mulata* Belen de San Juan, played by Lina Montes, who is the daughter of plantation owner Don Luis de San Juan and his Black wife María Belen, whom he married decades before over the racist objections

of his brother Don Carlos and the misgivings of Toña La Negra and her peers. The attitudes of the latter change when Don Luis marries María Belen and stands up for his mixed-race daughter to his racist brother. In the film's present, Belen's parents have both passed, and her uncle Don Carlos and his associate Don Antonio scheme to remove her from her the wealth, power, and standing she enjoys as a landed woman. Don Antonio's light-skinned son Pedro, meanwhile, returns to town and rejects the racist exclusion of Belen that his father and fiancé seek. A deadly duel between Don Carlos and Pedro only results in Belen's death when she, Don Antonio, and her friend Juan Miguel, played by the Black actor Juan José Laboriel, each attempt to alter or end the duel.¹²³ Interceding to protect Pedro from murdering his father, Don Carlos, Belen catches Juan Miguel's bullet, sacrificing herself.

Belen's death at the end of the film by the hand of her Black friend and would-be suitor, Juan Miguel, whose bullet was aimed at Don Carlos, has been read as a familiar and racist cinematic trope that disappears Black characters while also making them responsible for violence in order to effect transformation in white characters, whose redemption, in the end, is what matters. As she dies, Belen's words to Juan Miguel suggest that trope: "I am happy because . . . this has given me the opportunity to show that we, like they, have a soul." These words echo a statement made earlier in the film by Juan Miguel to Don Carlos that Black Mexicans are "children of God like you and like everyone," and they prompt the now-repentant Don Carlos to recognize his error, reverse his racism, and lament Belen's death. For viewers with knowledge of the legend, Belen's invocation of soul at death and Don Carlos's concomitant statement of reversal may also subtly echo the legend, allowing another final escape, albeit a Christian one.

Nonetheless, I suggest that scenes featuring Toña La Negra are as important as those featuring Belen in this film. In a substantial role as a guardian and adviser to Belen, Toña La Negra's visual and sonic influence in the film extends beyond that of Belen. Appearing in traditional and Caribbean-inspired costume alongside Belen and throughout the film, while the plantation owners and their children appear in modern dress, she in her clothing signals a racial and ethnic divide that is also a class divide. The musical medley of the opening scene sonically represents the cultural fusions of the region, with Toña La Negra singing to a rumba beat as the camera pans over a festive scene that includes rumba dancers, and soon harpists and marimba musicians enter to perform a huapango as dancers appear while the screen credits indicate that she performs with Eduardo Lanzetta and Los Diamantes

Cubanos, making evident the circum-Caribbean diaspora musical networks of which she is a part in the regional and folkloric uniqueness of Veracruz. The lyrics of the songs that Toña La Negra performs openly hail the Black workers gathered for festive enjoyment. Both Juan Miguel and Toña La Negra comment, at varied points in the drama, on the vexed racial in-betweenness that Belen inhabits, a state that makes her “too good” for a Black partner, despite the fact that all the men of color adore her, but “not good enough” for a white partner. Through their participation in the film’s open dialogues on racism, racial exclusion, and mixed-race Mexicans as well as scenes of communal gathering, Toña La Negra and Juan José Laboriel as Juan Miguel portray limitations on Black life as well as a powerful sense of community animating it.

TOÑA LA NEGRA’S ENDURING LEGACY IN MEXICAN SOUNDSCAPES

Upon Toña La Negra’s death in 1982, efforts to organize a public tribute in Mexico City were met with indifference. In contrast, the university, city, and musicians of Veracruz welcomed the opportunity to honor Toña La Negra and joined in efforts to create a festival honoring the famous singer in 1985 at which a statue commemorating her was unveiled. We learn these facts from a 1988 episode in the *Inmortales XEW* program on the Mexico City radio station, as the host plays the soundtrack of Toña La Negra singing “Cenizas,” whose lyrics reveal a speaker lamenting a love that is not reciprocated.¹²⁴ Yet if her busy multimedia career is any indication, Toña La Negra enjoyed enormous popularity among Mexican audiences for decades, and continued to perform, though less frequently, into the 1970s before her death in 1982 (see Figure 11). In the decades since her death, she is regularly included in the occasional radio tribute to Mexican music of earlier eras.

With her own perspective no longer predominant on the big screen, narratives of her place in Mexican popular culture emphasize her role as an interpreter of Agustín Lara’s songs, with little attention to the collaboration they shared, as discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, in a 1967 dramatized radio production of author Salvador Novo’s work on the national cultural history of Mexico—Novo was a prominent chronicler of Mexico City life—Toña La Negra makes a brief appearance, introduced as the best interpreter of Agustín Lara’s songs, and performs “Oración Caribe.” In what



Courtesy of Archivo General de la Nación

Figure 11. Toña La Negra concert appearance in the park. Photo courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City. Fondo Hermanos Mayo, Alfabético Artistas 1a. Parte, Toña La Negra, HMAA1236.

I read as an effort to reassert her part in their collaboration, she thanks all for the invitation to sing a song that she and Lara liked so much.¹²⁵ Several tributes to her upon her death praise her interpretations of Lara's music, tying her to an important Mexican cultural figure but also perpetuating a view of her as an instrument of Lara, obscuring the power of her own instruments: her voice, performances, and presence.

Yet a sense of Toña La Negra's impact and influence on ordinary Mexicans, particularly working-class and darkskinned Mexicans, emerges in the words of another chronicler of Mexico City life, the author and screenwriter Armando Ramirez. On the 2008 radio program *El soundtrack de una vida* (A Soundtrack of a Life), Ramirez's selections of music that made a difference in his life include "Cerezo Rosa Mambo" by Dámaso Pérez Prado, "Cada Noche un Amor" by Agustín Lara and sung by Toña La Negra, and "La Despedida" by Daniel Santos.¹²⁶ In Laura Barrera's interview with Ramirez we hear how Toña La Negra mattered to working-class people and, in particular, to the strong Mexican women who raised him: his single mother and his grandmother who raised him in the working-class neighborhood of Tepito. Ramirez conveys how Tepito is perceived by those outside of it when he

describes showing some of intellectual friends around the neighborhood, who “kiddingly” say things like, “This is Africa” and “It’s like New York,” so surprised are they by the vibrant street musical and dance scene as well as the darkskinned inhabitants of the neighborhood, yet he notes how these observations allowed him to really see and appreciate his neighborhood in new ways.

On *Soundtrack de una vida*, Ramirez gives his mother kudos for her strength in life and chooses the Pérez Prado song as a tribute to her since she loved to dance, echoing Pérez Prado’s comments on the importance of quotidian dance practices earlier in this chapter. The second “mujer fundamental” in his life whom he credits with giving him a cultural life is his grandmother, who hails from a family of musicians. Through her he learns of “Toña La Negra, Pedro Vargas, Agustín Lara, Jose Alfredo Jimenez.” His grandmother would tell him that “Toña La Negra was a great, great singer comparable to Ella Fitzgerald,” and Ramirez heard many of her records on Sundays when his grandmother would bring them out to play for neighborhood gatherings of music and dance. Not a shrinking violet, “Mi abuelita era más crítica y politicizada que nada. . . . Era simpatizante de la revolución cubana” (My grandmother was more critical and politicized than all get-out. . . . She was sympathetic to the Cuban revolution), Ramirez says. He credits his grandmother with cultivating a critical consciousness in him, which he associates with her appreciation for Toña La Negra and her music, and which grows throughout his life experiences.¹²⁷

While Veracruzans have reason to cherish Toña La Negra’s legacy as one of their own, she has clearly always spoken to, and for, a wider segment of Mexico. A rousing cinematic expression of this is her performance in *Una gallega baila mambo* (1950), when, at the end of film, she appears on stage with Los Trios at the Los Angeles Centro Social, a warehouse-sized dance hall full of Mexicanos dancing in a variety of styles. When she sings “Pachito Eché,” launching a call-and-response first with Los Trios, and then later with the massive dancing audience, a joyous and exuberant scene unfolds that conveys her appeal to a cross section of working-class Mexicanos. Today, a contemporary mural of her sits quietly behind the Museo Franz Meyer in downtown Mexico City, away from the busy and more visible thoroughfare just a block away, and *son* enthusiasts gather every Saturday in a small Mexico City downtown park to dance the afternoon away, revealing how Toña La Negra and the era of music she ushered in continue to matter in the lives of many Mexicans.

CONCLUSION

This chapter reveals the multiple ways that Toña La Negra contested and defied the limits to her inclusion in the visual and sonic realms in which she performed by cultivating belonging across geographies of relation, and this contributed to making her a much-beloved figure among ordinary Mexicans. Her work provides insight into the diversity of Black Mexican life in early to mid-twentieth-century Mexico both in the regions and in the capital. Her extraordinary and lengthy career promoted a consciousness both of Black Mexico and of Mexico's interconnections with multiple diaspora populations in the Americas. As a *jarocha* performer, she prompts us to recognize the spaces where Indigenous and Black peoples and cultures overlap and reminds us of the salience of "Afro-mestizaje" as a term of self-naming for Afro-Mexican populations that promotes bonds across the Caribbean with other diaspora populations and speaks to Mexico's darkskinned peoples.¹²⁸ Afro-mestizaje becomes a term and consciousness, taken up by Chicana Gloria E. Anzaldúa in her 1987 work *Borderlands / La Frontera*, in advancing yet another vision of relational consciousness, which Chapter 2 considers in greater detail to explore how Anzaldúa's and feminist women-of-color theorizing in the late twentieth century open a route toward greater consciousness of the multiple African diaspora populations in the Americas while challenging elite discourses of mestizaje.

CHAPTER TWO

Cultivating Consciousness of Race and Gender in the Chicanx and Mexican Borderlands

It was an exquisite *rebozo* of five *tiras*, the cloth a beautiful blend of toffee, licorice, and vanilla stripes flecked with black and white, which is why they call this design a *caramelo*.

—SANDRA CISNEROS, *CARAMELO*, 94¹

The dominant white culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our self-determination, it has made us weak and empty. As a people we have resisted and we have taken expedient positions, but we have never been allowed to develop unencumbered—we have never been allowed to be fully ourselves. The whites in power want us people of color to barricade ourselves behind our separate tribal walls so they can pick us off one at a time with their hidden weapons; so they can whitewash and distort history. Ignorance splits peoples, creates prejudices. A misinformed people is a subjugated people. . . . each of us must know our Indian lineage, our *afro-mestisaje*, our history of resistance.

—GLORIA ANZALDÚA, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 86²

The racism to which Black Mexicans have been subjected, the ubiquitous stigmatization of blackness in the Costa Chica, and the strong social boundaries that separate blacks, Indians, and mestizos from one another suggest that although Mexican identity has important meaning for people, it cannot be characterized as essentially consistent with the popular refrain and national slogan of unity, “*todos somos mestizos*” (we are all mestizos).

—BOBBY VAUGHN, “MY BLACKNESS AND THEIRS,” 231³

The pernicious myth of racial democracy that has operated in many Latin American nations, undergirded by the racial ideology of the mestizo (European and Indigenous mixed-race) subject as the desired foundational citizen

and representative par excellence of the nation, has long been unmasked. These Latin American conceptions of racial democracy and ideal racial citizen subjects were articulated by key nationalist thinkers across several Latin American nations in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the United States, one of the best known, and often cited, of these is Mexican José Vasconcelos and his essay *La raza cósmica* (The Cosmic Race),⁴ a slim, forty-page treatise first published in 1925 that advances a view of the historic and ongoing racial intermixtures of humans that is particularly notable among Latin American societies, and that Vasconcelos predicts will eventually lead to superior “Ibero-American” societies characterized by racial fusions, in contrast to Anglo-Saxon societies of white supremacy. However, Vasconcelos’s conception of mestizaje and the ideal future mixed-race subject worked to elevate particular aspects of Latin American racial and cultural inheritances, such as the Spanish and Portuguese, while denigrating and obscuring the knowledge, experience, history, and culture of Indigenous, African diaspora, and Asian peoples in the Americas. To the degree that discourses of mestizaje continue to promote views such as those of Vasconcelos on this question, they have been justifiably critiqued and condemned. Yet the Latin American context and Latin American conceptions have been presumed to be definitive for the United States and Chicana usage of the term, when, in fact, they are not. Context matters.

Vasconcelos’s early twentieth-century treatise participates in a long line of Mexican theorizing about mestizaje, as Agustín Basave Benítez suggests, which was not unrelated to debates and movements for political and economic power in the context of an emergent, and quickly growing, racially mixed population, as well as philosophical and pedagogical, included coerced, approaches to defining and forming national subjects in varied periods of Mexican history.⁵ While Basave Benítez’s work attends only to Mexican theorizing about the mestizo subject as product of Spanish and Indigenous populations, this chapter also considers Mexico’s African diaspora populations. Published on the heels of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century regime of Porfirio Díaz, which was dominated, as Cesáreo Moreno notes, by an “elite group of intellectual positivist thinkers known as *científicos*” who “resolved to prove that the indigenous and Afro-Mexican people were intellectually inferior,”⁶ Vasconcelos’s essay reflects the influence of his nineteenth-century Eurocentric education with respect to the superiority and supremacy of European peoples and cultures.⁷ During that period, “Afro-Mexican contributions to the history and culture of Mex-

ico were intentionally and systematically eliminated from much of the country's collective consciousness."⁸ This is, in part, what makes Toña La Negra's alternative project of carving out a space for the recognition of Black Mexican cultures and communities in film and music, discussed in Chapter 1, so significant. Yet, Basave Benítez suggests that while there is no longer any question that a racially mixed population dominates in Mexico, the supposedly much-desired corresponding cultural synthesis that Latin American theorists of *mestizaje* often advanced does not exist, nor can it given the anti-Indian racism of those theories and the continued contemporary marginalization of Indians,⁹ not to mention the anti-Black and anti-Asian dimensions of that theorizing, including in the work of Vasconcelos. In other words, he suggests, you cannot synthesize what you disdain; instead, elimination and erasure become operative.

In contrast, the 1960s and 1970s embrace of a *mestizx* identity by Chicana in the United States, forty years after Vasconcelos's treatise, challenged middle-class assimilationist discourses that embraced "Mexican-American" or "Hispanic" or "Latin" as whitening terms of identification and included a renewed focus on Indigenous ancestry and roots that sought to reclaim what had been erased from Chicana histories and consciousness, to assert not distance from that Indigenous ancestry but proximity, and to express pride in an aspect of Chicana identity that was continually and repeatedly denigrated in the United States with logics not dissimilar to those of Vasconcelos and his peers.¹⁰ The resignification of *mestizaje* in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s underwent further transformation in the 1980s with the publication of the groundbreaking volume of Chicana feminist and queer theory *Borderlands / La Frontera* (1987). In this volume, Gloria Anzaldúa subjects the inherited ideas of Mexican identity, American identity, Chicano identity, and *mestizaje* and *mestizx* identity to an intense critical scrutiny, one informed by a queer, gendered, and raced experience of exclusion from and unbelonging in nationalist frameworks of "Mexican," "American," and "Chicano." Like the protagonist of Sandra Cisneros's short story "Mericans," who finds herself in between these three groups, Anzaldúa must theorize another way and space of belonging in the borderlands between patriarchal nationalist identities that exclude her based on her linguistic repertoire, her religious heterodoxy, her darkskinned body, her woman's body, her lesbian desire. Anzaldúa, therefore, queers *mestizaje* to reclaim conceptions of *mestizaje* and *mestizx* identity as signifiers of a decolonial feminist, queer, and antiracist consciousness. She proposes that arriving at a "new *mestiza* consciousness" requires one to engage with the experiences of Black and Indige-

nous peoples in Mexico and in the United States on equal terms rather than paternalistic terms—in other words: to build relations of understanding, alliance, and solidarity based on mutual respect. In Chapter 7, “*La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness*,” from which the epigraph to this chapter is taken, Anzaldúa stakes out a position diametrically opposite to the Vasconcelian assertion of white Hispanist superiority by challenging the ideologies of white supremacy. Instead, she guides Chicax readers through a process of critical questioning and toward the adoption of “new perspectives toward the darkskinned, the women and queers,” ultimately leading Chicax to the conclusion not only that must we undertake the work of dismantling white supremacy’s erasures and oppressions, but that doing so requires a radical relational approach, an examination of how ideologies of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are intertwined.¹¹ Anzaldúa’s powerful call and groundbreaking work has reverberated across our field and many others, changing the critical discourse.¹² In the twenty-first century, it remains an invaluable treatise on the difficult terrain that thinking relationally invites readers to traverse together. It resounds in Chicax fiction and poetry, including Sandra Cisneros’s 2002 novel *Caramelo*, which portrays a mixed Mexican and Chicax family who, like Anzaldúa herself, live between the United States and Mexico, traveling back and forth frequently in ways that, as the novel reveals, colors and creates a borderlands subjectivity. The novel’s chief protagonist and narrator, Celaya, struggles to create her own “new mestiza consciousness” through a narrative that engages with both anti-Indian and anti-Black discourses among its Mexican and Chicax characters. This chapter, therefore, turns to the US-Mexico borderlands to reexamine Anzaldúa’s revision of mestizaje in its historical context, situating it in a longer Americas and American discursive trajectory, while also considering its contribution as a foundational text in emergent studies of radical relationality, before turning to a reading of Cisneros’s novel to consider how this fiction engages with a revised conception of mestizaje and histories of African diaspora and Indigenous displacement in Mexico and the United States.¹³

HOW A NEW MESTIZA CONSCIOUSNESS DIFFERS FROM THAT OF A RAZA CÓSMICA

“Mestizaje” is a contested term. The fact that leading Chicana theorist and critic Gloria Anzaldúa employs the term in her groundbreaking mixed-genre work *Borderlands / La Frontera* provoked, and apparently continues to pro-

voke, some controversy among scholars of the Americas. For citing José Vasconcelos, author of the “cosmic race” paradigm whose vision of a mixed-race people was deeply marred by essentialist and racist ideas, and for employing the terms “mestiza” and “mestizaje,” Anzaldúa was dismissed by some as not sufficiently knowledgeable about the context of Mexico and Latin America and by others as reinscribing white mestizo superiority while also facing critique by yet others for what they see as a romantic and appropriative claiming of Indigenous ancestry. While Anzaldúa was and is critiqued for lack of knowledge in Latin American studies, in leveling these critiques specialists in that field have rarely engaged with the rich body of scholarship in Chicana and Latina studies. A parallel situation emerges in the large body of work on Vasconcelos and mestizaje that does not engage at all with Anzaldúa’s revision of the concept; it would, in fact, be hard to find a reference to Anzaldúa at all in that voluminous scholarship. In all instances, it is striking how difficult it is for critics to acknowledge that a working-class, queer woman of color has elaborated a new theory of mestiza consciousness and mestizaje that revises an elite male Mexican philosopher’s idea to be explanatory of the reality of Chicana subjects living in the late twentieth-century United States, and of the reality of Chicana queer subjects in particular. As the above epigraph demonstrates, the actual content of *Borderlands / La Frontera* undertakes an important decolonial project. This chapter elaborates on this claim by exploring the discursive, cultural, and racial histories denoted by “mestizx,” “mestizaje,” or “mixed race” in both Mexico and the United States that are prelude to the Chicano Movement’s revision of mestizaje and Anzaldúa’s later revision. The significance of Anzaldúa’s revision emerges further in contrasting it and the Movement’s with Vasconcelos’s views. The chapter also addresses Anzaldúa’s figurative and theoretical intervention in resignifying “dark-skinned” and proposing a new mestiza consciousness that engages a geography of relation framework with respect to Indigenous, African diaspora, and Asian-descended peoples in the Americas.

Chicana Revision of Mestizaje

In adopting the name “Chicano,” activists of the 1970s movement understood that they were engaging in a powerful self-naming that reflected their distinctiveness as a racial and ethnic minority in the United States. As José Angel Gutiérrez said in 1972, “You’ve never met us. We’re not in the dictionary.”¹⁴ The 1969 “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” calls into being a “mestizo

nation” that is also a “bronze nation” that resists and contests the legacies of European colonialism and white supremacy.¹⁵ The nationalist and patriarchal elements of the Chicano Movement have been widely scrutinized by subsequent activists and community-engaged scholars—so much so that it is common to take for granted the feminist, pluralist, and LGBTQ-friendly meanings of “Chicanx.”¹⁶ The Chicano Movement’s revision of the racial paradigm of *mestizaje* has been less scrutinized, but it is the first step in a process of revision that Gloria Anzaldúa definitively extends with the publication of *Borderlands / La Frontera* in 1987. In tracing the alternative analytics that work such as Anzaldúa’s inaugurated, Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson note that “minority nationalisms emerged as part of the epistemological challenge to racist and colonial legacies of Western thought articulated by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States,” yet “Women of color feminism and queer of color critique profoundly question nationalist and identitarian modes of political organization and craft alternative understandings of subjectivity, collectivity, and power.”¹⁷ In this chapter I explore Anzaldúa’s legacy in the latter vein, exploring how her revision of the Chicano Movement’s revision of Vasconcelos’s version of *mestizaje* contributes to creating a new genealogy of thought and praxis.

A key document of the Chicano Movement, “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” defines the Chicane population in the United States as *mestizo* and calls for actions on Mexican Independence Day, both of which suggest some debt to Mexican self-conceptions as *mestizo* peoples, yet it also advances a nomenclature that differentiates Chicane from Mexican and revises these conceptions from the vantage point of a minoritized and exploited population in the United States. While Vasconcelos lauds the superior ideas, forms of civilization, and development of white Europeans, “El Plan” condemns exploitative economic models that predominate in the United States and demands restitution. Informed by the history of the exploitation of Mexican and Chicane migrant labor in agriculture, and its disposability, it proposes instead a vision of belonging on the land for those live and work on it.¹⁸

Vasconcelos’s treatise evidences his adherence to the “race science” of the era in viewing nonwhite populations as benefiting from the superior industry, intellect, and “vigor” of white settlers in the “formation of the future Ibero-American race.”¹⁹ In contrast, the Chicano Movement’s “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” contests “the brutal ‘gringo’ invasion of our territories” and, in advocating for reparations and self-determination, aligns itself with

similar demands by other marginalized groups in the United States challenging their compromised freedom, particularly the Black and Red Power movements.²⁰ Just as importantly, and contrary to the white-longing of *La raza cósmica* apparent in its statement “We accept the superior ideals of the Whites,”²¹ “El Plan” expresses pride in being of Indigenous heritage and pride in being darkskinned that is nowhere present in *La raza cósmica*, which suggests, at the very least, that mestizo does not mean the same thing in these two texts, and militates against a reading of the invocation of “mestizo” in “El Plan” as the white-longing advanced by Vasconcelos.

Vasconcelos’s translator, Didier T. Jaén, however, suggests that the Chicano Movement didn’t fully understand Vasconcelos’s aesthetic and mystical vision of humanity’s future:

The racial mixture Vasconcelos refers to is much wider, much more encompassing, than what can be understood by the *mestizaje* of the Mexican or Chicano. . . . biological mixture would not fulfill what Vasconcelos expresses with the idea of the Cosmic race, any more than a mixture of different breeds of chicken would produce a Cosmic chicken.²²

Jaén’s condescending dismissal of Chicano Movement appreciation for mestizaje displaces onto it a conception of mestizaje as an automatic biological fusion. However, a comparison of “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” and *The Cosmic Race* suggests just the opposite. While Vasconcelos’s treatise repeatedly predicts what “will” be in the future or what will naturally come about as superior Hispanist culture advances in the Americas, subsuming Indigenous, Black, and Asian cultures, “El Plan” lays out both “organizational goals” and an “action” section that clearly indicate that cultivation of consciousness and shared collective action are necessary to bring about desired worlds of greater social justice. Jaén’s assertion that Vasconcelos aims to produce a “theory of the future development of human consciousness” does not acknowledge the hispanophilia at the heart of Vasconcelos’s consciousness, one that reinscribes hierarchies of cultures and peoples in ways that echo colonial-era *castas*.²³ In contrast, Anzaldúa recognizes that her theory of human consciousness must confront the colonialist and Eurocentric legacies dominant in all spheres of human activity and thought in the borderlands—for example, the “claim that Indians have ‘primitive’ and therefore deficient minds” that pervades much Mexican theorizing about mestizaje.²⁴ Indeed, in the afterword to the 1997 edition, Joseba Gabilondo

cites Anzaldúa as one of a new wave of Chicana writers who “reuse Vasconcelos’s work in new and original ways.”²⁵

The “tolerance for contradictions” that Anzaldúa describes as necessary in the critical sifting and reevaluation of what we inherit from the past was surely tested when she read José Vasconcelos’s *La raza cósmica*. On the one hand, Vasconcelos lauds the independence leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean for standing for “the liberation of the slaves, with the declaration of equality of all men by natural right, and with the civil and social equality of Whites, Blacks, and Indians,” only to advance racist and essentialist conceptions of Asians, Blacks, and Indians in other parts of the treatise. While he condemns the white supremacy of the United States, he, too advances the perspective that Spanish blood and civilization are superior elements in the heterogeneous populations of Latin America and praises Spanish colonial conquerors, making his *mestizaje* a cover for hispanophilia,²⁶ which is not the first time in Mexican theorizing about *mestizaje* that *mestizaje* functions as a cover for hispano/white supremacy.²⁷

The Meaning of Mestizaje in Distinct Periods

It might be easier to see and understand the Chicano Movement’s revision of *mestizaje* as well as Anzaldúa’s later revision of *mestizaje* in contrast to Vasconcelos’s essay if we recognize that in struggling to insert elite Mexicans into hemispheric and global circuits of the respected classes while limiting the agency of Mexican subjects of Indigenous, Black, *mestizo*, and Asian backgrounds, Vasconcelos himself is reworking earlier notions of *mestizaje* that carried valence in the colonial, independence, and postindependence eras. His 1925 articulation of *mestizaje* firmly privileges the significance of Hispanic and European ancestries and whiteness generally in the formation of Mexican subjects, a turn to “whiteness” that was not uncommon in the 1920s in Latin America and the United States, most commonly expressed in legislation that privileged immigration from European countries as a counterweight to Black and Indigenous populations and a growing sector of mixed-race subjects (Latin America) or limited immigration from countries beyond Western Europe (United States).

However, the significance of Mexico’s mixed-race populations and the significance of racial diversity in contrast to racial homogeneity within the territory of what is now Mexico was not apprehended in the same way in every period. Under Spanish colonial rule, racial mixture proliferated—by

the coercion of conquest as well as designs on political control—yet this occurred so often outside the bounds of marriage that *mestizaje* and illegitimacy became synonymous, leaving *mestizx* marginalized and disenfranchised.²⁸ Ben Vinson III's history of *mestizaje* in colonial-era Mexico explores the evolution of the term “*mestizaje*” as well as the mutability of *casta* categories, categories frequently viewed as more stringent and rigid than they may have been in everyday colonial life “as the influx of Africans to the Spanish territories markedly increased,” spurring worries that “if other colored groups joined with the *mestizo* population, they could easily overwhelm the colony's whites.”²⁹ Such fears were grounded in the many instances of “free *mulattos*, *vagabonds*, and *mestizos* [who] joined forces with runaway slaves and *Chichimec* Indians” in revolts in raids, and soon both “*mestizos* and blacks came to be seen as somewhat coterminous categories: both groups were threatening and had to be controlled. All of this took place within a context of growing preoccupation over racial purity and escalating rates of miscegenation.”³⁰ This highlights the complexity of ethnic distinctiveness, ethnic/racial overlap, and access to power in the colonial period that would continue to fuel thinking about *mestizaje* into the future. Given the proliferation of *casta* categories and the fact that there is often no way of knowing whether the assignment of *casta* was made on the basis of lineage or on somatic appearance, slippage in *casta* assignments appears to have been the order of the day.³¹ Yet individuals in *castas* that included African-descended lineage of some type appeared to have intermarried with others, especially others in similar *castas*, to a greater degree than those without this lineage (creating the *Afro-mestizajes* that Mexican scholarship takes up), and persons from racial intermixtures involving Indigenous and Black-descended individuals appear to have gathered together in urban and poor areas.³²

In the independence period, elite *criollos* (Spaniards born in New Spain) built national unity against Spain's colonization by hailing *mestizxs* and Indigenous peoples as part of their independence coalition yet maintaining *criollo* rule and distinction from *mestizx* and Indigenous in the decades following independence.³³ Nonetheless, centuries of racial intermixture, which the *casta* system powerfully indexes, in what is now Mexico created “the greatest concentration of individuals of mixed race,”³⁴ which much Mexican theorizing about *mestizaje* attempts to address and valorize though not without reliance on elements of old *casta* thinking—such as the higher appreciation for white lineage and lower appreciation for Black or Indian lin-

eages.³⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, a rising intermediate, professional mestizx class emerged into greater power in Mexico; existing in tension with the privileged sectors of society, which were the criollo (white) landed elite and Catholic Church. Andrés Molina Enríquez, theorist of mestizaje in this period, views the mestizx subject as more Indian than not, and allied with Indigenous peoples in agrarian reform, making the mestizx subject the ideal national subject. His rejection of Hispano superiority, authoritarian, and quasi-Indigenist views, however, appear to delimit his legacy.³⁶ Nonetheless, his views represent attempts to codify the power and value of growing classes of mixed-race individuals who were emerging as leaders of the new nation. When Vasconcelos writes *La raza cósmica*, he does so on the heels of the 1910–1920 revolutionary upheaval led by Mexico’s darkskinned, Indigenous, mestizx, and working masses for land and liberty, and his essay represents not a continuation of that revolutionary ethos but instead a check on it. Within this longer framework of the evolving meanings that attach to mestizaje in Mexico, Vasconcelos’s revision of the concept corresponds well with other early twentieth-century movements of *blanqueamiento*, effected both at the conceptual and the policy levels in Latin America.³⁷

Considering this history of shifting meanings that attach to “mestizx” and “mestizaje” I suggest that we read Anzaldúa’s text as one that utilizes Vasconcelos’s text in a limited way as a route of return to discourses of mestizaje, not to reinscribe and uphold them, but instead to revise them once again. Her revision is not driven by a fascination with an ideal type of human or advocacy for racial mixing as inherently desirable, but instead with the histories, experiences, and ideologies that have shaped and named her in order to exclude her. Her revision is one that benefits from the Chicano Movement’s earlier revision of mestizaje, one necessitated by racial discourses prevalent in the United States.

The US Context: Troubled Mestizos and Mulattoes

The Chicano Movement of the 1970s represents a challenge to another version of *blanqueamiento* ideologies in the United States that manifested in policies of forced assimilation into mainstream white society. Yet, as assimilation narratives in mid-twentieth-century US film demonstrate, this process is not actually open to everyone, though the discourse operates to invalidate the cultures of those who do not conform or are not accepted into assimilation.³⁸ Cinematic portrayals of the mixed-race mulatto woman in

the early and middle twentieth century inevitably conveyed an eternally unhappy figure, a “victim of divided racial inheritance.”³⁹ In these representations we see the circulation of discourses denigrating mixed-race persons as troubled, unfit, and unhappy that undoubtedly reinforced regimes of segregation and assimilation in the United States. Not everyone could actually join or assimilate to the ideal racial and cultural subject of the United States even if they desired it, because some “mixtures” were suspect.

In earlier periods of British colonial and US national history in North America, legal prohibitions against race-mixing maintained an enslaved workforce, while in later periods discourses of the problematic mixed-race person fuel policies of enforced assimilation to the dominant white culture and society. Indeed, as Tiya Miles notes, South Carolina law in 1690 specifically includes “mustizoes” among those “deemed absolute slaves.”⁴⁰ As scholars note, “Laws prohibiting miscegenation in the United States date back as early as 1661 and were common in many states until 1967.”⁴¹ That is, for much of the history of the nation, the United States enslaved Black and mixed-race people or banned the mixing of races. In the wake of the Civil War and the defeat of Reconstruction, Cedric Robinson observes that American capitalists participated in “the conspiracy in racialism” that led to greater poverty in the South: “This better explains why so many poor whites (and Asians and Latinos) were placed under or threatened by cultural and social disciplines identical to those facing Blacks.”⁴² This included a resurgent anti-miscegenation discourse that transformed the figure of the mulatta from an “abolitionist figure . . . into the Jezebel” and an “icon of chaos.”⁴³ This discourse of the problematic mixed-race and Black woman furthered white supremacy and patriarchy and easily extended to other genders and populations, including the newly incorporated mixed-race population of Mexicans in the nineteenth century,⁴⁴ who, as Neil Foley finds in his study of Texas labor and race relations in the twentieth century, existed in an “ethnoracial borderlands between whiteness and blackness.”⁴⁵

Despite guarantees of equal citizenship in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans encountered disenfranchisement and dispossession under the racialized legal order of the United States. As Martha Menchaca documents: “Mexicans who were White were accorded the full legal rights of United States citizens, while most *mestizos*, Christianized Indians, and *afro-mestizos* were accorded inferior legal rights.”⁴⁶ These “inferior legal rights” for Blacks and Indians included the possibility of enslavement or indenture as well as denial of citizenship, while for *mestizxs* it could mean exclusion

from voting, practicing law, citizenship—which might bear on one’s ability to own property—and certain marriage partners.⁴⁷ Assaults on formerly Mexican Indigenous and Black people included the US denial of the property rights of Mexican Indians if they continued to practice tribal customs or maintained tribal governance, prompting some to adopt mestizx identities, while others lost traditional lands or were relegated to reservations. The many cases of Mexicans violently or legally dispossessed of property despite their supposed standing as “white” citizens also suggests that the large mestizx Mexican-origin population continued to be viewed as racially unassimilable,⁴⁸ a point underscored by Foley’s research on early twentieth-century Texas that finds Mexicans were racialized as nonwhite.⁴⁹

While lighter-skinned or white Chicanx and Latinx enjoy greater advantages than the darker-skinned in a white supremacist society, language, ethnicity, and cultural difference from Anglo-Americans can blunt that advantage. The discrimination felt by members of this group is undoubtedly more frequent and severe for its darker-skinned members, as history shows. From classifying Mexican American youth as “Mexican-Indians” to facilitate their institutionalization in the early twentieth century to instructions allowing recategorization of Mexicans based on “Indian or other nonwhite race” phenotypes visible to in-person census takers, to the systemic exclusion of Mexican-origin people from jury pools in Texas, evidence abounds of the quotidian lived reality of Mexican-origin populations as nonwhite groups in the US regardless of racial designations on official forms.⁵⁰ This racial categorization of Mexicans underwrites the labor exploitation of this population, as George Sanchez notes, when he quotes the early twentieth-century head of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Dr. George Clements, stating:

The Mexican is an Indian and must be considered so. He is undergoing active evolution. . . . His wants are few and his habits, while docile, are not in harmony with western civilization. . . . To pay him an exorbitant salary only meant to cater to his extravagance; to pay him a living wage and add to his future comfort seemed to be the only way in which to handle him.⁵¹

Clements was not alone. As Miroslava Chavez-García finds, early twentieth-century juvenile justice administrators in California advanced eugenicist claims about Mexican-origin children as “feeble-minded” and prone to criminality based on the “inferior biology” of their “Indian blood,”⁵² that is, their mixed race, their mestizaje. Ample research suggests that US Mexicans

and Chicana were frequently read as nonwhite, mixed-race Indian types against whom racist racial scripts about Blacks, Asians, and others were applied to enforce marginality. As Natalia Molina suggests, “Racial scripts provided a shorthand with which to construct Mexicans as inferior.”⁵³ As Monika Kaup and Debra J. Rosenthal observe, the nationalism of the United States is not so different from that of Latin American nations in that it “idealizes and essentializes the Amerindians while rejecting *mestizaje* and the *mestizo* as illegitimate and unnatural.”⁵⁴ These discourses and perspectives are also present in social science theories that predominated in the United States from the early to middle twentieth century in which mixed-race people were viewed as problematic and inherently troubled by virtue of their mixed race. For example, Robert E. Park suggests that “the marginal man is a mixed blood, like the Mulatto in the United States . . . who lives in two worlds . . . characteristics of the marginal man . . . [are] spiritual instability, intensified self-consciousness, restlessness, and *malaise*.”⁵⁵ From rationales for enslavement and labor exploitation to justifications for illegality and alienness to grounds for institutionalization and criminalization based on the assignation of pathologies, darkskinned *mestizx* were not assimilated or included as equal citizens in the nation. It would take the civil rights movements of Black, Indigenous, Chicana, Puerto Rican, and Asian American peoples of the 1960s and 1970s to challenge these misconceptions.

The Chicano Movement’s embrace of *mestizx* subjectivity and Anzaldúa’s further revision of it, therefore, emerges after a century of experience in the United States defined by discourses of troubled *mestizx*s and *mulattoes* on the lives of generations of Mexican Americans. As Rafael Pérez-Torres observes: “In the United States *mestizaje* has been used . . . to challenge accepted notions of American identity, notions often premised on the exclusion of the racial in the service of the national.”⁵⁶ The Movement’s declaration of itself as a bronze, *mestizx* nation asserted a pride in Indigenous heritage and mixed-raced histories that repudiates the discourse of the troubled *mestizx*, though it tended to enshrine an Indigenous-European heritage and elide the recognition of African diaspora and Asian lineages and cultures in *mestizaje*. Its challenge to ideologies of white supremacy opens the door to further and deeper revision by Anzaldúa, including the recognition of Black Chicana, Asian Chicana, and contemporary Indigenous nations and peoples. Nonetheless, the Chicano Movement’s consciousness of the need to engage in action to dismantle systems of exploitation opens the door to

more explicit engagement in solidarity with the struggles of Native Americans in the United States for sovereignty, and with the struggles of African Americans and Asian Americans for full citizenship, of which there are many examples.⁵⁷ The figure of the bronze warrior that emerges from the Chicano Movement is not without its shortcomings, gaps, and blind spots, and the masculinist, patriarchal, heteronormative, and nationalist elements of Movement's frameworks and practices have been challenged and revised by subsequent movements and critics, yet even in its initial vision it departs significantly from the Vasconcelian model.⁵⁸ The Chicano Movement and Anzaldúa share in conditions that perhaps make them easy to dismiss for some. Just like the framers of "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán," she was a person of color, a marginalized subject in the United States who was not an academic and did not hold the PhD degree at the time she produced *Borderlands*, much less a graduate from an elite institution. In contrast to *La raza cósmica*, *Borderlands / La Frontera* disrupts the colonial imposition of racial ideologies that divide and devalue as it explores sites and identities formed in cross-cultural exchange that must be interrogated. Yet just as "El Plan" provoked debate, discussion, and critique, so, too, does *Borderlands* in its further rewriting of *mestizaje* to signify a critical mobility.⁵⁹

The Decolonial Vision of Anzaldúa's Radical Relationality

Though she frequently names Mexican, Anglo, and Indigenous lineages in describing her own experience as a *mestiza*, Anzaldúa also launches an appreciation for the heterogeneity that the term "Chicanx" embodies in the delineation of the necessity for deepening our knowledge of "our Indian lineage, our *afro-mestizaje*, our history of resistance."⁶⁰ She resists collapsing the distinct lived experiences of racial/ethnic groups she later enumerates: "Chicano, *indio*, American Indian, . . . Black, Asian."⁶¹ In the latter phrase she deploys the blanket category of *indio* to encompass all Mexican indigenous on par with the term "American Indian" in a way that shifts *indio* from the register of the perjorative to the register of recognition. Writing in the 1980s, Anzaldúa employs the term "afro-mestizaje," coined by Mexican scholars, to describe Black inhabitants of the US-Mexico borderlands, a term that continues to circulate, among others, within Mexico to name Black belonging as well as intermixture with Indigenous peoples in the nation. Her language indicates that, while focusing on what brings her particular mixed-race self

into being and into consciousness, she does not conflate that mixed-race self with all other groups who or may not claim the same affiliations, ancestries, national, or binational origins.⁶² As Lee Bebout observes:

Anzaldúa's community of struggle is forged not through the foregrounding of sameness, but through the simultaneous individual and collective respect for commonalities and differences, those differences that are rejected by and disrupt the master-narratives of white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity.⁶³

In overtaking Vasconcelos's idea of *mestizaje* with her own, she not only enlivens the term anew, but also, as José Aranda observes, redefines Chicana studies.⁶⁴ That redefinition of Chicana studies moves the field in the direction of radical relational studies.⁶⁵

Adding "New" to "Mestiza": A Project of Resignification

When, in 1987, Gloria E. Anzaldúa cites Vasconcelos in her further revision of both his and the Chicano Movement's version of *mestizaje*, she also immediately marks the limit of her citation by invoking not the superiority and eventual triumph of Vasconcelos's Hispanist Iberian subject mixed with other races, but instead the "racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollination" underway—that is, mutually informing, equally significant, and valuable exchange on the multiple levels of ideas, practices, and relationships—that could lead to a "a new *mestiza* consciousness."⁶⁶ The temporality of "new," the contingency of "could," and the focus on "consciousness" matter in her elaboration of a different meaning of *mestiza* and *mestizaje*. Anzaldúa presents *mestizaje* as a process that *could*—not Vasconcelos's "will," but *could*—lead to a "a new *mestiza* consciousness."⁶⁷ The contingency of "could" unfolds further in Anzaldúa's description of the work required to create a new consciousness: a new *mestiza* enacts a "rupture with all oppressive traditions," "reinterprets history," "adopts new perspectives toward the darkskinned, women and queers," and "make[s] herself vulnerable" in order to "deconstruct, construct."⁶⁸ Anzaldúa's use of the term "darkskinned" rather than the Movement's "bronze" signals a recognition of racial, cultural, and ethnic multiplicity among Chicana, which she furthers by calling for a cultivation of knowledge and consciousness about Afro-*mestizajes*, or how these terms might animate each other. The "new" and

“consciousness” that Anzaldúa combines with “mestizaje” to theorize “new mestiza consciousness” thereby matter in her elaboration of different meanings of mestiza and mestizaje, resignified in her work to denote a critical consciousness of self in relation to one’s varied cultural, racial, ethnic, and gendered inheritances and in relation to others with distinct cultural, racial, ethnic, and gendered inheritances who share in conditions of dispossession, marginalization, and subordination.

Anzaldúa observes that “the borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within,” and she suggests that the “new *mestiza*” “learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality . . . she turns the ambivalence into something else.”⁶⁹ This is not a call from Anzaldúa to hegemonically occupy the space of others but instead her figurative description of what it means to cultivate awareness of being the “undesirable” so that one can learn both about the targets and aims of exclusion as well as the experiences and histories of others. “To be” in this instance is to cultivate knowledge of the workings of white supremacy so that one might participate in creating “something else.” This call echoes in M. Jacqui Alexander’s conception of what radical change will entail: “We are not born women of color. We become women of color. In order to become women of color, we would need to become fluent in each others’ histories. . . . We would have to unlearn an impulse that allows mythologies about each other to replace *knowing* about one another.”⁷⁰ Indeed, Rafael Pérez-Torres notes Anzaldúa’s contribution in “viewing Chicano culture as racialized, relational, and hybrid” while Alicia Arrizon suggests that Anzaldúa’s “‘border feminism’ and queer epistemologies of alterity invoke a ‘new’ kind of mestizaje that transcended Vasconcelos’s notion of the cosmic race,” and positions Vasconcelos as “yet one more canonized male thinker that feminists, especially lesbians, confront with defiance.”⁷¹

Part of Anzaldúa’s decolonial project involves figuratively recasting the dark, darkness, and underground (and by extension the darkskinned) as a creative force rather than the evil and hellish force it represents in much Western thought. *Borderlands / La Frontera* is, after all, a mixed-genre text written by a theorist, poet, and fiction writer. Her embrace of the serpent and its relationship to earth—“creativity, the basis of all energy and life”—forms part of this rewriting, as does her recognition of the colonial division of “upper (light)” aspects of Indigenous divine figures from “underworld

(dark)” aspects.⁷² From her discussion of the power of the “black, glossy surface” of the obsidian mirror in Mesoamerican culture as route to seeing, self-awareness, and knowledge to her theorizing of the act of “descending” in the Coatlicue state as a necessary and productive confrontation with resistance, Anzaldúa reimagines the dark, darkness, and descending as “matter, the maternal, the germinal, the potential” that makes change possible.⁷³ In making darkness constitutive of knowledge, awareness, and creativity, she revalues Blackness and brownness and explicitly claims as her own the project of changing metaphors and associations with evil that attached to “dark-skinned people.”⁷⁴

Borderlands / La Frontera opens with a poem that declares,

To show the white man what she thought of his
arrogance,
 Yemayá blew that wire fence down.
 This land was Mexican once,
 was Indian always
 and is
And will be again.⁷⁵

In imagining the African diaspora Orisha Yemaya as an agent in dismantling white supremacist rule and the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty, the poem positions the new mestiza subject as one who embraces the multiple worldviews that populate the borderlands and values this knowledge as she distances herself from the project of settler colonialism. The new mestiza speaker in this poem may be Afro-mestiza or may simply recognize her responsibility to know about the African diaspora and Indigenous peoples of the Americas. In recognizing the shared experience of these disparate groups as borderlands subjects, the poem leads to a deeper interrogation of their interrelationship.

In one of the last critical essays that she composed before her untimely death in 2004, Anzaldúa maintains the value of her resignification of the term “mestizaje” as one that conveys critical mobility. In that essay, Anzaldúa anticipates the emerging field of comparative racialization when she says that “I also like some form of the word mestizo/mestizaje as we’re all mixed, whether biologically or culturally. . . . This hybrid identity. . . it’s a result of living in multicultural communities, not isolated cultures in tidy *jaulas* but in relational dynamics.”⁷⁶ In that essay, dedicated to thinking about the

questions of identity and pan-*latinidad*, Anzaldúa discusses mestiza as an identity formed in “relational dynamics” and mestizaje as a process that centers negotiation, transgression of boundaries, and decolonizing reimagination that can assist in challenging the subordination of “Afro-mestizo and indiomestizo” subjects and create greater collaboration and solidarity within and between Latinx studies and “Native American, Women’s Afro-American, Asian, and Queer Studies.”⁷⁷ She does not deploy the phrase “We’re all mixed” as an excuse for not recognizing difference or as a cover for whiteness, nor does she suggest an erasure of Indigenous Latinx or Black Latinx under the general rubric of mestizx or a desire to pretend that the mestiza subject subsumes these other experiences, subjectivities, and consciousnesses. Instead, she outlines a reason for her feminist commitment to interrogating and acting to unmake colonial racial ideologies, to recognizing that “mestizx,” “Black,” and “Indigenous” are themselves categories of multiplicity in the Americas, as theorists of diaspora and indigeneity have explored. While in *Borderlands / La Frontera* she offers a new theory of mestizaje that creates critical mobilities for engaging in decolonial work, in her later theoretical work on *conocimiento*⁷⁸ Anzaldúa further elaborates on the “relational dynamics” that she discusses above as so central to that new mestiza consciousness.

Cultivating a new mestiza consciousness, however, is ongoing work. One way this work occurs is through the process of spiritual mestizaje, wherein religion and spirituality are reimagined and renewed in cultivating a new mestiza consciousness.⁷⁹ This critical mobility is fundamentally a decolonial project in three ways. First, engaging in this critical mobility is a task not only of the mind but also of the body and psyche and spirit: it is multimodal and requires every part of the self. This approach immediately places Anzaldúan thought outside the religious traditions that accompanied and rationalized colonization, for which the body remains a site of discipline and not pleasure or knowledge. Her work represents a move beyond Western epistemologies that conceive of the (racialized and gendered) rational mind as the only source of knowledge. Second, engaging in spiritual mestizaje requires research, critical thinking, and a willingness to shift and open in new directions through writing and practice. This research includes seeking out the knowledge stored in all of the above modes in our own archives as well as those of our communities, relatives, and friends, and those held in canonized cultural, social, and academic repositories. In this way, Anzaldúa prompts us to uncover, recover, and reimagine that which colonization and

domination have attempted to erase and obliterate. Sifting through this knowledge with an intersectional lens opens the possibility of understanding not only how colonial ideologies continue to maintain their force but also other worldviews and ways of being in the world that have been obscured by dominant ideologies. This unmasking offers the opportunity to reimagine how we live in this world, to develop new worldviews. The third aspect of spiritual *mestizaje*'s decoloniality is its cyclical operation. Anzaldúa does not propose a new static synthesis or construct a linear route to a new and permanent higher subjectivity or consciousness—in a clear rejection of dominant (and nationalist) conceptions of *mestizaje*—but instead outlines what is an unceasing inquiry into the colonialist, imperial, and Eurocentric legacies that dominate in human activity and thought.

What makes this spiritual *mestizaje* is also what makes it decolonial: querying knowledges and worldviews that apprehended the world and the sacred in it differently than contemporary Western (patriarchal and white supremacist) cultures and mining contemporary Chicanx experience for the traces of these among this hybrid/transcultured population.⁸⁰ Seeking these alternative knowledges is not merely romantic, nor does it become appropriative in Anzaldúa's hands but instead underscores her commitment to a decolonial path, before we could understand it under the rubric of the term "decolonial"; in other words, she is not only interested in Indigenous heritage as a "usable past" but also invested in rethinking modernity's dismissal of Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

Mestizaje, Mixed-Race Studies, and Now

In an essay on interracial love, Myriam Gurba self-identifies as *mestize*. *Mestizes*, she notes, "vary widely" in phenotypic appearance, as she also captures the white-longing of racism that circulates among some *mestizes*.⁸¹ For Gurba as for many Latinx, "*mestiza*," "*mestizo*," "*mestisx*," and "*mestize*" signify a mixed ancestry as the term denoting that legacy is continually updated in novel ways to signal gender inclusivity. It emerges as a key term of self-identification because it speaks to subjects who do not fit easily into predominant binary racial paradigms or categories of self-identification. The 1890 US census included the categories of "White, Black, Mulatto, Quadroon, Octoroon, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian," and 120 years later these had shifted to "White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/

Eskimo/Aleut.”⁸² And yet we know from our earlier discussion, and from practices of segregation in the US South and Southwest, that these categories didn’t always include Mexican Americans and Chicanx, and even when they did indicate inclusion on paper, they often did not in practice. What does it mean to repeatedly encounter your illegibility in a society’s legal structures? Anzaldúa’s revision of and use of “mestiza” to also denote a mixed-race subjectivity and consciousness, one that does not devalue its Indigenous and African and Asian ancestries, or its relations with these populations, or the ways that it might overlap with these other subjectivities, resonates with how many see themselves, as it also insists on cultivating in those individuals a new consciousness about what this identity might mean. One indication of embracing this more complex view of *mestizaje* may be the 1990 census in the United States, which was the first to give Chicanx and Latinx an opportunity to select a racial self-identification beyond the preestablished categories, an opportunity that many took advantage of to name themselves in myriad ways, including asserting Indigenous Latinx and Black Latinx identities.⁸³ While the Chicano Movement embraced a *mestizx* identity that marked its distance from whiteness and revalued the Indigenous heritage of Chicanx, Anzaldúa builds on this and further revises it from a static identity to a dynamic and ongoing radical process of building relation through which one negotiates the complexity of racial, ethnic, and gendered experience in the borderlands. Her efforts to build a different critical consciousness extends the woman-of-color feminist project of building coalitional bridges in relationship with other racialized and gender-subordinated subjects and, through a geographies of relation framework, brings her theorizing and methods into dialogue with those of diaspora.

When Lourdes Alberto, who self-identifies as Indigenous Latinx, writes about the pain of hearing her Latinx peers in K-12 dismissively deride her as “Oaxac,”⁸⁴ I recall similar instances from my own childhood of hearing *indio* used among Mexicans as a term of denigration, a practice that my mother always fiercely contested. What Alberto shares and what I recall may be the nationalist paradigms of *mestizaje* that Mexican migrants bring with them to the United States, but they could also very well be the anti-Indian ideologies learned in social studies and US history classes, or witnessed on the screen or at the sports arena. In either case, they speak to the work that we have yet to do in dismantling settler colonial ideologies everywhere. The new *mestiza* consciousness to which Anzaldúa opens the door requires work,

reflection, cultivation, study, interaction, and activism, yet neither the path she opens nor the work required to engage it is widely known among the diverse Latinx populations in the United States.

In fact, in 2010, the State of Arizona attempted to ban ideas such as hers from the K-12 curriculum when it enacted a ban on Mexican American studies. Arizona's K-12 Mexican American studies program was a leading example of curricular changes beginning to emerge in many parts of the country where educators worked to update social studies offerings to reflect a more accurate and inclusive view of the nation. In higher education, ethnic and gender studies remain small and underfunded areas of inquiry throughout the United States. This then becomes another reason for expanding the ethnic studies and gender studies curricula. Work like Alberto's on "coming out" as Indigenous Latinx to make colonization visible as "an ongoing process" and to affirm the presence, existence, and agency of Indigenous subjects contributes to this work. In pursuing it, let us distinguish between radical projects of resignification and anti-Black and anti-Indian movements of *blanqueamiento*.

CARAMELO'S BLACK THREAD

I suggest that the epigraph from the Cisneros's novel at the beginning of this chapter referencing the quintet of colors woven into the rebozo that is a desired object in this story also symbolically represents the novel's preoccupation with the legacies of colonial histories and racial ideologies. The novel takes up the multiple ancestries that inform conceptions of Mexican and Chicana identities, echoing, in some ways, Mexico's recognition of its third or African root.⁸⁵ As a garment reserved for use by the lower classes of mestizas, mulattas, and Black women in the colonial society's policing of caste-appropriate attire, the rebozo reminds us of colonial-era castas,⁸⁶ and it also prompts us to consider, as Rafael Pérez-Torres suggests, the "relational and contingent nature of mixed-race identities" as well as the "differential forms of knowledge and epistemologies" they represent.⁸⁷ As an object formerly of the lower classes but now valued even among the elite, the rebozo represents a historic shift. As a central and much-desired object in the novel, the rebozo references a past that continues to exert influence in the present, an influence that the novel interrogates, questions, and aims to shift in some way going forward.

The novel, which is an homage to the narrator Lala/Celaya's Mexican father, chronicles her Chicago Mexican American family's lives over several decades, beginning in the 1970s, with a particular focus on the family's enduring transnational connection to Mexico—particularly its capital city—and to her father's Mexican family—a link maintained for many years through the family's annual summer trips to Mexico. This reading focuses on aspects of the novel that have received little, if any, critical attention: its exploration of Mexico's African diaspora history and population, networks between Mexican Americans and African Americans, racial ideologies circulating in the Americas, and racial posing among Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Although it sometimes promises more criticality than it effects, *Caramelo* is, nonetheless, both critical and innovative in its reincorporation of Black Mexican experience into the historical imagination, working to challenge anti-Blackness masquerading under *mestizaje*. In this way, the thread it makes visible is not merely a long gone strand of Mexican identity or relation, but an ongoing Black Mexican population as well as the ongoing possibility of Chicax and African American interrelationship across geographies of relation.⁸⁸ The novel, therefore, corresponds to both a dialectics of difference and a dialectics of engagement on a hemispheric and global scale to reveal the borderlands and diasporas of national unbelonging that Black subjects must navigate.⁸⁹

Borderlands versus National Belonging

Given the novel's focus on a Mexican American family's ongoing relationship to family and life in Mexico, studies of the novel's transnational borderlands and hemispheric dimensions have proliferated with reference to the multiple border crossings that *Caramelo* enacts, the networks of social relations on both sides of the borders it constructs, and the emergence of new cultural phenomena that combines the influence of two nations.⁹⁰ Adriana Estill, for example, reads *Caramelo*'s "particular 'migratory,' transnational and 'translational' narration" as one that triangulates Chicago, Mexico, and the United States to convey "the *praxis* of labor and creativity."⁹¹ This chapter extends this idea to consider the wider expanse of movement engendered by both labor and creativity in this hemisphere that recurs and continually places Black, Latinx, and Black Latinx subjects in conceptual, spatial, and subjective borderlands and diasporas. As Tereza M. Szeghi suggests, *Caramelo* focuses on transnational subjects with multiple identifications and for

whom “families, nations, and cultures are always already in flux.”⁹² The continual re forging of relationships to both places and social groups that this creates places cultural and racial mixture rather than cultural and racial purity at the center of the novel, according to Szeghi.⁹³ Randy J. Ontiveros offers a reading of the novel as one that charts Celaya’s path to independence, autonomy, and sexual freedom,⁹⁴ which this reading also builds upon by considering how the search for freedom from gendered subordination involves a confrontation with discourses of race and ethnicity. This analysis also converges with that of Olga L. Herrera when she suggests that *Caramelo* shows us “exchange and connections take place not so much across borders but beyond them, emphasizing not the force of borders as much as their fragmentation and dissolution.”⁹⁵ Herrera finds that the “Mexican Chicago” created in Cisneros’s work emerges out of an “investment in locality and transnationality that bypasses the nation’s imperatives and forms”⁹⁶ through the voice of its authoritative narrator, Celaya, who integrates these divergent spaces into one.⁹⁷ This chapter builds on Herrera’s observation to suggest that the world or worlds created in *Caramelo* not only by Celaya, but by Celaya in dialogue with others, do indeed reflect a dialectic of engagement that is consonant with the geographies of relation in this hemisphere.

Staging a Dialogue on Race

Sandra Cisneros’s 2002 novel *Caramelo* explores the overlapping discourses of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in Mexican and Chicanx consciousness, revealing both anti-Black and anti-Indigenous discourses, in a story that spans not only several decades of the twentieth century in Mexico and the United States but also features cameos of earlier periods in Mexican history. The storyteller in this historical fiction is Chicago-born Celaya, or Lala, Reyes, the young daughter of her Mexican immigrant father Inocencio and her Mexican American mother Zoila. The story centers on the lives of her family, including six brothers (Rafa, Ito, Tikis, Lolo, Memo, Toto) and multiple members of her extended family (Uncle Fat-Face and Auntie Licha and cousins Elvis, Aristotle, and Byron; Uncle Baby and Auntie Ninfa and cousins Amor and Paz)—all of whom also live in Chicago; Celaya’s Mexican auntie on her father’s side, Auntie Light-Skin and her daughter Antonieta; and Celaya’s (awful) Mexican grandmother Soledad and grandfather Narciso Reyes on her father’s side). The novel opens with the Reyes brothers and their families preparing to leave Chicago for their annual summer sojourn with Celaya.

ya's grandparents, Soledad and Narciso Reyes, in Mexico City. The stories of the family's experiences and adventures traveling to, and in, Mexico over the course of many years emerges through a narrative constructed by the competing voices of Celaya and Soledad in a contest over control of the narrative. This overtly dialogic form focalizes the multiple and competing memories, fantasies, histories, and myths through which each narrator seeks to construct herself, imagine her family, and imagine her people in recounting the lives and experiences of three different generations of the Reyes family.⁹⁸ Originally from Chicago, the Reyes children relocate with their parents to San Antonio, Texas, in the third section of the novel.

The novel's metafictional tactics reveal the active and conscious cultural positioning of each narrator as well as that of their subjects as *Caramelo* reveals not a singular, homogenous Mexicanidad or Mexican Americanness but instead identities that are heterogeneous and marked by discontinuities, where, as Stuart Hall suggests, becoming and being are in constant transformation.⁹⁹ In addition to the primary settings of Chicago, Mexico City, and San Antonio, the novel also portrays important events that unfold in Memphis and Acapulco. Mobility and movement, therefore, figure strongly in this twentieth-century Mexican American family saga, and it is that mobility—both chosen and forced—that opens up the possibility for a sustained consideration of the events and experiences that bring differently raced, gendered, and classed subjects into contact with each other across the Americas. While the novel does not include any reference to Asian Mexican experience in its rethinking of mestizaje, it decidedly decenters the Spanish-Indian dyad by introducing Black characters and histories in both Mexico and the United States.

The novel's subtitle, *puro cuento*, invoking the alternative meanings of story as pretext, lie, or rationalization, furthers the disruptive work of dismantling national and transnational master narratives of Mexicanidad that perpetuate anti-Blackness, anti-Indianness, and gendered inequalities. In reimagining the ways that white, Black, and brown Mexicanos and Chicana are interrelated to each other, and the ways that these populations historically interacted with African Americans, the novel interrogates cultural memory.¹⁰⁰ In *Caramelo* readers are privy to Celaya and Soledad's exchanges about remembered events, revealing their distinct historically situated imaginations as these impinge on their desired interconnections.¹⁰¹ The antiracist consciousness that Celaya's narration advances reveals her to be a narrator coming-of-age amid both antiwar and antiracist movements in the

United States yet also writing/remembers her story at a twenty-first-century moment of awakening around anti-Blackness and the emergence of diaspora studies.

In considering how the novel engages with African diaspora and indigeneity among Mexicans and Chicanxs, this analysis must weigh the speech of characters against the action of the novel because, despite the novel's openness about anti-Indian attitudes and their transplantation into the Midwest with the Awful Grandmother's migration, Lala's Indian half sister Candelaria is never accepted into the Reyes clan in the novel.¹⁰² Consider the scene of Lala's awakening to the knowledge of Candelaria as her half sister:

Candelaria wearing her shell necklace and jumping with each wave, as brown as anybody born here, bobbing in the water . . . Candelaria sparkling like a shiny water bird. The sun so bright it makes her even darker. When she turns her head squinting that squint, it's then I know. Without knowing I know.

This all in one second.

Before the ocean opens its big mouth and swallows.¹⁰³

Here Lala's fascination with Candelaria's skin color merges with a view of her as part of the flora and fauna (bird), but this pairing is disrupted by a facial gesture that unmistakably telegraphs her familial connection to Celaya (squint). Despite the following events that make everyone in the family aware of what Lala intuitively senses here, Candelaria is never accepted into the family, but instead packed off on the bus. The "ocean" that overwhelms Candelaria also overwhelms and silences Celaya. In recounting this scene, Celaya questions her child self by showing readers how the recognition of Candelaria's squint as a family trait disrupts the discursive reverie she is using to keep Candelaria apart. For this reason, the perspective of the child Lala/Celaya in the narration is powerful in critiquing prevailing racial ideologies by exposing their supposed innocence.

Yet Lala and her text remain, in important ways, unreliable, as Ricardo F. Vivancos-Pérez notes in his reading of *Caramelo*.¹⁰⁴ Vivancos-Pérez suggests that "Cisneros's figuration of the Chicana as a subject-in-process . . . amalgamate[s] the categories of child and adult," which leads to the position of always curious, not conforming, disruptive force that the narrator occupies.¹⁰⁵ Yet that convergence fuels limitations in the text in dealing with anti-Blackness since Lala narrates key scenes of interest in this study from the vantage point of the child, who remains largely an observer rather than

an actor in those events, unable to intervene or contest the destructive ideologies she reveals. Meanwhile, the adult narrator Celaya often fills in with extensive historiographical footnotes that support her literary homage to the father Inocencio, who is a central figure implicated in both maintaining racial hierarchies and blithely benefiting from them. While many have commented on the extensive footnotes the novel provides, these predominate in Parts 2 and 3 of the narrative versus Part 1, for particular reasons. Part 1 is told from the perspective of the child Lala, while Parts 2 and 3 are told from the perspective of the adult Celaya. Part 2 begins by staging a metatextual debate between Celaya and the Awful Grandmother on the kind of tale she will tell, necessitating the beginning of extensive footnotes to support Celaya's readings of events that precede her actual presence as a character in the family story. This extensive footnoting continues in Part 3 to further illuminate the worlds the Reyes family inhabits. But Part 1 is significantly lacking in footnotes, which I will return to below.

Multiple Meanings of "Caramelo"

The novel's title references an object much desired by Lala/Celaya: the silk *caramelo* rebozo of her grandmother, and as I have suggested above, I believe this object also symbolizes the novel's exploration of Mexican racial diversity, yet the novel may subtly undercut that suggestion with its own particular style of referencing skin color. The first time that the word *caramelo* appears in the novel is not in relation to the rebozo but instead is used by Celaya to describe what she sees as the beautiful brown copper skin color of Candelaria, the servant girl whose mother, Amparo, does the laundry for the Reyes household in Mexico City and, as discussed above, turns out to be Celaya's half sister. Celaya describes Candelaria's skin color as *caramelo*, or "bright as a copper *veinte centavos* coin after you've sucked on it" and "deep as burnt-milk candy."¹⁰⁶ Celaya means for her description of Candelaria as *caramelo* to underscore the beauty of this particular darkskinned subject. Her language, however, mirrors the perspective of her child self, a self that unconsciously imbibes the racial ideologies of her world in imagining the darker-skinned Candelaria as something to be consumed (candy) or used (penny), or a servant girl whose value can be extracted from her (sucked penny). The term *caramelo* thereby works in two directions simultaneously to revise exclusions of Black and Indian subjects from the story of present-day Mexico and ideologies of racism embedded in normative beauty stan-

dards that prize light-skinned subjects as it also reveals how deeply these racial ideologies run.

The second invocation of *caramelo* in the novel further suggests its interest in examining racial intersections in the Americas. In the section of the novel where we hear the story of Narciso's and Soledad's lives before they were ever Celaya's grandparents, we learn that in the early twentieth century Narciso once lived in Chicago, in flight from war in Mexico. There he frequents "the black-and-tan clubs on South State Street" and meets and falls in love with African American dancer and performer Josephine Wells (maiden name Freda McDonald and later stage name Josephine Baker), who is described as possessing "caramel skin."¹⁰⁷ The portrayal of Mexican and African American interrelationship in Jazz Age Chicago reminds us of the history of Mexican and African American migration to the city for industrial labor and the ways these populations encountered each other in neighborhoods of that era as well as later eras.¹⁰⁸ This section of the novel offers readers a fascinatingly tense discussion about race that attempts to balance the representation of beauty across skin tones, acknowledge racial mixing, critique racial violence against Blacks in the United States, expose racism among Mexicans, and represent the transculturated mobile Mexican subject as it also addresses the subtle ways that wars change worlds—and all while also maintaining our sympathy for a character who is, after all, the beloved grandfather of the narrator. The invocation of "caramel" to describe Josephine Baker subtly suggests the historical webs of interrelation and shared circumstance that have formed raced subjects in the Americas.

In a tale that features Josephine Baker in a cameo appearance, Celaya recounts how her grandfather Narciso, fleeing war in Mexico and persecution of Mexicans in Texas, lands in Chicago, where he meets Freda McDonald, aka Josephine Baker, also in flight but in her case from the Saint Louis riots of 1917. Celaya imagines Narciso describing Freda/Josephine as "milk with a drizzle of coffee," replicating the style of associating skin color with something consumable that Celaya employs throughout the narrative, though not always in the service of dismantling racial hierarchies.¹⁰⁹ A textual invocation of *mestizaje* emerges when Narciso professes his love for Freda in a letter to his father Eleuterio where he describes Freda as Spanish, Cherokee, and Black, creating a second textual parallel or convergence of experience between the *mestizo* Mexican and the mixed-race American. However, Eleuterio rejects this assertion of convergence and relationality

and instead falls deathly ill upon hearing of Narciso's plans to marry the "negra" Freda McDonald, aka Josephine Wells.¹¹⁰ Tellingly, in Eleuterio's view, Freda/Josephine can be only one race—*negra*—and the fact of her Blackness makes her ineligible for marriage into his Mexican family.

In comparison to his father, the text suggests, Narciso is not bound by racial hierarchies or the prevailing racism. Yet a closer examination of Narciso's infatuation with Freda/Josephine calls this into question, as it reveals that his professed love for women of varied hues and his sexual appreciation of Josephine Wells reeks of sexism and racism in another register: "He would take care of her, he would tame her and make her his," for now "It was like making love with a river of mercury, a boa constrictor, a weasel."¹¹¹ In imagining her grandfather Narciso's innermost thoughts based on the stories she has heard from her family, Celaya uses nature or animal similes to describe Freda/Josephine just as she did in describing Candelaria earlier. The adult Celaya's language mimics and conveys the grandfather's lack of critical consciousness, revealing the limitations of Narciso's consciousness just as she earlier revealed her own in describing Candelaria.

When Narciso returns to Mexico, he further confirms his backwardness when he takes advantage of the family's servant, Soledad, because, as the narrator Celaya mockingly asks, "Was it not part of her job to serve the young man of the house?"¹¹² Similar to the open conflict the novel stages between the grandmother and Celaya in narrating the events of the novel, this return to imagine the historical past of her family is loaded with the tension of competing loyalties and competing aims, though here these are not expressed directly. Instead, what appears to be a loving, hagiographic account of Mexican American and African American convergence in Chicago unfolds as a cutting critique that places Narciso firmly on the side of his father Eleuterio, establishing a patriarchal and patrilineal privilege that will later include his son Inocencio (Celaya's father), as men who maintain normative racial and gender ideologies but exempt themselves from these for their own convenience and pleasure. Their actions, and Celaya's telling of them, reveal the mistaken assumption that mixing races by itself will end toxic racial ideologies. Through the retrospective consciousness of its narrator and its meta-narrative architecture, the novel enjoins the Mexican Vasconcelian ideal of the *raza cósmica* that held sway for so long, revealing its white supremacist agenda and echoing the Anzaldúan emphasis on the work of questioning received racial ideologies.

Idealized Race and Beauty, or White Supremacy in Circulation

The novel does not exempt women from criticism for participating in the maintenance of racial hierarchies that often fuse with class or gender prejudices. Rather, in the central focus on the Awful Grandmother as an overarching and domineering figure in the family's lives, it even seems to displace responsibility for class, race, and gender prejudices onto the figure of the woman in order to preserve the novel's hagiography of the father figure. Celaya's stories about the Awful Grandmother and her Aunt Light-Skin (*güera* in Spanish) follow this thread. As Bill Johnson González notes, Celaya's translation of her aunt's nickname and other Mexican "nicknames or supposed terms of endearment that call attention to a person's racialized, physical characteristics" has the effect of shocking readers into recognizing the racial hatred embedded in everyday Mexican middle-class speech.¹¹³ Throughout the narrative, Celaya mercilessly exposes and mocks the Awful Grandmother's class and race pretensions. And even when she allows the grandmother to narrate her own childhood story, revealing how class and race prejudice were deployed against her, Celaya's sympathy for her grandmother and her growing understanding of what motivates her does not obfuscate her critique of the grandmother's racism, especially when directed against her own mother:

My son could've done a lot better than marrying a woman who can't even speak a proper Spanish. You sound like you escaped from the ranch. And to make matters even more sad, you're as dark as a slave.

The Grandmother says all this without remembering Uncle Fat-Face, who is as dark as Mother. Is that why the Grandmother loves him less than Father?¹¹⁴

The Spanish translation of *Caramelo* employs the word *prieto* for the first instance of "dark" in the above passage and *moreno* for the second instance of it,¹¹⁵ suggesting a harshness versus acceptance embedded in the varied terms for describing darkskinned people. *Moreno* has been a euphemism for *Negro* when *Negro* was thought to be impolite, but its usage may also reflect acceptance of racial mixture or of racial hierarchy.¹¹⁶ More recently, activists have reclaimed "*prieto*" to assert pride and power, perhaps akin to Anzaldúa's use of darkskinned.¹¹⁷ In using two different terms for the same term used in English, the Spanish-language version highlights the racism of the grandmother and alerts us to the subtleties and reinscriptions of racism in specific terms.

Celaya portrays the Awful Grandmother as a woman bound to racist and classist ideologies that manifest in intrafamilial relationships. The Awful Grandmother's racial pretensions, however, are of no aid to her in Chicago, where, as Estill observes, "she is racialized as the same kind of sub-Mexican that she perceives Zoila to be."¹¹⁸ Yet, as Celaya soon reveals, these ideas are more than just fodder for an intrafamily fight, for they are beliefs with emotional and material consequences for the Reyes family: the Grandmother later gives all her money to the favored and lighter-skinned Inocencio, Celaya's father, to buy a house for his family, while the darker-skinned Uncle Fat-Face and his family receive nothing despite sharing in the responsibility for taking care of the Awful Grandmother. The ever-observant child Lala can see the "bad feelings" this engenders all around, though her father and grandmother blithely ignore them.¹¹⁹

Despite the affection and love that the narrator Celaya feels for her father and grandfather, she emerges, in this text, as much more like her mother in many ways, beginning with her racial, class, and linguistic difference from the expected Reyes norm. In a conversation with her cousin, the daughter of her Aunt Light-Skin, Celaya learns yet another way in which her Mexican relatives look down upon her when she inadvertently offends her cousin by questioning her name:

—How did you get named Antonieta Araceli, what a funny name?

—It's not a funny name. I was named after a Cuban dancer who dances in the movies wearing beautiful outfits. Didn't you ever hear of María Antonieta Pons? She's famous and everything. Blond-blond-blond and white-white-white. Very pretty, not like you.¹²⁰

The racial standard of beauty asserted by Antonieta finds echoes later in the text when a teenage Celaya, on another visit to Mexico City, notices the man selling "abalone cream" on the sidewalk, which will "make your skin whiter," as she is pulled along by her grandmother on an errand.¹²¹ Through these instances in which her grandmother and cousin assert a phenotypic difference between themselves on the one hand and Celaya and her darkskinned Chicana mother on the other hand, the Reyes women uphold anti-Indian and anti-Black discourses. Their delineation of difference, however, is also a class difference in which darkness is associated with slavery and whiteness is associated with fame and wealth. The power of this very association in Mexican discourse is what makes the supposed skin-lightening cream a viable product for street vendors in Mexico City. The social consequence of domi-

nant discourse becomes apparent when Celaya's mother Zoila says, "Whenever I enter a room, your Aunty Light-Skin and your Grandmother stop talking," leaving Zoila outside of the family circle.¹²² Celaya's cousin Antoineta, having imbibed such discourses, also participates in the quotidian enforcement of racial and social distinction when she chastises Celaya for playing with the servant girl Candelaria by scolding, "How can you let that Indian play with you?"¹²³ In this latter instance, Antoineta attempts to hail Lala into identifying with herself and her mother. In other words, she attempts to get Lala to buy into a discourse of white-striving *mestizaje*, yet her previous racialization of Lala is not so easily forgotten.

Celaya's narration of these events reveals that for her younger observant self, the events made an indelible impression. I suggest that one reason these comments are unforgettable is that Lala does not see her mother or herself as her father's family does. In contrast to the white-striving of the Reyes family evidenced above, Celaya appreciates her mother's beauty:

Mother with those cat-eyed sunglasses, looking out at the street, out at nowhere, out at nothing at all, sighing. A long time. In a new white dress she bought especially for this trip. A sleeveless dress she ironed herself, that makes her dark skin look darker, like clay bricks when it rains. And I think to myself how beautiful my mother is, looking like a movie star right now, and not our mother who has to scrub our laundry.¹²⁴

In the United States, Lala's mother might be read as an inferior mixed-blood, tainted with Indianness, and the Reyes family women appear to read her in similar ways. Here Celaya evinces a more discerning appreciation for beauty as she describes her mother's gestures and careful selection and physical appearance, ultimately reimagining standards of beauty to include multiple skin colors and statuses—and another way we might read the narrator's fascination with multiple skin hues throughout the narrative. The "look," however, that Celaya believes her mother projects is one of a "movie star" and not the everyday mother who does laundry, effectively reinscribing notions of beauty linked to leisure and class as it also reminds us of the audiences discussed in Chapter 1 who appreciate seeing the glamorous and dark-skinned Toña La Negra on screen.

Caramelo also presents Zoila, Celaya's mother, as possessed of a racial consciousness different from that of the Reyes family and her husband Ino-

cencio. While Inocencio proudly describes being forced to enlist in the US military in an earlier era as adhering to the duties of a “gentleman,” maintaining the class airs, which are also racial airs, of the Reyes family, Zoila expresses disgust with the draft of young men of color to fight in the Vietnam War. Zoila’s class consciousness favors the working class and recognizes its racial dimensions when she observes that it is “brown and black faces are up on the front line” of the Vietnam War.¹²⁵ I will return to consider Zoila’s racial consciousness again at the end of this chapter.

Much later in the novel, extreme color-consciousness emerges among Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the singles ads of a San Antonio newspaper that the Awful Grandmother peruses during the family’s trip there to find housing. In the seven ads she reads, two singles in search of love describe themselves as “white” or “white-skinned” and similarly indicate that they seek callers who are “light or fair-skinned” or “moreno claro.”¹²⁶ Four of the ads don’t mention skin color or race at all, while the fifth states explicitly that “color, appearance, and nationality don’t matter, but qualities and thoughts do.”¹²⁷ By this point in the narrative, readers are well aware that the Grandmother is not only color-conscious but racist, a fact emphasized in Chapter 58, “My Kind of Town,” when the Awful Grandmother, who is taking over a granddaughter’s room in Chicago as her own, prompts the granddaughter to remove a poster of the Jackson Five from the wall because “why anyone would want pictures of *negros*.”¹²⁸ With every new utterance it seems that the Awful Grandmother keeps cementing her status as an awful grandmother. This episode, however, suggests that in Chicago she is not alone in seeking some sort of superiority over others within a class- and race-stratified city, though such desires require mental acrobatics.

Yet silence about race is not necessarily antiracism. In the extended scene of family feud wherein the Awful Grandmother launches a racist attack against Zoila, Inocencio never speaks in defense of his wife. He does take his wife, rather than his mother, back to Mexico City, effectively siding with her, but here I adopt the narrator Celaya’s often mocking tone to ask: What else is he going to do with seven children? Take care of them himself? Although Celaya describes him as descended from the peoples of “Tunis. Carthage. Fez. Cartagena. Seville,”¹²⁹ her narration of events reveals that Inocencio assumes the privileges of white masculinity as his own but never claims these aloud in the language of race.

Recovering Black Mexico's History?

... the old mansion built by the *conquistadores* and their children. Once Indians dressed in livery had stood at attention in front of these colonial doors. Once the pearl-and-diamond-adorned daughters and wives of *las familias buenas* had traveled to church in tasseled sedan chairs carried by West African slaves. Long ago, the finest days of these residences were already history.¹³⁰

In a flashback to the past, the passage above describes the old colonial mansion where Soledad Reyes (the Awful Grandmother) goes to work at the age of twelve as a servant girl to her wealthier city cousins, the Reyes family, who occupy a third-floor apartment in the building. The passage is but one example of the ways that *Caramelo* works to weave the history of Mexico's Black population into its multigenerational family saga. The text links the wealth of those inhabiting the old mansions with the colonial-era slave trade that benefits them and, in another instance of seeming admiration that instead reveals cutting critique—Cisneros is a master of the *indirecta*—the linkage calls into question the supposed “goodness” of families known as “*las familias buenas*.” Our narrator's final observation and doubled emphasis that the “finest days” of such places were long gone even long ago places a question mark over any notion that these mansions ever represented anything to be celebrated.

Mexico's African-descended peoples and their histories, cultures, and experiences in the colonial, independence, postindependence, and contemporary periods have not been ignored in the research, but neither have they approximated the volume of research on other populations or aspects of Mexico. However, in recent decades there is significant renewed interest in this aspect of Mexican life that has extended beyond earlier anthropologically focused work to include history, philosophy, dance, performance, film, and literature.¹³¹ *Caramelo's* inclusion of this aspect of Mexican history and its exploration of Mexican American and African American encounters, therefore, places it among contemporary efforts to consciously write Black Mexico back into the imagined nation, and I want to suggest that it does this in two additional ways: first, by situating key events in Acapulco that bring the Reyes family into contact with the Vidaurri family and, second, by referencing Mexican cinema and performance of the early twentieth century.

The Awful Grandmother's racist rant against Zoila takes place during a family visit to a vacation hot spot of the latter half of the twentieth-century: Acapulco. Acapulco and the province in which it is located, Guerrero, has

long been home to a historically significant Black Mexican population. Though less well known as such than its “savvy mulato brother” Veracruz, according to Githiora,¹³² Guerrero evinces the enduring influence of African diaspora populations, often intermixed with Indigenous peoples, in cultural and political spheres.¹³³ Leading Black Mexicans who led the struggles for independence and abolition, including Mexican presidents Vicente Guerrero (who ended slavery in 1829) and María José Morelos, came from Guerrero. Yet Guerrero’s Black and mixed Black and Indigenous populations continue to struggle for recognition today. As Luz María Martínez Montiel suggests, “Los mestizajes entre negros e indios o entre negros y europeos llamados afromestizajes, no han tenido la misma atención por parte de los estudiosos que la que ha tenido dicotomía europeo-indígena”¹³⁴ (The mestizajes between Black and Indigenous peoples or between Black and European peoples called Afro-mestizajes have not received the same kind of scholarly attention as the European-Indigenous dichotomy has”). Acapulco as setting for the racial crisis the Reyes family faces in *Caramelo* therefore resonates with the actual history of the location as a site of understudied Black life in Mexico, with all the hints of invisibility and erasure and myths of racial harmony that that history implies. This unique history of Guerrero as a site of Black and Indigenous intermixing may also be the reason why the narrator Celaya repeatedly emphasizes the distinctive skin tone of Señor Vidaurri and his sister Catita throughout the narrative as a deep, dark red.¹³⁵

Chapter 18, “La Casita de Catita,” narrates Lala’s (Celaya’s childhood nickname) experience of her family’s rare sightseeing trip to Acapulco, which becomes the center of a racial conflict among the Reyes family. Lala and her immediate family join Aunty, cousin, grandmother, and servant girl Candelaria on the trip. And it is on this trip that the grandmother tells Zoila that Candelaria is Inocencio’s daughter, which triggers a fight between the couple in the presence of their family and onlookers and in which the grandmother intervenes on her son’s side with the racist rant aimed at Celaya’s mother previously discussed in this chapter. The Acapulco vacation soon devolves into a major confrontation between Lala’s parents, Inocencio and Zoila, over Zoila’s newly acquired knowledge of Inocencio’s having fathered the child Candelaria with the washer woman Amparo (and not likely a welcome sexual encounter for the latter). That the family crisis takes place in this location transforms Acapulco into a site of racial reckoning.

The Catita of the chapter title is twin sister to Aunty Light-Skin’s boss and silver-haired sugar daddy in Mexico City, Señor Vidaurri, previously intro-

duced in Chapter 9, and her somewhat rickety home, shaped like a boat, is where the family stays during their Acapulco vacation. Like Señor Vidaurri, Catita has a “big burnt face like the sun in the Lotería cards,” but in contrast to her twin, Lala finds Catita unattractive and manly, wearing a “borrowed man’s face,” and refuses to kiss her in greeting.¹³⁶ Lala’s description of Catita wrestles with the strangeness of seeing a twin as much as it reinscribes gender norms, but her racist and gendered description of Catita’s daughter, which is painful to read, reveals her own socialization in these skewed standards of beauty:¹³⁷

“Here is Catita and here is her fat daughter who smells of chocolate. Maybe it’s only her skin that is the color of chocolate, and I’m confused. That could be. I won’t remember the daughter’s name. Only her fat arms and fat *tetas*.”¹³⁸

Since chocolate is darker than red brick or caramel or copper, Lala’s description, which again employs food as metaphor, contributes to making the darkskinned daughter dismissable. Lala’s inability to remember Catita’s daughter’s name, or really anything significant about her, mimics the absence of Black Mexico in the Mexican national imaginary and suggests her own imbrication in systems of racialization that she is only beginning to understand. We might even read the description of Catita’s house—which Lala takes pains to describe as a boat-shaped house and boat-themed house—not only as a reference to the location of the port city but also an allusion to the modes of transportation that brought Africans to Mexico and the labor they performed in building boats in this location.¹³⁹

The Vidaurri family’s boat-shaped home also signals a space of in-betweenness, navigating borderlands and diasporas, that its Black Mexican characters inhabit. For example, Señor Vidaurri, who is Aunty Light-Skin’s lover, never enters the Reyes household, always remaining in the automobile when he picks up Aunty Light-Skin. Similarly, although the Reyes family stays in Catita Vidaurri’s home, they have little interaction with her or her daughter, spending most days sightseeing in Acapulco on their own, returning only to sleep. Readers, therefore, don’t learn much about the Vidaurris, suggesting a little-known experience and history. In this way, the text’s reliance on the child narrator’s voice of Lala to convey a racial innocence that is never supplemented by the adult Celaya’s extensive historiographic footing obscures the reader’s ability to also comprehend the racial drama at the core of this section as it relates to the ongoing recognition of Black Mexico.

Celaya Reyes returns to a discussion of the figures of Catita Vidaurri and her twin brother Señor Vidaurri three more times in the narrative, all in the third and final part of the text, “The Eagle and the Serpent, or My Mother and My Father,” which returns to the story of Celaya’s immediate family life in Chicago and San Antonio. In this part Celaya must come to terms with what her family experience and history mean for her and for them. This unfolds through a series of critical takes on events from Celaya’s point of view. She is no longer the observant but uncommenting child of Part I, but instead a narrator who offers many critical asides and observations on the scenes she portrays. It is also in this last section of the novel where the Vidaurris reappear.

The first mention of the Vidaurris in this part occurs in a conversation between Inocencio and his mother Soledad in the car as the Reyes family returns to Chicago from yet another trip to Mexico, this time with Soledad in tow. The topic of the disastrous trip to Acapulco comes up, and we learn that back in the day when Inocencio refused to take his mother back to Mexico City in his car, he had arranged for Señor Vidaurri to come and pick her up. Soledad recalls him as “a good man. A gentleman. He was always so very proper, so very correct, so Mexican.”¹⁴⁰ Her praise, in this context, is less than sincere since it is effectively a backhanded insult to her son, who did not take her in his car. Her critique of the lighter-skinned Inocencio unfolds as a description of darker-skinned Vidaurri as “so Mexican,” effectively, and hypocritically, reversing her racial prejudices because it is momentarily advantageous to do so. This praise is then immediately and explicitly called into question by our narrator: “Right. She forgets to mention how a ‘gentleman’ like Señor Vidaurri forgot to marry our Auntie Light-Skin.”¹⁴¹ The adult Celaya’s comment here shows her dedication to defending her beloved father against the grandmother’s critique, though her attempt to level a gendered critique against Vidaurri doesn’t quite land because, while readers intuit that Vidaurri is already married, we also know from the presence of Candelaria in the narrative that Inocencio is not a “gentleman,” if by that we mean men who respect their relations to women.

The second mention of Catita Vidaurri and her twin brother occurs when the Reyes family arrives to their new home in San Antonio, after a long drive from Chicago. When Celaya sees the house, after many inflated expectations inspired by her father and Grandmother, she describes it as “rascuache,” or “homemade half-ass” and soon compares it to Catita’s: “Our house looks like something out of Acapulco, like Catita’s house, in fact.”¹⁴² The par-

allel that the text plays with here is not a claim of similarity with the Vidaurri family on the hemispheric scale, but instead a more nuanced parallel between the status of the Reyes family in the United States and the status of the Vidaurri family in Mexico, each racially marginalized in distinct contexts but differently. In this way the text demonstrates an attention to the nuances of difference among peoples who move through the diasporas and borderlands of the hemisphere, and their differential access to power, without collapsing them into the same groups, an awareness, I suggest, that permeates the all the texts that are the focus of this study.

This attention to the differences among peoples and their contexts also emerges in the novel's discussion of a popular racist phrase. Celaya's grandfather Narciso tells the young Soledad (Awful Grandmother), who has been assigned to care for him, that "up north I had to work *como un negro*."¹⁴³ Later, Narciso's son, Inocencio will repeat this same phrase while working at an oyster restaurant in Little Rock. Inocencio declares to his Puerto Rican coworker one day that he has "worked *como un negro*" and then adds, by way of explanation, that that's what people "say in Mexico when they work very hard." The three sentences that follow, however, shift us back into the perspective of our narrator, Celaya Reyes, who comments on the unstable position of Mexicans and Latinx in the US racial hierarchy by clarifying: "When a white man says, —I worked like a black man, he means he hardly worked at all. But Inocencio is not a white man, although his skin is white. Today I worked like a black man, to the one other white man who is not white—the Puerto Rican busboy." Celaya's metafictional explanatory insertion emphasizes the contradictory racial in-betweenness of Latinxs in the United States, one that Inocencio's boss, Mr. Dick, makes clear in praising Inocencio's service and good manners with a toast to "your happy race."¹⁴⁴ However, Celaya's narrative intervention overlooks the normalization of racializing back-breaking work that the racist comment conveys and the too-easy conflation between Inocencio's position and that of a Black subject of the Americas. Her deep love for her father, evident throughout the narrative, complicates her critique here and reveals the difficulty of confronting systems of oppression within her family.

The final mention of the Vidaurris occurs in the very last chapter of the novel, at the scene of Inocencio and Zoila's anniversary party. This is a culminating event in the narrative as well as the culmination of the narrative that celebrates Celaya's parents and family, most especially the beloved father. Though chronicling the family's growth and its continuity, the nar-

native here moves toward a positionality different from the inherited discourses of race, ethnicity, and gender when Celaya begins to imagine the presence of her darkskinned, “Indian” half-sister Candelaria; Catita and her daughter and her twin brother Señor Vidaurri, “with his big burnt face like ‘el Sol’ in the Mexican Lotería game”;¹⁴⁵ Spaniards, Indians, mestizx, and her grandfather’s darkskinned sweetheart from Veracruz; and the light-skinned Mexican American Tongolele. This celebratory reverie of an extended “family,” however, runs the risk of subsuming all other groups under the dominant sign of the mestiza.

Nonetheless, *Caramelo*’s three mentions of the Vidaurris in the final part of the novel symbolically reclaim the Vidaurris and suggests a preoccupation with recognizing and reclaiming all of Mexico in its diversity rather than denial, one that leads to anticipation for Celaya at the final celebratory anniversary party that her father will finally acknowledge Candelaria as his daughter. But this doesn’t happen. Inocencio does not acknowledge his daughter, leaving Celaya to do it for him in a narrative that reveals all the family stories that her father insists she keep secret. Her narrative remembrance acts to call attention to and reverses the the patriarchal and anti-Indian marginalization of Candelaria from the family as it also conveys Celaya’s step toward a new mestiza consciousness.

Patricia Penn Hilden warns that a contemporary and progressive reidentification with Indian—and I would add Black—heritage or ancestry among Chicana in contrast to the earlier predominant conceptions and discourses that previously shunned these populations and racial formations in the Americas must remain attentive to the histories of genocide that those earlier predominant conceptions and discourses contained and represented as well as their enduring legacies. On the one hand, Penn Hilden acknowledges “values that differentiate a Mexican world from ‘ours’”—values informed and created out of the cultural matrix of Mexico, and on the other hand, she cautions us about again erasing the difference among us as well as the historically grounded continuous impact of anti-Indian—and I add anti-Black—phobias on Indian and Black Mexicans and Chicana.¹⁴⁶ These questions play out in the contrast between Soledad’s and Celaya’s narratives as Celaya observes the cultural differences and similarities between the United States and Mexico in a narrative that prompts readers to consider the values animating each. Yet she also portrays a diverse rather than uniform or homogenous Mexico, with varied populations and cultures often in tense coexistence, none standing in for the other or taking the place of the other, in a narrative that attempts to recog-

nize presence and relation as it questions inherited discourses of race and gender and perhaps underscoring, in its shortcomings, how getting to a “new mestiza consciousness” is not easy work.

Why It's Zoila Who Remembers Black Mexico

The novel's attention to important events and figures across the span of the twentieth century includes two mentions of Toña La Negra although no extended discussion or description of her or cultural contributions of region of Veracruz or other regions of Black Mexican populations.¹⁴⁷ Until very recently, information on Tongolele, who features more prominently in this novel, was more readily available than information on Toña La Negra, since the latter's critical reception has only recently begun to flourish, despite her appearance in twenty Mexican films between 1934 and 1951 and a prolific stage and live performance career.¹⁴⁸ Yet readers are introduced to another perspective on Black Mexico through the lens of Celaya's mother's story. In Chapter 50, “Neither with You nor without You,” Zoila describes her first significant love, a relationship with an older, more knowledgeable, more worldly, and middle- to upper-class Mexican man who has no qualms about exploiting the opportunity for romance with the younger and more naive Zoila. It is Enrique Aragon who introduces her to the “high-class music” of Agustín Lara, Trío los Panchos, and Toña La Negra, coding these widely popular performers of the early twentieth century both as treasured Mexican artists and as elite cultural producers.¹⁴⁹ Through her relationship with Aragon, whose family owns a chain of movie theaters and who, as Celaya tells us in a long footnote, is descended from a humble and fortunate man in Veracruz, Lala's mother learns about Mexican music and cultural performances deemed upper class but with wide national appeal. The Aragon family prospers in the United States through a chain of cinemas that show Mexican films for Spanish-speaking audiences, playing a role in the circulation of Mexican cinema and culture in the United States. Zoila's ruminations underscore her education in the importance of the hybrid Mexican bolero in early twentieth century, for which famous Veracruz artists Agustín Lara and Toña La Negra were well known, and which remains a part of her cultural memory decades later. That Aragon, whose relatives hail from Veracruz, and through him the darkskinned Zoila, keeps alive the memory of the extraordinary Black singer, performer, and actress Toña La Negra, while Mexicans in this novel, such as Aunt Light-Skin, forget it, prompts us to consider the parts of

Mexico that different immigrants carry with them as well as the impact of the extensive distribution and screening of Mexican films, including the rumbera films, in the United States among Spanish-speaking communities in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁵⁰ The popular expression that serves as title for Chapter 50, “neither with you nor without you,” therefore, suggests a more complex constellation of desire/rejection and push/pull that refers not only to the romantic liaisons that are the focus of the characters’ memories but also to the migrations and dispossessions that mark characters’ lives and, most importantly for this analysis, to the contradictory ways in which Black Mexico is acknowledged and circumscribed.

CONCLUSION

As this chapter demonstrates, neither conceptions of mestizaje and the mestizx subject nor the meanings that attach to these conceptions are universal across all time and space. In offering an analysis of how Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands / La Frontera* theorizes a decolonial subjectivity and consciousness by critically and methodically reworking conceptions of mestizaje and mestizx subjectivity, this chapter suggests that Anzaldúa’s work, like women-of-color feminism more generally, continues to illuminate the paths toward dismantling patriarchal, anti-Black, anti-Indian, anti-queer, and antiwoman ideologies in the Americas. My attention here to Anzaldúa’s explicit engagement with African diaspora in revising mestizaje suggests her deeply relational approach and offers a more nuanced reading of what she does with mestizaje than has often been recognized in her work while also foregrounding the decolonial method that she so brilliantly constructs toward a new mestiza consciousness, toward *conocimiento*. That decolonial path, however, is not an easy one, as Celaya in Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo* reveals. Celaya does not shy away from self-critique in revealing her own blind spots as she questions the narratives and behaviors of her father, grandmother, and aunt. Yet through her storytelling she also reveals how beloved she is to them and they to her, and the power of those bonds of attachment in also shaping the story she tells. Speaking of, or in disagreement with, those she loves is not easy but necessary to dismantling systems of oppression. Cisneros’s novel works to recognize Indigenous and Black Mexicanx and Chicax, not only to apprehend the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the Americas but also to challenge the nationalist and patriarchal mythologies and ideologies

of racial harmony that exclude, erase, and subordinate. This preoccupation with geographies of relation ultimately leads Celaya to do what her father has been unable to do. In imagining its Chicana and Mexican characters in the same spheres and places as African American, Black, and Indigenous Mexican and Chicana, as engaged, in some ways, in a centuries-long dialogue and practice of building relation across difference, I suggest that Cisneros's work attempts to activate the decolonial approach that Anzaldúa offers in *Borderlands*.

While this chapter explores the contributions of Chicana authors to relational thinking as a feminist woman-of-color project and their critiques of anti-Blackness from the position of mixed-raced/mestizx subjects and characters, Chapter 3 turns to a different kind of borderlands in New York, a site of Black excellence in the arts birthed by the Harlem Renaissance, which *Caramelo* briefly invokes in thinking about Mexican and African American interactions in the early twentieth century, and which Toña La Negra also visited in the 1960s,¹⁵¹ to consider how African Americans and Puerto Ricans negotiated their different diaspora experiences in relation to each other in both the middle and late twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

An East Side, Downtown, and Greenwich Village Story

Puerto Rican and African American Diaspora Discoveries in New York City

When Piri Thomas corrects the police officer arresting him, who has called Thomas a “black bastard,” by replying, “If you don’t mind, I’m a Puerto Rican black bastard,”¹ he defiantly knits his ethnicity and race together, insisting on the specificity of his experience, voicing his belonging across multiple borders, speaking this complex experience into existence, and willing the officer, and the reader, to really see and hear him as a racial and ethnic subject. Thomas’s 1967 autobiography *Down These Mean Streets* takes up the conversation that emerges at mid-twentieth century among African Americans and Puerto Ricans in New York about their relationship to each other. Lisa Sánchez González suggests that Piri’s struggle with the US racial binary “engenders a whole series of irreconcilable dilemmas,” including internalized racism, denial of his “unique cultural legacy as a member of the African diaspora by way of Puerto Rico,” and love for his lighter-skinned family members.² To acknowledge his Blackness, Thomas must also peer beneath the veneer of Puerto Rican ethnic unity, where lay racial prejudices and hierarchies,³ one conveyed by a popular Puerto Rican refrain that refers to the ways that people hide or deny their darker-skinned ancestors: “Y tu abuela donde esta?”⁴ He also ponders conceptions of Black subjectivity that would erase his ethnicity as a Puerto Rican. As he works to understand more deeply the United States and global contexts of racial relations, he grows racial awareness and self-understanding. For Thomas, this is by no means a straight line from one end to another as he grapples with multiple trials and exclusions while undergo-

ing a transformation in his ethnic and racial identities.⁵ Thomas's experience as a Black Puerto Rican at midcentury makes him a subject who does not completely belong in either Puerto Rico or the United States, a borderlands and diasporic subject.⁶ His transformation is one that challenges the national frameworks of each place, revealing "other" subjects who traverse these spaces and create new ways of understanding themselves and their worlds as well as multiple diasporas.⁷

This chapter explores the literary and cinematic portrayal of Puerto Rican experiences of African diaspora as well as the textual exploration of Puerto Rican and African American diaspora difference and interrelationship by tracing these twin concerns forward from Thomas's text through Marta Moreno Vega's 2004 memoir *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, James Baldwin's 1974 novel *If Beale Street Could Talk*, Barry Jenkins's 2018 film adaptation of *Beale Street*, and, briefly, Ava DuVernay's 2019 *When They See Us*. Tellingly, Thomas's narrative takes up the ubiquitous presence of the police in Black lives, a presence that emerges again in Baldwin's 1974 novel, Jenkins's 2018 film, and DuVernay's 2019 docudrama, as it also represents the discovery of affiliation through African diaspora with African Americans, a subject taken up both in Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* and in Vega's *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*. Both Baldwin's 1970s text, written in the wake of Black Power, feminist, and decolonial movements, and Vega's twenty-first century text, written in the wake of feminist women-of-color theorizing and turns to the transnational, hemispheric and diasporic, depart significantly from Thomas's. Both Baldwin and Vega mesh decolonial and gender critique with the portrayals of figures discovering themselves as diaspora subjects in relation to other diaspora subjects in migration, a process through which they knit together a diaspora consciousness across ethnicities and national boundaries.

REMEMBERING LIFE IN EL BARRIO IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

Marta Moreno Vega's 2004 memoir of her childhood and young adulthood, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, is also a coming-of-age story set in New York's El Barrio of the 1950s and 1960s, though written much later than Thomas's memoir. Her account engages with African diaspora worldviews in multiple spheres, deepening our understanding of the ways that Black Puerto Ricans have sustained themselves. Vega's memoir, written decades after the events it

portrays, shares with a wider contemporary audience the significance of a cultural life that nurtured her self-understanding as a child of the African diaspora, particularly the enduring import of her grandmother's influence. In some ways, her memoir complements Thomas's by revealing a female experience of Puerto Rican Black subjectivity at midcentury, including the differential impact of gender norms. In other ways, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* is a counterpoint to Thomas's memoir in that it shows us a character who accepts her Blackness and, though also living in an urban environment, does not lead a life defined by drugs and criminality. Vega's memoir looks beyond Thomas's focus on phenotype and racial formation to explore what Black Puerto Rican means culturally and how acceptance of ethnic and cultural difference among diaspora subjects matters in constructing solidarity.

As Vega, known by her childhood name of "Cotito" in the narrative, tells it, the strong bond between herself and Abuela teaches her about her African diaspora heritage, primarily through the value and power in everyday life of her diaspora-informed spirituality. As we know, one way that African influence in literature manifests is in the incorporation of African religions.⁸ Vega's memoir explores a creolized or hybridized form of African spirituality in *Espiritismo*, that is, a combination of Kardecist Spiritism and Orisha worship,⁹ and, therefore, shaped by religiosities of African diaspora peoples in this hemisphere.¹⁰ Orishas, or divine spirits often embody forces of nature and each has distinct characteristics, realms of power/effectiveness, and personalities and are central to several African diaspora worldviews that circulate in this hemisphere, including Santería, Lucumí, Vodou, Candomblé, Palo Monte, and *Espiritismo*. In a sign of both the shared conditions of diaspora between African Americans and Puerto Ricans as well as differences between these two ethnic groups, African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s were more likely to refer to these traditions as "Yorùbá religion" and to infuse their practice with Nigerian rather than Spiritist or Catholic influences.¹¹ While worldviews derived from African origins, therefore, manifests a diaspora history and experience in the Americas, Vega's memoir does not rest there but instead reflects on the alternative knowledge of self and world that Orisha worship embraces in a critique that opens up for consideration the logics informing colonial exploitation and possession.

A Puerto Rican Black woman, Vega remembers this early spiritual training as integrally interconnected with her family's negotiations with racialization in the United States, her growing questions about normative gender and sexual roles, and Latinx popular culture of the period. Hers is a narrative

grounded in intersectionality that recognizes her “multiplicitous selves.”¹² Though the narrative centers on an era that predates the emergence of “intersectionality” as a theory of how women of color might craft political and juridical answers to the multiple oppressions they face, Vega’s narrative resonates with observations about the roots of women-of-color feminist theory in US social movements of earlier decades.¹³ Her memoir reveals how unique forms of Latina feminism emerge from the experiences of Black Latinas as it also extends the women-of-color feminist project of thinking in a radical relational framework discussed in the introduction to this volume.

While we cannot assume that all Orisha worship and the traditions from which these derive are inherently more gender equitable,¹⁴ my analysis examines the ways that Vega represents worldviews in the Americas such as Orisha worship that are African influenced as embodying a more holistic perspective on the physical, intellectual, psychic, and emotional dimensions of being than that offered in dominant Western and Christian views. These differences allow Vega to reference, imagine, and create worldviews that disrupt prevailing gender norms and expectations and exert broader cultural influence in the social, sonic, and performative spaces in which they exist. They suggest an awareness of the ongoing dynamic process of cultural change among Puerto Rican African diaspora subjects, one that refashions the meaning of diaspora in Latinx literature for Black Latinx subjects. They also suggest an awareness of the ways that, as Diana Taylor notes, “embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge,” including the “cultural archives and repertoires” of African-influenced worldviews in the Americas that promote “*knowledge and understanding* rather than belief.”¹⁵

To compose her own memoir, Vega explains that it was necessary to research her own story, by interviewing family and friends she knew in the 1950s and by visiting her Abuela’s hometown in Puerto Rico, Lóiza Aldea, known for its strong African diaspora heritage.¹⁶ Vega doesn’t mention here, perhaps taking it for granted among her readers, the decades of research, teaching, and community arts organizing in the cultures, arts, and worldviews of African diaspora peoples for which she is well known. Founder of the Caribbean Cultural Institute in 1976 and faculty member in African diaspora studies at Hunter College and in Puerto Rico, her numerous projects, initiatives, exhibits, and publications over the past forty years have been a significant contribution to creating our present-day consciousness of the African diaspora in Puerto Rico, and of Puerto Rican subjects as Afro-Latinxs.¹⁷

Vega's memoir offers an intimate account of home life, relations among Puerto Ricans in the neighborhood as well as relations between Puerto Ricans and others, including African Americans, in educational, social, and cultural spheres. In the latter chapters of her memoir, she does, like Thomas, address the proliferation of drugs in El Barrio, but she approaches this from the question of spiritual health. Having worked for decades to expand the knowledge and understanding of African diaspora in Puerto Rico through her research and institution-building within arts and ethnic communities, Vega can finally narrate her story of a childhood and youth immersed in forms of spirit and ancestor worship unique to African diaspora peoples that, in the 1950s, were not widely accepted, discussed, or known beyond adherent and insider circles. She describes this in another work: "In 1955, there were approximately twenty-five people in New York City who were believers in the Orisha tradition."¹⁸ It is not hard to imagine the lack of acceptance or understanding that these worldviews may have encountered in the United States of the 1950s, especially given the scholarship on Puerto Ricans in the United States in the post-World War II era that has made plain the considerable obstacles to economic, educational, social, and political opportunity faced by this heterogeneous population—eloquently and beautifully addressed in Pedro Pietri's 1973 poem "Puerto Rican Obituary."¹⁹ This makes Vega's published account of diaspora-informed spirituality all the more significant, making it an important precursor to contemporary work such as Melissa DuPrey's 2021 theatrical drama *Brujaja*, directed by Miranda Gonzalez, which lovingly and openly explores the significance of Orisha worship in the lives of its characters in ways that invite the audience into knowledge about this cultural practice.²⁰

When the Spirits Dance Mambo also explores the contours of Puerto Rican difference as it emerges and is re-formed in encounter with mainstream white society and African Americans in the United States, making visible earlier narrative attempts to fix Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican culture in the national imaginary as homogeneous outsiders, while also disrupting the logic of horizontal national space (whether US or Puerto Rican).²¹ In its multiple scenes of border crossing—as a child crossing the threshold into her abuela's sacred space, as an adolescent entering the Music and Art High School, as a young woman from El Barrio crossing into Harlem for a performance at the Apollo—Vega conveys her sense of living a borderlands between many worlds. By remaining attentive to the multiple temporalities invoked in the narrative, this chapter explores the representation of the dynamic

nature of cultural change among Puerto Rican diaspora subjects in several interrelated spheres: the sonic/musical, religious/spiritual, and the gendered/domestic.

Sonic Dimensions of African-Inspired Worldviews

In the opening lines of her book, Vega lists the multiple influences that informed her upbringing, emphasizing her African heritage:

I grew up surrounded by the pulsating rhythms of Tito Puente and Machito and the teasing, sensual songs of Graciela. The deep, robust voice of Celia Cruz brought Africa to our home. In our cramped living room on 102nd Street, my brother taught me to mambo. There, too, my father took my mother in his dark, powerful arms and they swayed to the tune of a *jibaro* ballad. In the bed we shared, my older sister cried herself to sleep while the radio crooned a brokenhearted lament. And my grandmother, cleaning her altar to the spirits of our ancestors, played songs to the gods and goddesses. Imitating the motions of the sea, she let her body be carried by an imaginary wave, then, taking my hand, encouraged me to follow in her steps. In Abuela's world, our hearts beat to the drum song of the thunder god, Changó.²²

This passage begins to convey the narrative's complex family portrait, one in which our darkskinned young narrator, Cotito, gradually becomes painfully aware of the gender and racial inequalities that impinge on her life and that of her family, creating fissures in the family relationships. In bringing into focus language, movement, even tears, but also the pleasure of dance and prayer, the passage weaves together a consideration of the popular music of the era with cultures of Orisha worship that the music references, retrospectively recognizing this worship as inheritance, song, imagination, and bodily motion.

The narrative conveys an emergent collective awareness among Cotito and her siblings of their participation in dynamic cultural practices rooted in diaspora, an awareness that can flourish in retrospection. In this case, diaspora worldviews have a continued force at home, but are also described, at a pivotal moment in musical cultural history, as fusing with secular music movements to create new cultural phenomena in/from/about the diaspora—Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians of the era invented and performed music infused with the languages, beats, and concerns of African diaspora Orisha

practices with which they were familiar.²³ These Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians played an important role in creating this spiritual community in New York at mid-twentieth century.²⁴ Elsewhere in her writing, Vega explicitly traces out the influence of important musicians of the era, including Chano Pozo, in “promot[ing] the songs and music of the Santería tradition.”²⁵ Her memoir portrays Cuban, Puerto Rican, and African American musicians of the 1950s as popularizers of the “music of Santería, the rhythms of Abakua rituals (nañigos), Kongo music” in a narrative that allows readers a glimpse of the infusion of the supposedly archaic past into the modern that new musical forms represent.²⁶ Each chapter echoes the memoir’s title in conveying the dynamic new expression of African diaspora worldviews by beginning with a snippet of song from the burgeoning mambo or Latin jazz scene of mid-twentieth-century New York, which is both a context for the life experience of the young “Cotito” as well as a central part of the text’s reason for being. As the narrative suggests, Black Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians of the era invented and performed music infused with the languages, sounds, beats, and concerns of the worldviews with which they were familiar, but these would not be familiar to audiences outside of these practices and life experiences.

Vega’s memoir conveys her youthful recognition of this groundbreaking fusion of sacred sonic traditions with secular musical forms in the rising popularity of mambo, salsa, and Latinx jazz at midcentury. Her recognition is shared by her brother, who calls to share it with her:

One spring evening in 1956, Chachito called Socorro and me from the Palladium, as always. . . . There was an extended pause. And then the blaring trumpets of the orchestra heralded the voice of Machito. “*Changó ta veni, Changó ta veni, Changó ta veni,*” his voice roared over the microphone. “*Con el machete en la mano, tierra va temblar,*” he sang. Machito sent lightning bolts with his voice as the sound of the maracas roared like thunder through the telephone lines from Fifty-second Street and Broadway into our bedroom in El Barrio.

“Machito said Changó. Did you hear, Chachita? He said Changó, like the records in Abuela’s house,” I whispered to my sister.

“Shhh, Papi and Mami will hear. Just shut up,” she snapped.²⁷

Knowing that his sisters cannot attend the performance, Chachito shares a bit of it by phone, capturing a section of song that references the deity Changó, associated with the lightning and thunder that Cotito ascribes to

Machito's performance. Her sister's shushing her into silence mirrors their parents' disapproval of the girls participating in such events as well as their silencing of Orisha traditions in the domestic space. When she is old enough to attend one of these musical performances, Cotito accompanies her brother to the Apollo Theater to hear Celia Cruz:

Then the band brought the tempo to a slow, reverent African rhythm, and the mood changed. The *conguero* beat slowly on the drum, replicating the sound of my heart. Celia's voice sang, "*Eleguá y Ogun de la region Africana, guerreros valiente.*" Eleguá and Ogun, gods of Africa, valiant warriors.

This mention of the divinities that lived in my Abuela's house startled me. The repertoire honored those warrior spirits that had traveled from Africa to Harlem. I couldn't wait to tell Abuela that the gods that she worshipped were also at the Apollo. With a soft, lingering tone, Celia ended the song by saying, "*Moforibale.*" In honor of the gods.

"What does that mean?" I asked my brother.

"I don't know," he responded without looking my way. His attention was focused on Celia. "Ask Abuela—it's probably some African word."²⁸

Once again a major performer invokes deities from Yoruban cosmologies, prompting Cotito to recall her grandmother's spiritual practice, but she begins to see that there is much more for her to learn. In each of these passages, her brother and sister join Cotito in recognizing their grandmother as the keeper of diaspora knowledge, and in both instances, her brother actively includes Cotito in the innovative cultural and musical experience occurring before their eyes and ears, even though gender norms enforced by her parents prohibit Cotito from going out dancing to a venue like the Palladium or attending the concert without being chaperoned by her brother. Chachito's willingness to negotiate gender prohibitions on Cotito in these ways to allow her access to these musical performances strongly suggests that Chachito intuitively feels that this music, in particular, will resonate with her because of her intimate relationship with Abuela and her participation in Abuela's Orisha traditions.

Despite the relative lack of openly practiced Orisha traditions among Puerto Ricans at midcentury, this textual emphasis underscores how diaspora worldviews found new routes of expression as diaspora peoples entered new spheres and new geographies, infusing secular music with sacred allusions and rhythms, asserting presence, and voicing their experiences.

Sounding diaspora, then, is not only about genre or instrument or allusion, but also about patterns of sound in performance that embody histories and psycho-affective worlds and are expressive of both continuities and disruptions. Vega's exploration of the fusion of sacred and secular sounds is in keeping with cultural critic Stuart Hall's observation that we must attend to the "routes"—transformations, transculturations of culture—rather than the "roots" or "essences" of the diaspora experience.²⁹ How Vega describes this new musical fusion of sacred and secular amid the ordinariness of the everyday and as a part of the generational and gendered differences within her own family disrupts temporal teleologies that are perhaps more aligned with empire and nation than with geographies of relation.³⁰ The Black daughter of migrants to New York City, from a territory still dominated by the United States but no longer named "a colony," Cotito's narrative navigates the meaning of Puerto Rican and Black Puerto Rican and woman in the context of postwar, midcentury political economies that define her time but not her self.

Cultural and music critics have also written about the important sonic fusions of this period, providing invaluable insight into African American and Latinx musical networks, innovations in form, transnational musical movements, and the emergence of Latinx musical genres,³¹ yet Vega's memoir provides an insider narrative of what it felt to be among those hearing and experiencing this new music for the first time with an understanding of its varied levels of signification. Recognizing the entry of sacred sound and themes into new secular spheres is an exhilarating experience for Vega who reveals how this knowledge animated her own movement into womanhood as her "body melded with the music,"³² moving beyond mere recognition of the reference and listening to the sound, allowing the music to move her. Yet her movements are also informed by two other influences: her brother's dance lessons and her recall of Abuela's sacred dancing. Just like the music she hears, she fuses several influences to create her embodied response and engagement with this new sound. Her narrative innovatively emphasizes the fusion of sacred and secular in the sonic realm by highlighting a holistic approach to worldview, body in motion, and sound—or Orisha worship, dance, and music as it also examines how these figured in the generational and gendered differences within her own family. Her narrative, therefore, underscores the ways that African-descended peoples in the Americas communicated and continued unique cultural understandings, histories, and perspectives through music and song.³³

Differing Views on Spiritual Health and Healing

Vega's narrative negatively portrays the silencing of Orisha traditions in her family³⁴ and contrasts the gender and racial norms that her abuela's spirituality supports in contrast to those supported by the more predominant Catholicism. Three episodes in the memoir make this contrast evident: Cotito's observation of Abuela's healing practice, her engagement with Abuela's power and leadership as a medium and spiritual healer, and her assessment of Abuela's response to the "crisis" of her sister Chachita's premarital sexual relationship. In these episodes, the memoir represents diaspora-inspired spiritual practices as sites where women, normally marginalized due to prevailing gender norms, attempt to exert power and influence in local communities.

The text suggests, then, that there is a different and more feminist perspective on the female body and gender roles in operation in Orisha practices, one that unfolds for Cotito through her engagement with distinctive spiritual approaches to the body/physical self that have broader cultural influence in the realms of the social, sonic, and performative. The memoir thereby embraces an Afro-Puerto Rican identity that represents a challenge to Western/Christian dominant gender roles normalized through prevailing religiosities as it conveys a feminist awareness of embodiment gained through Orisha worship.³⁵

A medium and spiritual healer, Abuela conveys to Cotito an appreciation for the sensory and aesthetic realms through her *Espiritista* practice as she teaches Cotito about the significance of these realms in human expression.³⁶ As is the case for Puerto Ricans who practice *Espiritismo*, also known as Mesa Blanca, the sensory and aesthetic fuse in this worship of a multicultural pantheon of spirits.³⁷ In one encounter with the African male spirit named El Negro Juango, the spirit speaks through Abuela to teach Cotito to "play music in the mornings before you leave the house. You will see tremendous changes. . . . Place a cup of fresh, cool water daily by your headboard for this spirit."³⁸ El Negro Juango asks her, "Don't you feel much better after you dance?" And tells her that she has "una gitana dressed in yellow and blue dancing around you."³⁹ This exchange stresses the aesthetic dimensions of African-inspired worldviews that represent the involvement of the entire self/body in communing with the divine, but it also suggests that spiritual health and sensory/physical pleasure are linked. The memoir further underscores a view of spiritual health that centers human expressions of beauty

and pleasure in its descriptions of the young Cotito assisting her abuela in the creation and maintenance of her home altar. Cotito's description of Abuela's spiritual practice in her home, and her involvement in it, is one that privileges the expressions of beauty, song, and the body in motion.⁴⁰

Worldviews of Gendered and Domestic Relationships

The power and meaning of Abuela's practice in the everyday begins to unfold for Cotito when she and her mother witness an episode of spiritual healing. Abuela intervenes to aid a troubled neighbor, Alma, in the botanica, a shop common in Spanish-speaking communities of the United States offering herbs, oils, candles, statues, and other religious items. Alma visits the botanica in hopes of securing medicine to change her husband Gregorio, who is cheating on her. Her predicament sparks laughter and derision from other customers in the store. The store owner, Caridad, recognizing that Gregorio can't be changed, counsels Alma to change herself and prescribes a treatment for lessening Alma's love for Gregorio while also telling her, in what appears to be a somewhat derisive tone, that Alma should teach Gregorio a lesson by also stepping out on him. As she turns to leave the store, Alma runs into Cotito and her abuela and mother. Transfixed by Abuela's powerful spirit, Alma falls to the floor, and silence spreads among all present in the botanica. Abuela calmly calls forth the spirit that has taken possession of her body. Alma's guardian spirit Ochún, speaking through Alma, says:

She loves that good-for-nothing more than she loves her children, more than she loves her spirit, and more than herself. . . . She must not allow herself to be disrespected. I will not tolerate it any longer. . . . I do not allow the abuse of children or women.⁴¹

When Alma wakes from the trance, Abuela conveys to her what Ochún has said, and Alma leaves the store with some anxiety. Shortly thereafter, Cotito hears the neighborhood news that Alma threw Gregorio out of their home after finding him there with another woman. In this episode, Ochún speaks through Alma, and this knowledge, drawn from her own body, is related back to her by Abuela, who functions as a kind of translator to Alma of her own body, returning her to a fullness of being that makes her subsequent action possible. This reading resonates with the reevaluation of women's experience as source of knowledge in feminist philosophies because of both

its “active and passive functioning” and its status “midway between mind and body,” as Elizabeth Grosz suggests.⁴²

We see the active and passive functions of experience in this passage, the ways that Alma simultaneously gives in to dominant expectations for women and yet tries to resist them, or their impact on her, through appeal to Santería. The suggestion of a mind-plus-body continuum rather than binary division supports a reading of embodied spirituality as a form that allows for women’s experience and knowledge to emerge and become authorized. The view of women’s embodied spirituality as one that produces knowledge is widespread among African American religions. As Telia U. Anderson notes:

Because of their personal connection with the divine, black women’s calling the spirit occupies a place of disclosure, rather than a place of reference. It is, as African religious scholar Marta Moreno Vega describes, “evidence of the sacred within.”⁴³

Read in this way, Orisha worship enables gender critique to emerge as it also heals gender disparity. It matters that this occurs in a *botanica*—rather than a church—and that a healing encounter with the powerful spirit of *Abuela* effects change rather than the lesser power of a commodified solution to the problem and the somewhat insincere advice offered by *Caridad*.

Another layer of this scene of embodied spirituality involves a turn to what André Lepecki, drawing from anthropologist Nadia Serematakis, terms the “still act.” Lepecki suggests that the still act “describes moments when a subject interrupts historical flow and practices historical interrogation.”⁴⁴ Serematakis elaborates: “Stillness is the moment when the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness like life-supporting oxygen. It is the moment of exit from historical dust.”⁴⁵ The *botanica* scene is just such a still act, a “corporeally based interruption of modes of imposing flow,” in which Alma and *Abuela* together are able to pierce the conditions that would render both women invisible and meaningless. That moment in the *botanica* where an African guardian spirit appears in a small shop in mid-twentieth-century Manhattan represents not an invocation of a lost origin, but to quote Stuart Hall, “the continuous play of history, culture and power” among Afro-Puerto Ricans who refuse to leave a part of themselves “behind” and instead recreate in the Americas the worldviews that will sustain peoples forced into diaspora.

A contrast between Abuela's worldview and Western religious institutions appears in another episode where Abuela's channeling of the spirits yields a gender critique but does not succeed in altering gendered relations or gender norms. The second episode involves Cotito's older sister Chachita, who surreptitiously spends several weeks living with her African American boyfriend Joe while claiming to be away working at a summer camp. When Mami finds out about Chachita's ruse, she calls her daughter Chachita "*una atrevida*," "a disgrace," "lowlife," and "*una puta*"⁴⁶—all labels that Abuela calmly asks her to reconsider, reminding Mami that Chachita isn't the first woman to have run off with a boy and won't be the last, a bit of advice she repeats several times. Cotito describes her parents as more worried about "*el que dirán*" ("what they will say") than their daughter, and overly concerned with their daughter's virginity,⁴⁷ emphasizing their conformity with religious gender norms. When Chachita returns home, unaware that her parents have already learned of her transgression, her father angrily confronts her, asking, "How could you do this? We did not raise you to be *una cualquiera* [a floozy]."⁴⁸ After physically lashing out at her, he orders Mami to "find out who he is. Arrange the wedding immediately."⁴⁹ Cotito underscores the subordination of her sister's desire, will, and person to a patriarchal order by stating: "My sister's fate would be sealed with a handshake between our father and a man with whom she had just hoped to find a little bit of freedom."⁵⁰

In the days following this confrontation, Cotito visits Abuela and assists her in cleaning her altar when Abuela is visited by the spirit of the liberated slave El Negro Juango, who tells Cotito, through Abuela, "The decision your parents made is wrong. But they're so blinded by their false pride that they won't change their minds."⁵¹ Juango adds that Cotito should convey his message to her parents so that they will remember his words and regret their decision.⁵² When Cotito does tell her mother about what Juango said, Mami drops the plate she is holding, and it shatters. Mami then swears Cotito to secrecy about the spirit's message, an act that underscores the significance of this spiritual message as well as the choice to ignore it.⁵³

Chachita herself becomes listless and despondent as she realizes that there is no way to exit the planned marriage. Preparations for the ceremony are "chores," and the Catholic wedding itself is described as rigid, lifeless, and empty, a sad event more akin to a funeral, suggesting a critical assessment of the dominant practice of Christianity at mid-twentieth century as one that limited women's opportunities for equality and spiritual health. In this way, Vega echoes Gloria Anzaldúa's discussion of the process of "differ-

entiating between *lo heredado, la adquirido, lo impuesto*” as a critical and decolonial one that opens the possibility of a “conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions.”⁵⁴

In this episode, Abuela and Juango attempt to intervene to prevent an unwanted marriage and lifetime of sorrow. Abuela, in particular, recognizes that Chachita’s actions are those of a young woman seeking to find and define herself in contrast to the perspective of Mami and Papi, who embrace the discourses of virginity, chastity, and honor of family embodied in the supervision of female bodies and linked, in this text, to Catholicism. The framework of her spirituality gives Abuela another perspective on the events, a view that is more accepting of Chachita’s whole self while also aiming to provide guidance to her granddaughter. This juxtaposition of diaspora worldviews and Christian values at midcentury reveals a retrospective critique of gender norms. However, at the time of the events, Chachita’s body becomes an object or text upon which the beliefs of her parents and prevalent discourses will be made physically manifest.⁵⁵ Abuela’s willingness to dialogue with Chachita and to respect her whole person and experience is pushed aside as her parents force the marriage. In this episode, the memoir reveals Abuela to be a powerful woman healer and spiritual leader whose diaspora spirituality opens the road to more progressive gender norms, in contrast to those that dictate either that women stay with abusive husbands “until death do us part” or that respectable women are prohibited from enjoying a sexual life outside of marriage.

Black Americans: African Americans and Black Latinx

Even after decades of educational and community work, Vega notes in 2012 that there is no consciousness within the United States of the “more than 150 million people of African ancestry in the other Americas” and their descendants with the United States.⁵⁶ Recent decades have brought ever increasing knowledge and understanding of Afro-Latin Americans and Black Latinx lives, yet much more remains ahead. Vega’s memoir makes plain that the lack of knowledge about Afro-Latin America and Black Latinx that she discusses is also one suffered among Latinx populations, a situation that presents us all with the continued challenge to grow this knowledge. Yet she never imagines this as a simple recitation of facts or imagines her Afro-Latina self, experience, or identity as static and unchanging. Instead, she explains how diaspora prompts ongoing cultural interrogation and change:

I know that my racial and cultural identities will continue to evolve as the image of myself continues to change, and as I learn more about our peoples' journey before and after enslavement: lessons of the philosophical, spiritual and living practices that have contributed to constructing a thinking and a day-to-day existence infused with racial, cultural and ancestral sacred thought.⁵⁷

Her statement echoes Gloria Anzaldúa's decolonial process of spiritual *mesitaje*, one that embraces a commitment to continued journey that is informed by research on previously denigrated knowledges. Her memoir then offers us a reclamation of diaspora experience for Puerto Ricans against the myths of racial democracy or racial mixture that would erase these from Puerto Rican ethnic/national identity. Her memoir works not only to fill gaps in knowledge but also to challenge the ideologies and paradigms that have erased and ignored this history and experience within Latinx communities. Vega advances a more complex apprehension of the multiple experiences and histories that the term "Latinx" might name even as she recognizes that these remain in flux.

As her memoir makes clear, Vega's path toward a fuller appreciation for African diaspora cultures begins at home and in her youth, yet she also conveys a sense for how the civil rights and Black Power movements in the United States shaped her developing consciousness in significant ways. As is the case with Piri Thomas's father, Cotito's parents are not unaware of themselves as raced subjects, yet they struggle with internalized racism and assimilationism. For Vega, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the Black Power movement of the 1970s were "the living texts of my self-realization."⁵⁸ These movements created the opportunity for her to grow in understanding and changed the conditions of Black women in the United States facing discrimination and marginalization as they also opened up greater appreciation for African diaspora cultures, revaluing these. In this way, critical cultural consciousness and social movement go hand in hand in this narrative, revealing the ways that Black Puerto Ricans and African Americans exist as borderlands subjects at the margins of nations, continually navigating spaces of exclusion through movements for social change.

Alliance between African Americans and Puerto Ricans doesn't just happen automatically or magically, however, and *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* takes up both the tensions and the solidarities that emerge among African Americans and Puerto Ricans at midcentury. In the domestic sphere, the

memoir shows that while ethnic groups tend to cleave to their own ethnic group, greater mixing is on the horizon among the younger generations. Cotito's sister Chachita's wedding to her African American boyfriend, Joe, reflects this trend toward cultural and social interrelationship, one that defies the expectations of both Joe's family and Chachita's family that each would marry within their ethnic group: "His family did not approve of his marrying a Puerto Rican girl, just as our family disapproved of Chachi marrying out of her ethnic group."⁵⁹ Yet Joe's mother cuts to the quick of such exclusions when she asks her son, "You happy with your Puerto Rican gal? She looks like one of us, doesn't she? So what's the big deal? We all shifted uncomfortably in our seats, rendered speechless by her honesty."⁶⁰ While Joe's mother disrupts notions that Blackness and Puerto Ricanness are contradictory, or that the only Blacks in the United States are African Americans, she gives voice both to ethnic tensions and to overlapping diasporas.

In the religious sphere, shared African diaspora worldviews among Latinx and African Americans do not necessarily lead to common ground since other factors such as particular cultural fusions, race, language, and nationality also impinge on these relations. For example, while Cuban and Puerto Rican Santería adherents did interact with African American followers of Yoruban cosmologies at mid-twentieth century in New York, the predominance of Spanish in the activities of the former implied that it was open only to Spanish speakers.⁶¹ Later, in the 1970s, some individuals indicated that that they were held back "from progressing in the tradition" by the racism of Latinx members.⁶² When Vega undertakes a more serious Orisha practice as an adult, she notes that similarly inclined African Americans of the period tended to eschew European influences such as those present in syncretic Christian/Orisha Cuban and Puerto Rican saints, and instead sought to explore Yoruba cosmologies closer to its Nigerian roots/routes rather than in conversation with Black Puerto Ricans.⁶³

These differences within African diaspora reveal many versions of "connective and mediating" relationships among diaspora communities that are imagined and enacted spiritually, as well as symbolically and performatively in *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*.⁶⁴ This chapter's earlier discussion of the sonic dimensions of Yoruban worldviews references the extensive research on the sonic fusions and multiethnic collaborations between Latinx and African Americans that characterized musical movements in jazz, mambo, and salsa, noting how Vega's memoir positions the musical arena as a location of encounter and negotiation between Latinx and African Americans

that yields innovative new sound. *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* also reveals recreational and entertainment spaces shared by African Americans and Latinx in this period. As Vega states:

Although El Barrio had a significant population of African-Americans and a fading number of Italians and Jews, the tone of East Harlem was overwhelmingly Afro-Latino and tropical. . . .

As we crossed to the west of Madison Avenue, the population became predominately African-American. . . . East and West Harlem appeared to me as part of the same family, one tending to be lighter, like my mother and sister, and the other darker, like Papi, Chachito, and me. Yet it was evident that these two neighbors, although existing side by side, were different and set apart. My parents rarely ventured into West Harlem, but the younger generation was beginning to cross the boundaries. My brother and his friends often went to the Savoy, the Audubon Ballroom, and the Apollo Theater to catch their favorite artists, whether African-American, Puerto Rican, or Cuban. My brother and his friends' proficiency in English and their clarity about also being black allowed them to function in both communities. I felt the same way.⁶⁵

The passage conveys how shared geographies and social locations may slowly lead to greater interrelationship and alliance if one learns new languages—both literally and metaphorically. Notably this passage suggests that this is a process both between African Americans and Latinx as well as within Latinx communities when Cotito contrasts the different skin tones within her family to those among these broader populations.

African Americans also worked to understand their new neighbors. As one writer for the Black-owned *Amsterdam News* observed in the 1950s:

A recent survey conducted by this paper revealed that Negroes living in close proximity to Puerto Ricans have little or no knowledge of them. Just as most American born citizens, they are guilty of viewing the habits and customs of the newly arrived people as being “strange” and “foreign.”⁶⁶

Vega's memoir reveals African Americans and Puerto Ricans seeking greater common ground across these gaps. For example, the scenes of friendship and bonding between Cotito and her African American peer in high school, Donna Stokes, offer readers a view of conscious efforts to forge alliance across

ethnic difference among Black women subjects in diaspora. Like Cotito, Donna Stokes is one of the very few Black students at the elite public high school that both attend. Stokes befriends her at the very moment when her linguistic difference is marked, noticed, and disparaged by her white teacher and predominantly white classmates in the new school:

“I like your Puerto Rican accent,” she said soothingly.

I resisted the urge to ask, *What accent?*

“It’s cute,” she went on. “I’m going to learn to talk just like you.”

Through my tears, I smiled at her. . . . This girl had heard me, truly heard me.⁶⁷

In this exchange, the focus on “hearing” echoes the narrative’s overarching attention to sonic expression and discernment. It also suggests to Cotito that Donna Stokes recognizes and accepts another Black person who is not like her. Stokes does not, in other words, assert sameness but accepts difference, one that she explicitly indicates in her willingness to “learn.” Cotito’s affinity with Stokes based on a shared diaspora experience is reinforced and allowed to grow with Donna’s acceptance of her language. In echoing her earlier observation about her brother learning both English and African American culture, she shows African American and Puerto Rican characters creating bridges across diaspora difference.

The solidarity that Cotito and Donna experience together in high school allows them to challenge the Eurocentric musical curriculum of their elite school, countering their teacher’s assertion that the African American and Latinx musicians they cite represent “music that will fade away, that people will not remember in a few years.”⁶⁸ As Cotito notes, “We knew it was important, lasting music, but we could not explain why in her terms.”⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the two women friends lead a successful little protest, garnering the support of their peers. Chronologically, this section of the narrative represents Cotito’s maturation as she turns the diaspora wisdom she has learned into action, while, topically, it offers a picture of evolving relationships between African Americans and Puerto Ricans.

BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN IN *IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK*

James Baldwin’s 1974 novel *If Beale Street Could Talk*, set in New York City, engages the social and cultural shifts of the late 1960s and early 1970s and

the changed demographics of the city in that era, including an established Puerto Rican community increasingly vocal about the conditions and inequities it faced, alongside African Americans.⁷⁰ Baldwin's novel portrays the dynamic interrelationships between its African American and Puerto Rican characters, in which the two sides recognize both their difference from each other and their shared historical condition as colonized, marginalized, and diaspora subjects. This decolonial perspective is fueled by Baldwin's central preoccupation as a writer, "his insistence on removing, layer by layer, the hardened skin with which Americans shield themselves from their country," according to Orde Coombs in the *New York Times Book Review*.⁷¹ His writing is inextricably wrapped up in examining the US racial context, as the Poetry Foundation notes: "Baldwin's writing career began in the last years of legislated segregation; his fame as a social observer grew in tandem with the civil rights movement as he mirrored blacks' aspirations, disappointments, and coping strategies in a hostile society."⁷² Most Baldwin scholarship considers his work within the framework of Black/white relations in the United States, but in this discussion I want to consider Baldwin's treatment of African American and Puerto Rican relations through a close examination of his 1974 novel, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, in comparison to director Barry Jenkins's cinematic interpretation of this novel, released in 2018.

As Marta Moreno Vega's memoir reveals, African Americans and Puerto Ricans in New York City not only lived near each other but also interacted in significant ways, especially since they experienced similar kinds of discrimination and marginalization due to their racial and ethnic difference but also because these groups recognized their diaspora subjectivity in each other, a legacy of African descent in the Americas that continues to shape their contemporary experience. Thomas's and Vega's work, set in the 1950s shortly after significant Puerto Rican migration to New York, address this new encounter between ethnically different diaspora subjects as they meet and begin to negotiate their relationship to each other in ways that are also self-illuminating for both Thomas and Cotito. Their discovery of themselves as diaspora subjects takes center stage in both Thomas's and Vega's texts and occurs both through building relationships with African Americans and in their efforts and consciousness to transform "Black" into a subjectivity that could also contain "Puerto Rican" and "Puerto Rican" into a subjectivity that could also contain "Black," thereby writing themselves into being.

Baldwin's novel, set in the early 1970s, takes us a decade or so beyond the period of Vega's and Thomas's texts to examine the systemic racism that lumps together Puerto Ricans and African Americans, and to advance a deco-

lonial vision for challenging that status quo. In this way, *If Beale Street Could Talk* joins Vega's and Thomas's narratives in breaking out of the Black/white binary and hierarchy to consider relational racialization, to look laterally at Black and Puerto Rican relations and conditions in the context of systemic racism in the United States. Looking at racialization relationally, as Daniel HoSang and Natalia Molina suggest, "provides a way of confronting how white supremacy in the United States continues to sustain colonial possession and the social exploitation and disposability of racially devalued people as mutually constitutive today."⁷³ This key element of Baldwin's decolonial vision in the 1974 novel is glossed in Barry Jenkins's twenty-first-century African American-centered cinematic interpretation of the novel, a film that returns us to the Black/white binary that Baldwin had already surpassed, but before discussing the film, this chapter will examine Baldwin's decolonial vision in the novel.

If Beale Street Could Talk is a story about police violence and the long arm of the law in a white supremacist society as much as it is a story about the systemic racist violence of colonial possession and its legacies. While Baldwin's own life experience of New York was surely significant in his crafting of the novel, his consciousness on the issues the novel addresses emerged and changed through his involvement in the civil rights and Black Power movements and his dialogue with emerging Third World and feminist movements, as well as his encounter with the French suppression of the Algerian anticolonial movement while a resident of France.⁷⁴ Laila Amine and Bill Mullen note that Baldwin's post-1960 texts evidence a different consciousness than the one animating his earlier work, particularly with respect to the above movements.⁷⁵ Indeed, his 1972 work, *No Name in the Street* offers an anti-imperialist critique of the US war against Vietnam as well the settler colonialism in South Africa and Israel.⁷⁶ The urgency of Baldwin's decolonial vision in *If Beale Street Could Talk* contrasts with both Thomas's 1967 civil rights-era narrative and Vega's retrospective focus on the recovery of feminist and diaspora consciousness. Crafted in the midst of movements against imperialist intervention, for gender and queer equality, and for Black, Chicx, Puerto Rican, Indigenous, and Asian American equality, *If Beale Street Could Talk* advances a critique of enduring colonialist logics in the incarceration of African Americans and the dispossession and subjugation of Puerto Ricans. It explicitly advances a decolonial vision by delineating the subordinate status of Puerto Rico as a territory of the United States as it crafts a tale of Puerto Rican and African American characters consciously building relations of solidarity across borders.⁷⁷

The novel's central characters are a young couple, Tish and Fonny, from two very different families—his is fanatically religious, prideful about lighter skin tones, and fractured, while hers is a loving and supportive working-class family—whose future is placed in peril by Fonny's imprisonment on a false charge of rape. The novel has two parts: Part 1 is titled "Troubled about My Soul" and focuses on Tish and Fonny's story, their backstory, and that of their families, migrants to New York like the Puerto Rican neighbors they encounter there, amid the ongoing struggle to free Fonny from jail. From the beginning of this section to the end, however, the hopeful and loving Tish experiences the dawning realization of the powerlessness that she, Fonny, and their families live. The much shorter Part 2, at only twenty-one pages, is titled "Zion" and focuses on death, miscarriage, and birth, events in the novel that metaphorically represent the state of the future promised land signaled in the section's title.

At the time of its initial publication, Baldwin's novel garnered both praise and condemnation, but only a few critics commented on the novel's indictment of the criminal justice system, and some found this unbelievable. French critics generally received it positively as a beautiful love story revealing US systemic racism told in the register of the blues, a view echoed by the few African critics who reviewed the book. In contrast, several US critics described Tish and Fonny as unbelievable characters (Pinckney), called it "junk" (Aldridge), or referred to it as "white-bashing" (Broyard). However, these were not the only US critical assessments of the novel in its time. Joyce Carol Oates called it "a quite moving and very traditional celebration of love. It affirms not only love between a man and a woman, but love of a type that is dealt with only rarely in contemporary fiction—that between members of a family" amid the "provisional but tentative nature of our lives." US critics also hailed it as significant work (Webster) and saw in it a "poetic interpretation of a new black consciousness" (Bryant) while also praising its engagement with the blues genre (Detweiler, Mosher).⁷⁸ Later, Baldwin biographer David Leeming would refer to the novel as Baldwin's "prison parable," noting that a reviewer's attitudes about race mattered in the reception of the novel.⁷⁹ Yoshinobu Hakutani argues that the novel reveals "the strength of the communal bond in African American life" and "the universal bonds of emotion that tie the hearts of people regardless of their color of skin."⁸⁰ Love and self-love, as Trudier Harris observes, are absent from the deeply insecure fanatical religiosity of Mrs. Hunt, Fonny's mother,⁸¹ but present in the everyday enduring and savoring of life that characterizes Tish's mother and father, Sharon / Mrs. Rivers and Joseph / Mr. Rivers. The questions of love, endur-

ance, religion, and prison, and their relationship to each other in this novel, therefore, have long been of interest to critics and readers, with many recognizing that the novel's challenge to an unjust criminal justice system is fueled by love.

Tish on Love, Self-Love, Familial Love, Communal Love

If Beale Street Could Talk is the only work of Baldwin's with a female narrator, and readers are, therefore, privy to events from Tish's perspective, a young woman in love whose fiancée has been falsely accused of rape.⁸² At the very beginning she tells us, "People call me Tish," as if launching into a conversation with readers. I suggest that it is important to consider the typical viewpoint from which readers might hear a story of police violence. In this case, we are not hearing this story from the perspective a white detective or police officer, or from the perspective of the young man accused of rape, or from the perspective of a community member, or the young man's lawyer or even his family, though we hear the voices of all these people in the narrative. Baldwin creates the youthful Tish, about to give birth, as the controlling perspective. While critics have recognized the sympathetic power of Tish's narration and perspective as one that both draws readers in and telegraphs the power of love, Tish's compassion and pregnancy are sometimes conflated in these assessments.⁸³ The latter obscures the compassion and love that emanates from other characters in the novel, including Fonny, and that this compassion and love that is not limited to specific genders but issues from multiple characters forms part of Baldwin's vision.

As characters, Tish and Fonny represent a new generation of African Americans who are pursuing paths unavailable to those who came before them, epitomized in Fonny's dream of a life dedicated to art and Tish's critical assessment of the fanatical religiosity of Fonny's mother, Mrs. Hunt, as well as their shared optimism about their future together. As a young pregnant character, Tish literally embodies the question of futurity in the novel; however, the novel portrays her love, compassion, hopefulness, dedication, and resilience as well as that of Fonny as equally important in representing that futurity. The novel's weaving together of Tish's pregnancy with Fonny's imprisonment makes of futurity not only a reproductive question but also a social justice question, and through Tish's perspective readers are able to apprehend the ways that questions of social justice and future generations are intertwined. Ultimately, Tish and Fonny, each in her or his own way,

must work to ensure that futurity with everything at their disposal. Yet Tish's voice provides an intimate and loving portrait of characters and communities as they navigate the systemic racism they face.

The novel opens with Tish recounting her visit that day to the jail to tell Fonny about her pregnancy, a description that indicts the criminal justice system as one that preys on poor working people and in which African Americans and Puerto Ricans are equally powerless. She is astounded that the actors and agents who keep the system running feel no shame:

I've never come across any shame down here, except shame like mine, except the shame of the hardworking black ladies, who call me Daughter, and the shame of proud Puerto Ricans, who don't understand what's happened—no one who speaks to them speaks Spanish, for example—and who are ashamed that they have loved ones in jail. But they are wrong to be ashamed. The people responsible for these jails should be ashamed.⁸⁴

Tish names the criminal justice system as a key protagonist in the novel, a vast system that thrives on Black death, as she also recognizes that both African Americans and Puerto Ricans are victims of it, yet nonetheless attempt to see and support each other. Her narrative then moves back in time to recount her long friendship with Fonny since childhood, their courtship and decision to marry, the announcement of their pregnancy to their parents, and their move from a predominantly Black neighborhood to a loft in the Village. We learn from Tish in this early part of the novel that her love for Fonny's passionate independence, the characteristic that fuels his art and his love for Tish, is also likely the reason he is in jail: "For, you see, he had found his center, his own center, inside him: and it showed. He wasn't anybody's nigger. And that's a crime, in this fucking free country."⁸⁵ We also know that Fonny's friend Daniel is being held in jail to force him to recant his statement providing an alibi for Fonny. But the details of events surrounding Fonny's arrest and detention are not yet fully revealed.

The recognition of a shared condition of racialization among African Americans and Puerto Ricans is not confined to Tish and Mrs. Rivers / Sharon, but also a key part of her sister Ernestine's consciousness. Ernestine, who works in a settlement house for children, plays a key role in the struggle to free Fonny by utilizing her activist connections to raise funds for Fonny's defense and secure the lawyer Hayward. Of course, she is not alone in these efforts. Both Sharon Rivers and Joseph Rivers, Tish's parents, as well Fonny's

father, Frank Hunt, work day and night to bring in extra income to cover the legal expenses. Yet Ernestine's path to activism on behalf of children, notes Tish, is inspired in part by having witnessed the death of a child whose ethnicity stands out to Tish: "The little girl was dying, and, at the age of twelve, she was already a junkie. And this wasn't a black girl. She was Puerto Rican. And then Ernestine started working with children."⁸⁶ From Tish's perspective, Ernestine's continued work for children of "all colors" emerges as much from her intense study and reading as it does from her direct experience of the precarity of life for the working poor in New York City.⁸⁷

The pacing and timing of Tish's telling of events are significant to how the novel unfolds its decolonial vision. While we know from the beginning that Fonny is in jail, we do not learn until the middle of the novel, in a scene with the lawyer Hayward, that he is accused of rape by Mrs. Rogers, who is Puerto Rican, and that she appears to have left New York for Puerto Rico. Because the earlier part of novel allows readers entry into the intimate emotional lives of Tish and Fonny and the Rivers and Hunt families as well as the multiple challenges that they work to overcome in their daily lives, readers are sympathetic to Tish's perspective and, with her, suspicious of the Puerto Rican woman who has accused Fonny, until further conversation among Hayward, Mrs. Rivers, and Tish reveals the depths of the systemic racism they face. The novel positions the woman we only know as Mrs. Rogers at this point as, according to Hayward, "a distraught, ignorant, Puerto Rican woman, suffering from the aftereffects of rape."⁸⁸ Both Hayward and Mrs. Rivers recognize Mrs. Rogers as a victim, a view that Tish arrives at more gradually. At this juncture Hayward confirms for Mrs. Rivers and Tish that Officer Bell is the one who provided "authoritative identification of the rapist," prompting Mrs. Rivers / Sharon to recognize Bell's role in orchestrating Fonny's imprisonment: "You mean—let me get you straight now—that it's that Officer Bell who tells her what to say? You mean *that*?"⁸⁹ This is the first time in Tish's story that we learn of Officer Bell, and the first thing we learn about him is that he has pressured a victim to falsely identify Fonny as a rapist.

Before we learn about Tish and Fonny's previous dealings with Officer Bell, Tish introduces us to another key event that predates Fonny's arrest, and this is Fonny's reencounter with his old friend Daniel after the latter's lengthy imprisonment on false charges. Fonny and Tish offer Daniel support as he struggles to overcome the trauma of his imprisonment, including rape in prison. He talks about his time in prison, making evident not only his

story but also his ongoing psychological struggle in the same way that Tish is positioned as the storyteller of this narrative, talking to us, her readers, about her own experience of racial terror, though she will never call it this. The unspokenness of this reality at varied points in the narrative—as when Sharon says, “That,” rather than spell out the racist framing of Fonny enabled by the racist treatment of Victoria Sanchez Rogers—underscores its lethal impact. Daniel’s story and ongoing psychological struggle become potent knowledge for both Tish and Fonny as they, unfortunately, find themselves navigating the same terrain shortly thereafter.

On the heels of the conversation in Hayward’s office, Tish is trying to understand how it is that Victoria Sanchez Rogers accuses Fonny, and so what she reveals and when she reveals it provide insight into her own growing consciousness. Only following Tish’s reconsideration of Daniel’s story does she reveal the details of the accusation and reflect on the person of “Mrs. Victoria Rogers, née Victoria Maria San Felipe Sanchez,” a reflection that leads her to consider her own experience. Tish reads the short paragraph that is Victoria Sanchez Rogers’s official statement about suffering a sexual assault “by a man she now knows to have been Alonzo Hunt.”⁹⁰ She reflects on who Victoria Sanchez Rogers is, but she is also piecing together everything she knows up to this point about Fonny, about Daniel, about Bell, and even, about herself, making the remembrance of Daniel significant. It not only reminds her of another experience of racist and unjust imprisonment, linking Daniel and Fonny, but also allows her to see Victoria Sanchez Rogers’s trauma and terror in her remembrance of Daniel’s traumatic experience of sexual assault. She sees the fact of racial terror, as Daniel says, the fact that “they can do with you whatever they want. *Whatever they want.*”⁹¹ This awakens in Tish the recollection of how white men treat her as an object for their pleasure in her role as department store perfume counter clerk. These reflections on her status at her job and on Daniel’s experience lead her to see, finally, “the reality of rape,” as she and Ernestine talk about Victoria Sanchez Rogers, a conversation in which Ernestine insists that Mrs. Rogers is a traumatized victim who is “not lying,” but rather taking psychological comfort in ending the trauma and putting it behind her.⁹²

Tish’s self-reflection unfolds at the midpoint of the novel as she contemplates the circumstances of Victoria Sanchez Rogers’s accusation. This critical reflection, even more than her pregnancy, and intertwined with her love, is what marks her shift from an innocent girl to a resilient woman fighter as it deepens her support for and love of Fonny as well as Daniel. In joining

Fonny to offer love and support to Daniel, she steps outside of the bonds of her immediate family and love interest to embrace the idea of community, just as her sister Ernestine has already done. Eventually, Tish recovers her own buried memory of harassment and assault by Officer Bell, and the powerlessness she felt, though readers will not hear this part of her narrative until the end of Part I. Through this recognition of her own trauma, she begins to understand her relationship to other victims of racism and misogyny, including Victoria Sanchez Rogers. This is in keeping with Magdalena Zaborowska's observation that Baldwin's work in *Beale Street* "min[es] the terror of memory on the one hand" as much as it reveals the importance of "what is not being said" in deciphering the racial landscape.⁹³ In this work as in others, Zaborowska notes, Baldwin lays bare the "racial terror" that is the "national house" of the United States.⁹⁴ Officer Bell both represents and enforces a powerful racial order in which Blacks and Puerto Ricans are decidedly inferior and subordinate, and though the novel presents readers with several sympathetic white characters, such as the shopkeeper, landlord, and restaurant workers, its power lays in its critical articulation of that systemic racial order.

"Whoever Discovered America Deserved to Be Dragged Home, in Chains, to Die"

The section of the novel set in Puerto Rico successfully illuminates geographies of relation among Puerto Ricans and African Americans by revealing the depth of the dilemma that diaspora descendants face.⁹⁵ *Beale Street* takes us to Puerto Rico in search of Victoria Sanchez Rogers, as Sharon Rivers undertakes to convince Rogers of her son's innocence. As the lawyer Hayward had earlier explained, the disappearance of Victoria Sanchez Rogers and the reimprisonment of Daniel combine to eclipse Fonny's prospects for both release from jail and a fair trial. Sharon Rivers's journey to Puerto Rico to appeal to Rogers to drop her accusation against Fonny is, therefore, a last hope in their case.

Trudier Harris and Magdalena Zaborowska comment on the significance of *Beale Street's* attention to the ways that African Americans and Puerto Ricans are linked. Zaborowska argues that *Beale Street* "links the plight of American women of color to those beyond its boundaries," creating a text that also examines "the transnational space created in the wake of U.S. imperialism."⁹⁶ Harris suggests that Ernestine's (Tish's sister) familiarity with the ways that Puerto Ricans are exploited and marginalized in New York,⁹⁷ com-

bined with Sharon's travel to the island, "allows Baldwin to develop some of the ideas he has hinted at of the political connections between American blacks and other Third World peoples."⁹⁸ As Harris notes, we see the workings of that racialized power in the figure of Officer Bell, who "would divide blacks and Puerto Ricans and conquer them both by having them fight each other,"⁹⁹ but she also notes the novel's focus on the shared condition of diaspora when Sharon "meets Mrs. Rogers . . . [and] emphasizes that they must help each other because they are both black."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the novel describes Victoria Sanchez's appearance in a photograph as darkskinned, and when Mrs. Rivers appeals to her in person to drop her accusation against Fonny, she tells her, "He's black. . . . Like us."¹⁰¹

What Sharon Rivers's trip to Puerto Rico reveals to her and to her family is that African Americans and Puerto Ricans are connected in subjection to the power of the same racialized state and in experience as descendants of the African diaspora in the Americas. The novel, I suggest, conveys that this knowledge is shared by Victoria Sanchez and Mrs. Rivers when Sharon describes Victoria, upon first meeting her, as having a "girl's face. There is concern in it, not unlike Jaime's concern. There is terror in it, too, and a *certain covered terrified sympathy*."¹⁰² In their exchange, Victoria insists she is not the Mrs. Rogers that Sharon seeks, and while this appears to be a strategy to avoid detection, it is also a revealing statement that underscores her real status in relation to Mrs. Rivers by insisting that the surname of a long gone white husband offers her no protection: she walks through the (white) world as Victoria Sanchez. When she tries to create distance between herself and Mrs. Rivers by insisting, "I am not a North American lady," Sharon Rivers counters with: "I am not a lady. I am Mrs. Rivers." And at this point Victoria concedes some common ground: "And I am Mrs. Sanchez."¹⁰³ Both women are clearly aware of the ways that the term and status of "lady" has been historically reserved for white women or colonizing women, the ways that it can signal imperial or First World superiority, and both women reject it. When Victoria insists, despite this moment, that she doesn't know Sharon, Sharon's reply emphasizes their shared bond by recognizing that they don't know each other personally and yet they know each other: "'I know you don't *know* me. Maybe you never even heard of me.' Something happens in the girl's face." Victoria's gesture in offering Sharon a cigarette at this point cements the bond.¹⁰⁴ The linguistic and gestural dance between Sharon and Victoria in this scene, with the two of them sitting side by side on the bed, strongly conveys the awareness of both women of their shared condition,

one that each side finds it hard to acknowledge, as Sharon later muses, because of the enormity of the challenge it presents: “Like they don’t look at themselves—like *we* don’t look. I had never seen it like that before. Never. I don’t speak no Spanish and they don’t speak no English. But we on the same garbage dump. For the same reason.”¹⁰⁵

This critical and transformative exchange between Victoria and Sharon is the reason that Sharon then calls Victoria “daughter” in her appeal, her action echoing Tish’s experience at the very beginning of the novel of being called “daughter,” of being cared for, by the “hardworking black ladies” she encounters at the jail. This connection is felt by Victoria, too, but it is a connection and a recognition that absolutely breaks her. When Sharon touches her cross and appeals to her in the name of what is sacred, Victoria knows that this recognition will require her to engage in a battle for which she is unprepared. In this scene, Victoria demonstrates not the indifference that Tish earlier describes as fueling blindness, but instead terror about her complete powerlessness: “She sits with a stubborn, still helplessness, her thin hands limp between her knees, like one who has been caught in traps before.”¹⁰⁶

Baldwin’s novel creates multiple possible reasons for why Victoria cannot alter her position in the trap set for Fonny: Ernestine believes that Victoria, having been a victim of violent rape, cannot psychologically accept that no one would be punished for it and that she is wrong about her experience; in relating Bell’s assault on her, Tish introduces the possibility that Bell is the rapist and Victoria continues to fear him.¹⁰⁷ Tish’s experience and Sharon’s interactions with Pietro in Puerto Rico suggest that another possibility is that Victoria is protecting Pietro by acquiescing to Bell’s demands (Tish had once tried to verbally protect Fonny from Bell).¹⁰⁸ After all, as Pietro tells Sharon in the novel (though this dialogue is not represented in the film), “I’m sorry, but I ain’t nothing. I’m an Indian, wop, spic, spade—name it, that’s me. I got my little thing going here, and I got Victoria, and, lady, I don’t want to put her through no more shit.”¹⁰⁹ Pietro’s words convey his sense of powerlessness, too, in the events that have engulfed their lives.

Through her interactions with Pietro, with Victoria, and with her taxi driver Jaime and what he tells her about power on the island, Sharon slowly begins to grasp these possibilities, which lead her to the conclusion that they are “on the same garbage dump,” a statement that represents a further development in her consciousness of the situation, beyond her earlier appeal to Victoria. The novel, therefore, doesn’t advance a narrative of Fonny as victim to a Latina’s false accusations of rape against Black man, but instead shows us Victoria and Pietro and Tish and Fonny and the Rivers family and

Hunt family as darkskinned subjects in struggle against a racist and colonial system. None of the characters in this struggle are perfect, in a novel that allows readers to see the many imperfections of multiple characters engaged in struggle from the inside, fleshing out one of the novel's catchphrases about how the internal view is different from the external one.¹¹⁰ The complexity of the interrelationships in this novel between diaspora and borderlands subjects as well as its sense of geographies of relation parallels Baldwin's lifelong dedication to telling "the story of a country deformed by an idea of blackness that white people had invented."¹¹¹

In the end, Tish and Fonny awaken to the knowledge of where they stand: "Now, Fonny knows why he is here—why he is where he is; now, he dares to look around him. He is not here for anything he has done. He has always known that, but now he knows it with a difference."¹¹² In an echo of Tish's earlier observation that "the dream of safety dies hard,"¹¹³ Fonny acknowledges that this isn't about justice. Fonny always knew that he didn't rape Victoria, but now he knows that Victoria is not his problem, that, in fact, it is much bigger. Tish and Sharon know this, too, as both characters undergo a transformation in their consciousness through the course of this novel. This challenge is understood even by the unborn child Tish carries, who kicks as she imagines/hears the baby asking, "*Is there not one righteous among them?*" And the cries of this baby being born at end of the novel, crying "like it means to wake the dead," signals another generation of struggle in which the efforts of Frank Hunt and others will not be forgotten.¹¹⁴

Yet Victoria is not the only broken soul at the novel's end. The struggle has also broken Frank Hunt, bearing out one of Tish's key fears at the outset, when she tells us, "I'm scared—because nobody can take the shit they throw on us forever."¹¹⁵ While the love between Tish and Fonny remains strong, Tish sees that "he is very far from me. He is with me, but he is very far away. And now he always will be."¹¹⁶ We know that Fonny's family has indeed raised the bail needed to get him out of jail and that the prosecution's case will likely fall apart because the utterly broken Victoria will never return from the mountains of Puerto Rico, but this is not, nor meant to be, much consolation.

MASS INCARCERATION, CINEMATIC SILOS, AND DOCUDRAMA BRIDGES

There are many ways in which Barry Jenkins's 2018 film adaptation of *If Beale Street Could Talk* successfully translates the language of Baldwin's novel into

the visual sphere. Robert J. Corber, for example, discusses how the director's "trademark visual style—lush, painterly, and dreamlike—works to translate the novel's sensuality into cinematic language," as in for example, the sequence where Fonny sculpts in his basement apartment:

The camera slowly rotates around him as the smoke from his cigarette swirls above him in the opposite direction. Jenkins removed the roof of the set and flooded it with sunlight so the sequence would have a "heightened quality." As film critic Manohla Dargis has pointed out, the effect is to render Fonny "beautiful, holy."¹¹⁷

Indeed, arguably one of Baldwin's aims in writing and Jenkins's aims in making the novel into a film is to recognize, as Gloria Anzaldúa tells us in poetry, "We are the holy relics."¹¹⁸ Throughout the film, its light and lighting convey what cinematographer James Laxton describes as the "glow" of Tish and Fonny's love by bathing them or framing them in light of varied hues,¹¹⁹ usually warm and soft, though at times bright and soft, as when the sunlight streaming in the windows behind Tish in the loft they are looking to rent turns her into a Madonna figure. Rahul Hamid notes how well the film's visual language captures elements of the novel, in particular the interior view of Black life that Tish's telling of the story provides, an intimate and personal lens that the film conveys when characters look directly into the camera or walk toward the camera.¹²⁰

Barry Jenkins's film, though it heeds much of Baldwin's story, ultimately creates a different story, one that centers the issues of false accusations and the mass incarceration of Black men as well as the healing Black love that is the centerpiece of the novel, though it demands something different from its viewer than Baldwin demands of his readers. Jenkins's homage to Black love furthers the decolonial work of challenging systemic racism, yet it also siloes African American love and unity. Baldwin's loving portrait of minoritized individuals and networks is informed by his view, as Zaborowska notes, that these merit the name "community" "because they are informed by their knowledge that only they of the community can sustain and re-create each other. The great, vast, shining Republic knows nothing about them and cares nothing about them."¹²¹ This love and self-knowledge in the film does, indeed, sustain Tish and Fonny and the Rivers family, giving them the strength to persist, though that depiction is aided by the film's exclusion of Frank Hunt's suicide from the story's events and contrasts with Baldwin's

suggestions that each minority community is equally aware of its own borderlands position marginal to the nation. In the novel Baldwin recognizes how Puerto Ricans are aware of this, and the novel's great gift is that it knits together the fates of Puerto Ricans and African Americans in a decolonial vision. Jenkins's choices and changes shift *Beale Street* from its original hemispheric framework into a national framework, albeit an antiracist one.

Emily Rios, who plays Victoria in the film, suggests that the film strove to "show some respect and some level of compassion towards the survivors who are willing to bring these stories to light," though, as Manuel Betancourt notes, Victoria remains a suspect character in the film.¹²² Baldwin's novel doesn't present a Victoria who "would rather play along"¹²³ but a Victoria who is terrorized and broken. Neither does it present us with a confrontation between Sharon Rivers and Victoria as the film does, with each facing the other, but instead as interlocutors side by side in a difficult conversation. Jenkins's film turns away from considering the broader frame of colonialism that has ensnared both African Americans and Puerto Ricans, and the shared legacy of African diaspora that Piri Thomas, Marta Moreno Vega, and James Baldwin explore. It is telling that the novel introduces us to "Mrs. Rogers" first, then "Victoria Sanchez Rogers," then, when Sharon and Victoria meet, "Victoria Sanchez," the name she insists on. This gradual shift in the name by which Tish knows Victoria suggests Tish's changing consciousness of what is at play, a shift that the text also prompts among readers. But the credits of the film erase this shift by listing Emily Rios in the role of "Victoria Rogers," suggesting that the film reads her only as white-identified.

The film's portrayal of the women of the Rivers family also suffers in translation. Jenkins's portrayal of Tish and Sharon as loving and sympathetic wives and mothers struggling to keep their family together departs from Baldwin's portrayal of Tish and Sharon as radicalized and loving mothers who are raising another generation of Black people with a new consciousness. The former effort surely takes strength in a racist society even as it maintains a traditional woman's role, but it isn't the same as the latter. The visual translation the film offers of Bell's sexual assault on Tish, with its zoomed focus on Bell, who steps closer to the camera, followed by Tish's turning away, conveys the significance of this event in Tish's coming to consciousness about her own positionality in remembering and confronting an event she has tried to suppress from memory, though for those unfamiliar with the novel it may combine with other script changes to gloss this event.

The novel's focus on Tish's coming to consciousness in relation to other minoritized populations becomes more muted as a result.

While the novel emphasizes Victoria Sanchez's flight into hiding and, therefore, the crumbling of the state's case against Fonny and his eventual release, the film represents Fonny's multiyear incarceration by introducing another event—a plea deal that leads to prison time. This new element of the cinematic story illustrates an issue that is everyday more evident in the United States: Black men railroaded into prison on plea bargains. Tish's voice-over about the carceral system accompanies a montage of black-and-white documentary photographs of Black prisoners and underscores this new dimension of the critique of the criminal justice system that the film offers, updating Baldwin's critique. Yet this change also diminishes the achievement of Ernestine, Sharon, Joseph, Frank, and Tish to raise the funds to free Fonny and contest the state's efforts to rig the case against him, including Sharon's visit to Puerto Rico, and instead emphasizes their ability to endure. In the film, Fonny's friendship with Pedrocito remains and is even amplified as the two men and their partners enjoy a brief moment of dancing joy together, but Tish's relationship to Pedrocito independent of Fonny, and Pedrocito's continued care for her is not visually depicted. This decision highlights cross-cultural male bonds but eclipses geographies of relation that involve both men and women.

In the voice-over Tish insists, "We've gotta live the life we've been given and live it so that our children can be free." In this way the film shifts the actions of Tish, Ernestine, and Sharon Rivers as well as Joseph Rivers into events in a longer-term struggle. While the novel concludes with the birth of Tish and Fonny's screaming/crying baby aiming to "wake the dead," the film ends with the child Alonzo Jr. giving prayerful thanks for the family's blessings as he and his mother visits his father in prison. The film thereby presents us with a Fonny and Tish whose love for each other is the same at the end of the film as it is at the beginning, signaled by the soft yellow light pouring in on over them as they sit at the table in the visiting room of the prison. As the camera recedes from them we see the creamy pale yellow walls of the visiting room surrounding them as light streams in from the high windows, and we know that Tish and Fonny and Alonzo Jr. will endure. The film's ending thereby celebrates the survival and endurance made possible by Black love and faith.

Jenkins's film, however, elides the racial relationality between African Americans and Puerto Ricans and the shared legacies of coloniality that

Baldwin portrayed.¹²⁴ If Baldwin's lived experience of New York is an influence in his work, perhaps Jenkins's lived experience of growing up in Miami with its large Cuban exile population is equally significant here.¹²⁵ Jenkins adaptation gestures toward an understanding of Latinx and Blacks as comparably devalued racial subjects in several ways, yet it removes the complexity of the relationship between Puerto Ricans and African Americans that Baldwin so carefully drew. The film's final scene in the prison visiting room exemplifies this in the visual rendering of groups seated at five different tables in the room: one table occupied by a white family, though this could also be a light-skinned Latinx family, one table occupied by a brown Latinx family, and two tables occupied by Black families, some of whom might also be Latinx, though we aren't given any indication of this, plus Fonny, Tish, and their son Alonso at the final table. The scene conveys the disproportionate incarceration of Black individuals in the United States, though if we assume the other families are one white and one Latinx family, it positions them similarly both in number and at tables on the same side of the room, while all three Black families sit on the opposite side of the room, as the camera largely maintains a perspective that keeps this division in view. The decolonial force of Baldwin's assertion in the novel of racial relationality among African Americans and Puerto Ricans is missing. That gap is reinforced by the lack of any visual portrayal of the impoverished conditions in Puerto Rico that Sharon witnesses in the novel, its portrayal of an alliance in Puerto Rico between Sharon and her taxi driver Jaime, and Sharon's conclusions, in the novel, about being on the same "garbage heap" as Puerto Ricans. These cinematic choices contribute to de-emphasizing if not excising entirely the radical relationality that Baldwin's novel advances. In contrast to the novel, the film does not center the complex story of different diaspora and borderlands subjects working in relationship with each other.

The novel's depiction of the exchange between Sharon and Victoria discussed above becomes something else in the film—different in material appearance, rhetorical effect, and gestural nuance. Sharon and Victoria meet not in a run-down abandoned private mansion turned into individual dwellings that looks out on the sea that both Victoria's and Sharon's ancestors have crossed, but instead in a bricked-in alley. The film cuts out the novel's complex rhetorical and gestural dance between Sharon and Victoria and instead shows us a moment of confrontation that allows us a glimpse of Victoria's pain, presenting her as a rather sad character. Regina King, playing Sharon, shakes her finger at Victoria when she says, "You pay for the lies you tell," in

contrast to the action in the novel, where Sharon Rivers reaches out for and pulls Victoria toward her. Importantly, in the film Sharon never tells Victoria that Fonny is “black. . . . Like us.”¹²⁶ The novel tells us that the woman who takes Victoria away doesn’t look at Sharon and the neighbors merely stare, but the “Abuela” who walks Victoria away in the film openly scorns Sharon Rivers, echoing the scorn that Jenkins’s screenplay calls for from Victoria,¹²⁷ cementing a divide between Latinx and African Americans.

Jenkins’s casting choices play a significant role in aiding the changed meaning of his film adaptation and its focus, drawing a firm line between black African Americans and white Puerto Ricans, in contrast to Baldwin’s diaspora and borderlands subjects. In the novel, Tish describes Mrs. Hunt and her daughters Adrienne and Sheila as “fair” and “fair skinned” with long hair, in contrast to Fonny, who, Tish tells us, is much darker than his sisters but also lighter than Tish and with “nappy” hair.¹²⁸ However, in the film, Mrs. Hunt and her daughters are played by actors Aunjanue Ellis, Ebony Osidian, and Dominique Thorne. In the novel, Tish notices that Victoria’s picture reveals a woman with dyed-blond hair and “dark shoulders,” which may be why Sharon later appeals to her to help Fonny because “he’s black. . . . Like us.” Sharon also notes that Pietro is the same age as Fonny and describes Victoria, repeatedly, as “girl” who is thin and fragile, whom she tries to talk to as if she was talking to Tish. Yet in the film, Victoria is played by light-skinned Emily Rios and looks significantly older than Tish, played by Kiki Layne, while Pietro is played by the forty-something actor Pedro Pascal, who inhabits a more condescending than terrorized Pietro character. The effect of these casting and screenplay choices is also to visually separate African Americans and Puerto Ricans by skin tone/color, ignoring Black Latinx.

Jenkins creates a lush and loving portrait of Black love and its force in sustaining a community. From the repetition of the soft golds and yellows in the autumn trees and in Tish and Fonny’s clothing at the film’s start and through the warm golden light that punctuates the visual vignettes of their time together to the deep yellow tiles that are the backdrop to Fonny’s face in jail, color suggests the warmth of their love as well as the reverence with which the film treats it. The film’s updating of Baldwin’s theme of mass incarceration tells a much-needed story for new audiences about Black life and Black experience, revealing truths that have been deliberately hidden from us. In this way, Jenkins’s adaptation maintains a focus on Tish and Fonny as individuals harmed and changed by their experience, yet persisting, but what it loses in translation is the recognition of another diaspora experience.

CONCLUSION

Ava DuVernay's 2019 docudrama *When They See Us* portrays the five young men unjustly accused and imprisoned in the 1989 Central Park jogger case, "whose identities were erased and rewritten before they'd even had the chance to finish eighth grade."¹²⁹ DuVernay's portraits of Kevin Richardson, Antron McCray, Raymond Santana, Korey Wise, and Yusef Salaam includes careful and considerable attention to the distinct ethnic backgrounds of the five young men who were lumped together in the 1989 case by virtue of being Black, including Black Puerto Rican Raymond Santana.

We expect that a docudrama's performance of the past will allow viewers some new perspective on events, and we, therefore, anticipate that docudramas have "historical and ethical obligations to the past."¹³⁰ DuVernay's series works to create a new public memory of these events and the five young men powerful enough to counter the narrative that railroaded them into prison and remained in the public imagination for decades afterward. In creating a new public memory of these five young men, DuVernay mines a variety of sources, including the media and tabloid coverage, criminal justice system documentation, and the accounts of the Harlem African American and Latinx / Puerto Rican communities, as well as those of the young men themselves and their families. The docudrama captures well the racist paranoia that predominated in New York in the late 1980s and 1990s, one fueled by real estate interests and tabloids, as Garrett McGrath describes in "Love/Hate: New York, Race, and 1989."¹³¹

The series merits greater consideration than I can give it here, but allow me one point. The first episode throws us into the frenzied round-up and interrogation of five young men in Harlem in 1989. The interrogation rooms at the police precinct are small, and the director heightens the sense of claustrophobia and powerlessness of the young men with tight camera frames, dark rooms, and downward camera angles on the young men. At the end of episode 1, the five young men meet for the first time when they are placed in a bright, almost blindingly white room together. Kevin asks the others, "Why are they doing this to us?" and Raymond Sanchez answers, "What other way they ever do us?" I suggest this "us" closely matches the "us" of Baldwin's *Beale Street*, as it also recognizes Black Puerto Ricans. Indeed, this assertion of "us" also accurately captures the emergence of a diaspora consciousness among African American and Puerto Rican characters in mid- to late twentieth-century New York in the works of Piri Thomas, Marta Moreno

Vega, and James Baldwin, works that, as this chapter has demonstrated, illustrate the migrations and movements of different African diaspora peoples into the same orbit—to be sure, an orbit different from that of the circum-Caribbean discussed in the previous chapter—and the subsequent negotiation of difference within diaspora that strengthens all sides. The texts in this chapter represent questions of colorism and legacies of racial mixing in thinking about race relationally as they also illuminate the spread of carceral logics in policing Black and darkskinned subjects. Chapter 4 examines representations of these carceral logics as well as challenges to anti-Blackness in the Peruvian-US borderlands by focusing on the fiction of Daniel Alarcón and documentary film work of Mitch Teplitsky, revealing a little-explored site of African diaspora in Peru and a challenging reassessment of elite discourses of *mestizaje*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Centering Peru's Black Diaspora While Querying Dominant Cultures in the US-Peru Borderlands

This chapter examines the ways that a set of twenty-first century literary and cinematic texts engage with the experiences, cultures, and histories of Black Peruvians. This archive includes Peruvian American author Daniel Alarcón's collection of short stories *War by Candlelight* (2005), Alarcón's and Sheila Alvarado's graphic novel *City of Clowns* (2015), created from a story in the *War by Candlelight* collection, and Mitch Teplitsky's documentary film *Soy Andina* (2007), which features dancers Cynthia Paniagua (of Peruvian and Puerto Rican descent) and Nélida Silva (Peruvian American migrant to New York). Of particular interest is how these texts explore anti-Blackness and geographies of relation among Black Peruvians, Indigenous, and mestizx Peruvians.¹ This challenge and exploration occurs across the US-Peru borderlands and among its diaspora populations. *War by Candlelight* and *City of Clowns* represent Afro-Peruvian characters, yet each text's preoccupation with negotiating global racial and ethnic hierarchies and exclusions goes beyond representation to interrogate racial ideologies and to prompt readerly reconsideration of inherited racial ideologies. These short stories reveal a racially and culturally diverse Peru in ways that disrupt white-aspiring or white-supremacist paradigms and identities. Similarly, the documentary *Soy Andina* reverses the tropes of the ethnographic film and the American tourist in search of "authentic" culture elsewhere to reveal subjects actively constructing Peruvian and Peruvian American cultures in ways that include Black Peruvians as they traverse both the United States and Peru, evincing belonging across these spaces and making legible histories of inter-American cultural exchange while centering both Black Peruvian and Indigenous Peruvian cultures in the Americas.

These contemporary literary and documentary texts do not announce themselves as “about Black Peru,” yet their attention to Black Peru is significant for two reasons. One is that most people and even most Latinxs remain unaware of the histories and experiences of African diaspora populations in countries like Peru and Ecuador. Victoria Santa Cruz, a leader in developing Black Peruvian dance in the twentieth century, whose work I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, relates that when studying in Paris in the 1960s, she was often mistaken for African, but when traveling in Africa in this same period she was often assumed to be African American from the United States, indicating how little the world knew of Black Peruvians.² More recently, Charles Henry Rowell observes that “except for Susana Baca and members of the Santa Cruz family, very few of us in the English-speaking world are acquainted with Black Peru.”³ While countries such as Colombia and Brazil are better known and studied as locations of African diaspora in Latin America, this chapter contributes to illuminating Peru as a site of African diaspora as well as colonial racial ideologies.

A second reason that these texts merit analysis is because of what they do in representing Black Peru: normalizing Black subjects as Latin American and Latinx subjects while challenging colonial racial ideologies. Their work resonates with Christina Sharpe’s observations on “the past that is not past,”⁴ highlighting for us the degree to which analysis of contemporary literature and performance about anti-Blackness must consider the legacy of colonial pasts. These texts and film offer us a vision of *latinidad* that makes African diaspora constitutive of Latinxs; examine discourses of racialization and the “racial projects”—to borrow from Omi and Winant—of Latinx in contrast to those of Latin American nations; and reckon with the anti-Blackness at the core of both aspirational whiteness and colonial and neocolonial ideologies that circulate among Latinx. As Petra Rivera-Rideau, Jennifer A. Jones, and Tianna S. Paschel note, “Blackness—or the socially constructed meanings and qualities associated with being black—differs depending on distinct national and historical contexts.”⁵ This is not a denial of pervasive anti-Blackness in the world that Charles Mills examines in *The Racial Contract* (1997), or that James Baldwin earlier and Christina Sharpe more recently have addressed in the US context. Instead, Rivera-Rideau, Jones, and Paschel advance a call to question universalizing pan-ethnic claims and constructed identities in order to take seriously the differences among Latinxs that emerge from specific local contexts as well as race and ethnicity. The texts analyzed in this chapter effect greater recognition of

how varied borderlands and diaspora experiences define and shape *latinidad*, recognizing Black subjectivities as Latinx and Latin American subjectivities and, therefore, revealing multiple *latinidades*.⁶ This chapter, therefore, focuses on the intersections of Blackness and *latinidad* in Peru and among Peruvian Americans explored in Alarcón's text, Alarcón and Alvarado's text, and Teplitzky's film, and considers these in the context of the unequal, racialized, and stratified societies through which both characters and documentary subjects move.

The theoretical doing of women-of-color writers remains important here as thinkers who critically inhabit borderlands and diasporas, both spaces where the entrenched and hierarchical colonial orderings of human beings in the Americas are disrupted, questioned, and countered. The fictional and cinematic texts discussed in this chapter enter into this critical inhabitation of borderlands and diasporas, making visible Afro-Peruvian mobilities and challenging Afro-Peruvian immobilities in ways that account for differences within diaspora and shed light on contemporary transamerican borderlands. "Transamerican" joins "borderlands" and "diasporas" in this chapter to signify both the geographical and contextual specificity of this study but also to short-circuit any assumed or given emphasis on comparative national contexts since this study explores literature and film about those existing at the margins of national contexts, those existing in the borderlands and diasporas of the Americas.⁷ This chapter also centers on texts that, like those discussed in previous chapters, are not only narratives of emigration from a place in Latin America to the United States but also narratives of return to Latin America, examining mobility as a two-way rather than one-way phenomenon.⁸

A BORDERLANDS TEXT CONFRONTING ANTI-BLACKNESS

The Disposability of Human Life as Legacy of Colonialism

War by Candlelight offers readers a confrontation with anti-Blackness in both Peru and the United States. Alarcón's collection of short stories opens with the poem "In Your Kingdom," by Carlos Villacorta, which suggests the violence of statelessness as it addresses processes of dehumanization that underpin the disposability of peoples forced into migration that many of these stories explore, and though set in the contemporary period, this col-

lection engages the history that informs the present. As such, “In Your Kingdom,” with its titular reference to monarchy, works, like Eduardo Galeano’s writings,⁹ to remind us of the long histories of enslavement, indenture, and exploitation in the Americas. We find echoes of the poem’s subject in the collection’s first story, “Flood,” where prisoners are violently killed, and again in the second story, “City of Clowns,” where racialized class differences predominate, and again in “Third Avenue Suicide,” where one character slowly dies because of her inability to confront the racial and ethnic hierarchies that her family embraces, and again in “Lima, Peru, July 18, 1979,” “Absence,” and “War by Candlelight,” where the fracturing effects of violent struggles for state control unfold. In this way, the dehumanization that takes center stage in the poem “In Your Kingdom” reverberates throughout the collection.¹⁰

Readers witness Wari’s elation and uncertainty, in the short story “Absence,” as a traveler from Peru to New York planning to turn his temporary visa into permanent undocumented migration. The high stakes of his effort become apparent in the face of a border control apparatus that pointedly reminds him at every step that he is not wanted, and hosts who are unable to fully connect with him. “Wari” is the Spanish spelling for an ancient Andean population and culture, the Huari, centered around present-day Ayacucho, Peru. In carrying the name of an Indigenous population of the Americas, the story gestures toward affinities other than national ones as it also conveys the irony of Wari’s status. He experiences the “border crossings that confer on [migrant people] the status of alien, the illegal, the refuse of nations,”¹¹ despite a name that suggests his belongingness in the Americas.

Challenging Racial Hierarchies

The collection includes stories set in Peru in a time of armed conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, stories that convey a pervasive sense of instability and precarity that carries over into stories about the lives of migrants set in New York immediately before and after 9/11. The title story features an underground guerrilla protagonist, Fernando, known by the nickname “Negro,” whose social justice sensibilities from an early age place him in the path of death. The last story, “A Strong Dead Man,” about a Dominican character in New York’s Inwood neighborhood whose father dies, presents us with a meditation on the nearness of death in the lives of young Latinx men. The story

"Third Avenue Suicide," about the love affair between the Latinx narrator and his South Asian girlfriend, which is doomed by the ethnic, racial, and class hierarchies that structure her family's ideas about ideal mates, similarly suggests death. Although none of these characters are explicitly named as Black characters, the second story describes the groups of boys who encounter a floating dead body in the Hudson using language that suggests in-group identification as Black subjects.¹² Death, or the prospect of death, haunts many of the stories, perhaps underscoring how, as Christina Sharpe notes, "Black life [is] lived . . . in the present tense of death."¹³ I read the collection, therefore, as one that deliberately incorporates Black Latinx characters and invokes the quotidian racial ideologies, and their deadly consequences, that circulate among Latinx, particularly in relation to Peruvian Americans.

Both official and quotidian racial designations in Peru have shifted over time. While "criollo" was commonly used in the colonial era to denote a Spaniard born in the Americas, the term fell out of use in postindependence Peru, according to migration studies scholar Ulla Berg, while three other racial categories gained salience in the Peruvian urban setting: "*blancos* (whites), *mestizos* (mixed race), and *cholos* (i.e., the urban Indian)." Berg notes that residents of Lima who see themselves as white, criollo, or mestizx, in racial hierarchies that trace back to the colonial period, often view newer internal migrants to the city (from Indigenous areas) as racially inferior, a tension that emerges in several stories in Alarcón's collection.¹⁴ Charles Henry Rowell points us to the circulation of broader categories of "Amerindian" and "mestizo," noting that the latter can encompass whites. Both Berg's and Rowell's observations indicate that Indigenous cultures and peoples remain vital in Peru, while "mestizo" marks difference from Indigeneity in varying degrees and inclusive of varied races. A leader of the revival of Black Peruvian cultural forms at mid-twentieth century, Nicomedes Santa Cruz often referred to "Black Peruvian mestizaje" to discuss the particular ways that Black Peruvian culture came into being and changed over time, recognizing its uniqueness and its basis among a proud Black Peruvian population.¹⁵ His words underscore a mixed Black Peruvian heritage as well as the influence of Black Peruvian culture on mestizx in Peru, yet Black Peruvians have not always been recognized, valued, and respected in Peru. The label "Afro-Peruvian" emerges in the latter half of the twentieth century in Peru as a positive self-naming that asserts both a belonging in Peru and a diaspora connection to other African-descended peoples in the Americas. In this discussion I use "Afro-Peruvian" and the more contemporary "Black Peruvian" interchangeably.

Are the Darkskinned and Poor Part of the Nation?

The first story in Alarcón's collection of transamerican short stories revolves around the battles between rival gangs in an urban neighborhood next door to a prison that houses both a significant population of *terrucos*, as the narrator calls them, and ordinary criminals or delinquents, including the narrator's own older brother. The geographic and topographic details of the neighborhood suggest the district of San Juan de Lurigancho in Lima, one of the most populous districts of the city that grew tremendously in the 1980s due to migration from the countryside to the city.¹⁶ The story explores the divisions between criminal prisoners and *terrucos*, a Peruvian neologism that conflates political and terrorist into one term.¹⁷ The narrator gives voice to his mistrust of and disdain for the *terrucos*, a distrust and disdain shared with guards in the prison at one point, but soon experiences his own terror as a temporary prisoner in what the local residents euphemistically call the "university."¹⁸ Scholar Carlos Aguirre notes that the discourse of *terruco* also works in insidious ways to delegitimize human rights workers, family members of detainees, victims of political violence and Peruvian Indigenous peoples in general.¹⁹ And this is what the narrator of this story eventually comes to understand, all too profoundly: that he does not, in fact, share the views or status of the guards or police.

In setting the story in a prison with both criminal and *terruco* inhabitants, the story references the period of insurgency in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s. The loss of life in Peru during this period was devastating. According to Ulla Berg, in the 1980s the insurgency prompted new migrations to Lima of Indigenous peoples from the highlands in search of safety and escape from poverty, but this migration as well as emigration from Peru continued in the 1990s due to "democratic instability and growing inequality" in Peru under a "full-blown neoliberal economic regime."²⁰ Ulises Juan Zevallos-Aguilar notes, "In the Peruvian case, 70,000 casualties and 1,000,000 displaced people were the result of twenty years of an undeclared civil war between 1980 and 1992."²¹ Alarcón's short story collection begins, therefore, by introducing readers to this life-altering social reality of late twentieth-century Peru. Post-civil war Lima figures prominently as the subject of each of his stories set in Peru, revealing the ways that internal migrations bring characters from distinct racial and ethnic backgrounds into contact with each other as well as the scarcities and logics of war that infuse quotidian practices and views in the city.

The unnamed narrator of the story, who joins with his friends Renán and Chochó in the petty battles between their neighborhood gang, the Diablos Jr., and that of their counterparts in the Siglo XX neighborhood just across the street from them, tells us once that “in the sun, Chochó gleamed like a polished black stone,” suggesting that racial difference matters in the story.²² When the narrator and his two friends are picked up by police following a fight between the two gangs, beaten and then essentially held hostage in the prison under the guise of a murder investigation until their families pay a bribe, it’s clear that in the eyes of the police, the boys aren’t worthy of the protections afforded to citizens. In the eyes of the police, they are disposable because they, too, have crossed a border, inhabiting a place where they are not welcome. As they are harassed in an attempt to force a confession for a crime that never happened, their disposability is made evident to them by the police. When Renán tries to defend the reputation of his already imprisoned brother Lucas, and, by extension, his own reputation, from the homophobic and gendered aspersions of their interrogator by praising Lucas’s military service in the police “interview,” the cop Humboldt dismisses them as “common criminals in uniform” unlike “men like me.” If the name allows us to presume that Humboldt, like his nineteenth century namesake the Prussian explorer Alexander von Humboldt who visited Lima in 1802,²³ is lighter-skinned than the boys, we see the conflation here of race and class as well as sexuality in articulating the ideal masculine subject to whom the nation truly belongs. Held in prison for the night, our narrator dreams of killing, death, the geographical precarity of his neighborhood encircled by mountains and subject to floods, and the increased proximity of the *terrucos*.²⁴ Before releasing them the next day, Humboldt reiterates that they are “scum” and “deserved to die,” while complaining about the demands placed on him by “human rights people.”²⁵ If the boys don’t already feel their exclusion and disposability, Humboldt’s words make it clear: you do not belong here equally. The racial animus against the boys is subtly underscored when our narrator tells us that they learned later from rumors in the neighborhood that no person had been killed in the fight but instead a dog of “pure breed.” After two dogs from the Diablos Jr. neighborhood are killed in retaliation, calm settles. But the detail of the “pure breed” is a telling echo of at least one of the story’s concerns.

Despite the boys’ patriotism and their investment in the discourse of *terrucos* as well as their hatred of the armed conflict that defines their world, none of these discourses save them or their loved ones. As events unfold, our narrator’s allegiance to nation and military makes no difference. His dream,

after their first interrogation by Humboldt, begins to hint at this in seeing the *terrucos* “with us” and, like the Diablos Jr. and the residents of Siglo XX, inhabiting their own neighborhoods, though the narrator is not yet fully conscious of his own questioning of imbibed loyalties to the nation and the military. The additional humiliations Humboldt heaps upon the boys, and the discovery that it was a dog killed and not a person, subtly reinforce the doubts that surfaced in the dream that proves to be tragically prophetic in the end. A “riot” that started on the “terrorist side” of the prison soon involves “the delinquents,” too, who were also starving. The prison is surrounded, and despite Renán joining with others in vigil outside the besieged prison, wearing “his brother’s medals pinned to his threadbare T-shirt,” his brother Lucas and all the other brothers are not saved. Instead, “Someone, at the very highest level of government, decided that none of it was worth anything. Not the lives of the hostages, not the lives of the *terrucos* or the rioting thieves, or any of it. . . . There would be no future.”²⁶ The absolutely catastrophic violence rained down upon all in the prison erases all divisions and distinctions. Where some felt themselves superior to others, now there is only absolute and total disregard for all, everyone equally disposable. The story’s closing lines hint at the depth of the turmoil this evokes for all who witness it: “The bombs fell and we felt the dry mountains shake.”²⁷ As the first story in the collection, “Flood” offers a caution about the delusions of superiority or imagined differences that informs how we apprehend the other stories in the collection, also revealing the extent of unbelonging and marginality imposed upon raced and classed others in the schema of the nation, geographically in the precarity of their dwelling spaces, ideologically in the disregard for their personhood, and physically in the disposability of their lives.

City of Clowns

War by Candlelight’s “City of Clowns” presents a journalist, Oscar, ruminating on his father’s influence and his own identity following his father’s death. Told in the first person, set in Lima, and opening with the father’s death, the story is full of flashbacks that chronicle the family’s arrival to Lima from Pasco in central Peru and the working-class life they lead in the city. Its opening scene, in the hospital where his father Hugo has just died, presents Oscar’s mother, Marisol, mopping side by side with Hugo’s common-law wife, Carmela—the woman for whom Hugo left Marisol and

Oscar—to work off the hospital bill for Hugo's care. Oscar's immediate antipathy for "the other woman" creates a central tension in the story, which he struggles to resolve. However, as Oscar soon reveals, the conflict he struggles with is not exclusively familial but also ideological and racial. Oscar tells us that Carmela, the former mistress turned wife of his father, is Black. Oscar describes Carmela as "petite, cocoa colored with blue-green eyes." Later, when he goes to see his mother, who is staying with Carmela, he reveals that she and her family reside in the neighborhood of La Victoria, a neighborhood of Lima known historically as a Black residential area—one where the influential leaders of Afro-Peruvian cultural revival Nicomedes and Victoria Santa Cruz grew up.²⁸ I believe the potency of this particular short story for interrogating contemporary racial hierarchies in Latin America, for posing critical questions about self-definition and national racial imaginaries or the ideal national subjectivity, is one reason that the story itself became a separate graphic novel, published by Riverhead Books in 2015.²⁹

Blindsided by the face-to-face meeting with Carmela in the hospital and unprepared for the later meeting with his half brothers, Oscar's uncertainty predominates. When he meets his three half brothers at their father's *velorio* in the short story, he tells us:

I tried to project some kind of authority over them—based on age, I guess, or the fact they were black, or that I was the *real* son—but I don't think it worked. My heart wasn't in it. They touched my mother with those light, careless touches that speak of a certain intimacy, as if she were a beloved aunt, not the supplanted wife. Even she belonged to them now. Their grief was deeper than mine. Being the first-born of the real marriage meant nothing at all; these people were, in the end, Don Hugo's true family.³⁰

Oscar's assumption that he should feel some superiority over his half brothers because of their race and their illegitimacy reflects the hold of pernicious racial ideologies, and while we might read his failure to perform racial superiority as an acceptance of its failure, the scene, nonetheless, creates a troubling distance between Oscar and his half siblings. The first two lines of the above excerpt are not included in the graphic novel version of the story, which visually conveys tension between Oscar and his half brothers in a creased forehead and distance but doesn't capture the complexity of that tension as well as his words do in the short story. The short story's "These people were, in the end, Don Hugo's true family" is softened in the graphic

novel to “Carmela, her sons, and my mother were, in the end, Don Hugo’s true family,” erasing the continued ambivalence that the phrase “these people” represents in Oscar’s thought.³¹

Unlike the original English-language story “City of Clowns” in the collection *War by Candlelight* (2005) peppered with Spanish-language colloquialisms and phrases, the English-language graphic novel *City of Clowns* (2015) does not include any Spanish-language colloquialisms or phrases, instead offering a completely English-language version. The graphic novel takes much of the descriptive language that creates the physical scene of action for readers in the short story and transforms this into visual scenes, making the textual description unnecessary, yet the graphic novel exists only in black and white, so that the colors described in the story, from the green of Oscar’s clown costume to the cocoa color of Carmela’s skin, vanish. The prostitute in the graphic novel wears a strapless bra-like top, while the one in the story wears a “tight blue tank top.” The black-and-white format, therefore, erases elements of bilingualism and subtler shades of color. But these elements aren’t all that disappear. While Oscar describes the varied shapes and sizes and races and ethnicities of Lima’s prostitutes, the graphic novel renders the prostitutes more visually alike than different in body shapes and features in its more abstract presentation of the women. Similarly, the graphic novel removes language from the very beginning of the story, in which Oscar directly wrestles with his racial difference from his brothers, and instead implies this through the different visual depictions of them. The graphic novel, therefore, oddly makes racial difference and racial ideology more evident by making it visual—the reader might miss this in the short story but can’t avoid seeing it in graphic novel—while also possibly muting the short story’s engagement of diverse racial subjects, hierarchies, and relationalities. In other ways, the graphic novel form advances what I suggest are key concerns in the novel. On a spectrum of realist to abstract depiction, most characters are rendered abstractly, making them and the novel’s concerns more about ideas than representation, with slightly more realist depictions emerging at key moments to ground us again in Oscar’s particular experience.³² The black-and-white format also lends itself to a reading of the graphic novel as primarily about racial ideologies, posing this more starkly than the short story does, while the many pages of borderless panels contribute to the reader’s perception of the novel’s concerns as persistent ones.³³

In the short story Oscar conveys a complicated mix of resentment toward his father and unthinking acceptance of patriarchal legal and social norms

that is challenged by the weight of evidence of a stronger emotional bond among his mother, Marisol, Carmela—who, he suddenly recognizes, is not merely a mistress but actually a second wife, and her children. In this way the story metaphorically gestures at dismantling the juridical structures that perpetuate male mestizo rule—“Being the first-born of the real marriage meant nothing at all”—indeed, enshrine it as the ideal national subject. However, Oscar will have to resolve his investment in these structures and how they are linked to his need for the now-forever-absent father.

When he learns that his mother is now spending considerable time at Carmela's house, he views this as a complete humiliation of his mother, a surrender to the superior power of Carmela, reflecting his continued adherence to patriarchal norms. Oscar's mother and deceased father came from Pasco, a central region both dominated and devastated by silver mining, to Lima,³⁴ but Oscar realizes after his father's death that Hugo and Carmela's relationship predates his own and his mother's arrival in Lima to join his father. This new knowledge, his father's death, and his mother's new closeness to Carmela and her children, his half brothers, have the effect of unmooring Oscar in ways he had not anticipated. This newfound confusion hovers in the background of Oscar's extensive investigative wanderings through the city of Lima as a journalist researching the lives of clowns. His ramblings through the city his parents brought him to provide the perfect pretext for Oscar's recollections of his life with his father, the character of his parents' relationship, and the race and class hierarchies that have structured his life in Lima as he considers his own future. He acknowledges his own racialization when he tells us,

All my life, I've been Chino. In Pasco, in Lima. At home, in my neighborhood. The way some people are Chato or Cholo or Negro. I hear those two syllables and look up. There are thousands of us, of course, perhaps hundreds of thousands, here and everywhere that Spanish is spoken. No nickname could be less original. There are soccer players and singers known as Chino.³⁵

What do these nicknames mean? All refer to a person's appearance and ethnic/racial identity. “Chato” may refer to either a snub nose or a short, wide girth. In Peru, “Cholo” signifies a person of Amerindian ancestry. “Negro” means Black. In a definition that dates back to the colonial era, “Chino” refers to an individual of mixed ancestry that includes African—most likely Native American and African, and it can also refer to a curly or kinky hair

texture, though in contemporary usage it might also mean of Chinese or Asian ancestry.³⁶ Oscar, therefore, is identified and self-identifies as a mixed-race person living among comparably racially and ethnically marked peers. Yet they each also inhabit distinct ethnic/racial identities that are significant. In this musing, Oscar/Chino, who is a journalist, addresses the racial and ethnic multiplicity of Peru, situating this not just in one region, but in both rural and urban regions of the country, and, indeed, “everywhere that Spanish is spoken” these ethnic/racial distinctions exist as comparable yet distinct. That these nicknames proliferate everywhere that Spanish is spoken echoes the racial castas that also once proliferated throughout the Spanish colonial Americas, reminding us not only of the legacies of colonialism,³⁷ but also of the cultural intermixtures that define Latin America.

But before his youthful experience of racialization, Oscar remembers the first time he met Carmela, on a trip to Lima with his father at the age of six, two years before he and his mother would move to Lima to join his father: “I’d never seen a black person before. I cried and said she looked burnt. She grinned and pinched my cheek. He hit me and told me to be nice to my *tía*.”³⁸ Despite Oscar’s assertion of comparability of these varied racial/ethnic nicknames in the places where he grew up, we know from his earlier admission about meeting his half brothers that “Negro” is no longer comparable to “Chino” for him.³⁹ His narrative thereby charts three different points in the development of his racial consciousness that also correspond to his geographic and class locations: Pasco, the rural mountain mining town where he is from but where “there is no future”; San Juan de Lurigancho in Lima, the diverse working-class district of migrants to the city where he grows up; and the powerful center of downtown Lima, where he now lives and works as a journalist, thanks to a university education.

The racial/ethnic comparability he asserts in the above excerpt, and at another point in the text, as well as signified in his nickname, is lost to him when he enters the upper middle class as a scholarship student at an elite private school and is thereafter known by a nickname that associates him with low-class criminals: *piraña* (piranha). Oscar’s remembrances of his childhood and youth reveal the ways that the assignment of the term *piraña* overlaps with and even underlies his Chino racial/ethnic nickname. I suggest that Natalia Molina’s conceptualization of racial scripts—or how discourses and ideologies about race are always available to be used in relation to another group, and often are—proves valuable in understanding and reading these moments of Alarcón’s text, since *piraña* applies equally to all racialized sub-

jects of Oscar's San Juan de Lurigancho neighborhood, no matter whether they are "Chato, or Cholo, or Negro."⁴⁰ His racial difference and that of those around him aren't necessarily remarkable within the context of those from his own social milieu. Yet to the upper classes, who live in different neighborhoods of Lima and who do not hail from the rural mountainous area of Pasco or coastal regions that are home to Black Peruvians, all racial difference is menacing; hence *piraña* collapses differing racial scripts into one.

The new nickname assigned to him when he enters a space of class and race privilege in Lima conveys this so keenly that when his classmate Andrés addresses Oscar as *piraña* in the presence of Andrés's mother, he is openly scolded by her.⁴¹ The graphic novel *City of Clowns* suggests that Andrés is lighter-skinned with lighter-colored hair. The frames depicting Oscar's first encounter with classmates at the exclusive private school Peruano Británico that his mother's employer is paying for shows a student calling him *piraña* after a conflict on the soccer field. The frames convey the racial divide by showing Oscar with very dark hair against a dark background, while the privileged boy is framed by a white background. An image of students lined up at the new private school similarly features several with lighter-colored hair against a white background, with Oscar having the darkest hair.⁴² When Oscar next appears in a scene at the school, his own head and face are replaced by that of the *piraña*, indicating that Oscar himself is no longer visible, just the stereotype.

How much the youthful racial/ethnic comparability of San Juan de Lurigancho has been lost to Oscar is also evident in his brief tryst with a sex worker in Lima. As he enters the red-light district, he observes: "And there the parade began: tall, short, fat, skinny, old, young. Beneath every arched doorway, or leaning against the dirty walls: chinas, cholas, morenas y negras."⁴³ He seems to accord the sex workers some respect when he asserts that they are just as hard working as the rest of Lima, yet he erases that respect by imagining that this is how his father met Carmela, a vision that sates his anger at his father for having left him and his mother as it also suggests how much he has internalized the racial scripts that apply to all of nonwhite Lima.

In some ways, despite his love for her, those scripts even apply to his mother, whom he views with pity because of her racial and class background: "What could Carmela and my mother share besides a battleground? My mother had capitulated. It gave me vertigo. It was the kind of humiliation only a life like hers could prepare you for."⁴⁴ In his eyes, her life as poor, working-class migrant from the highlands leaves her unprepared for the hus-

tle of the city. In these ruminations, Oscar reveals how much he has become like his father, a man he describes as a thief and a con artist who is also hard-working, a man who puts his own needs first when abandoning his mother but also maintains a second family, a man who makes Oscar his co-conspirator in crime while making sure he will know how to hustle to survive, a man who knows his place in society but parlays that into more.

The perceived menace of the racialized lower classes pops up throughout “City of Clowns” as Oscar observes the city on his travels through it, coming upon a loud street protest of workers that prompts an observation that strangely echoes the label *piraña*: “Social movements, like all predators, sense weakness: the president was teetering; half his cabinet had resigned. But on the street it still looked like Lima, beautiful, disgraced Lima, unhappy and impervious to change.”⁴⁵ As the protest recedes, he witnesses a scene of a “hundred children” pelting a street clown with water balloons until the clown is rescued by the bus driver of Oscar’s transport. Later, a group of shoeshine boys marches through a main commercial center, sending shoppers and shopkeepers scattering in fear, but Oscar stays on the street to watch and sees only “skinny, fragile, and smiling” boys who march by him, “whispering their demands.”⁴⁶ Oscar comments on the surrealness of the outsize response to their protest—a vestige of Peru’s troubled past, perhaps—and, indeed, to the surrealness of the side-by-side existence of such privilege and such poverty in Lima.

Wearing Whiteness

Oscar’s ruminations and flashbacks unfold under cover of his assignment to write a story about clowns, an activity that also provides him with an escape from his grief and anger. To produce an in-depth story, he joins a pair of clowns in their daily routine dressed as a clown himself. Together the trio ride the city’s buses begging for money:

We collected laughs and coins until the money weighed heavy in my suit pocket. I was a secret agent. I saw six people I knew. . . . Exactly zero recognized me. I was forgetting myself too, patrolling the city, spying on my own life. I’d never felt this way: on display, but protected from the intruding eyes of strangers and intimates.⁴⁷

Having donned the outlandish costume and makeup, he is caught by surprise at his invisibility and then settles into it to observe, highlighting the

paradox of hypervisibility and invisibility he experiences.⁴⁸ The costume makes him unrecognizable to those he knows, including a former girlfriend, his mother, and Carmela and her children. And while Oscar's whiteface in this story represents an investment in aspirational whiteness that he hasn't quite shaken (witness his meeting with half brothers), it also works to reveal how racialized others become hypervisible and yet invisible,⁴⁹ a status Oscar inhabits as *piraña* in the exclusive Peruvian Británico school, that Carmela and her children inhabit in his mind, and that perhaps his mother inhabited in his father's mind.

It is through the whiteface of the clown costume that Oscar begins to grapple with who he is. He spies on Carmela and his half brothers, never identifying himself to them, but suddenly awakening to the depth and duration of his father's double life and of the betrayal of his mother as he recalls his childhood meeting with Carmela. His father, however, is not alone in betrayal. As a willing young participant in his father's burglary business targeting the homes of wealthy Limeños, Oscar, too, kept things from his mother, Marisol. Most importantly, in what seems like his last burglary, Oscar joined his father in placing his mother's employment and well-being at risk by burglarizing the home where she works as a domestic servant, one of the two places in Lima where, as Oscar tells it, she actually felt safe.⁵⁰

Oscar can justify his early participation in his father's burglary ring as revenge upon the wealthy classmates who othered, excluded, and ignored him at Peruvian Británico—indeed, they even steal from one of his classmates's homes. However, he shocks and disgusts himself by participating in that last burglary. The shame of it still haunts him, even though he, like his father before him, has distanced himself from his mother and his old neighborhood and entered the professional classes as a journalist. He now lives in downtown Lima. Despite his love for his mother, he has left her, and as he tells us in the end, he will not be returning to her.

It seems, as one of the professional clowns observes earlier in the story, that Oscar has realized that “it's like this: you wake up one morning, and *boom!* you're a clown,” in a comment that reveals that acclimation to Lima is not merely about navigating the city geographically but also about cultural and ideological adaptation. It is a comment that serves as a warning about participating in those processes uncritically. Issues of class, and rural versus urban difference, which are also tied to race and ethnicity, abound in this story. For example, Oscar's mother Marisol remains an outsider in Lima in ways that Carmela is not, which perhaps mirrors the broader reality of Indig-

enous Andean alienness in Lima, what dancer Nélide Silva in *Soy Andina* notes when she comments that she was always a “serrana” in Lima, in contrast to the long-standing urban presence of Black Peruvians in Lima.⁵¹ Carmela runs a dress shop from her home, placing her in an entrepreneurial class, a position that resonates with accounts of Black Limeños in La Victoria as having created opportunities among themselves.⁵²

In the short story, Oscar says to his mother, “I won’t leave you” as he holds her in a hug, both he and his mother crying as his face paint runs down his sleeve in white streaks. He is seeking reassurance from his mother that he mattered to his deceased father, in a scene that mixes together filial love and desire for patriarchal and racialized power. But Oscar tells us that after he says this, “a shiver passed over me. I knew in my heart that the clown was lying.”⁵³ The graphic novel’s closing pages emphasize Oscar’s realization, or choice, by depicting Oscar walking away from his mother on a black background, her hand reaching out in love, his hand clutching the clown mask followed by the final pages showing a receding Oscar on white background as he again dons the clown mask. Since we know that he has already delivered his article on the clowns to his newspaper, his admission that he will be leaving his mother behind, coupled with his receding figure and his return to the role of clown, suggests an enduring absence as it echoes the graphic novel’s opening images of his father walking away.⁵⁴

The story’s ending, therefore, does not create an ideal ameliorative ending that would paper over the profundity of the problem, but instead critically assesses anti-Blackness within dominant Peruvian ideologies. At the end of “City of Clowns” Oscar is one step closer to a dawning knowledge, but he also reveals how much the powerful figure of the desired mestizo father haunts him and informs his own self-interest. The story conveys Oscar’s unease and anxiety about his place in society in a way that addresses assumptions about who is Peruvian and who isn’t as it reveals multiple migrations of individuals and networks as well as communities of care born in those movements. The specific histories that inform understandings of race and ethnicity in Lima and their interaction with structures of colonial and then capitalist extraction exert a continuing force on the characters in this short story / graphic novel, one that cannot be easily overcome.⁵⁵ Oscar reminds himself of this when he notes that, while he and his friends in San Juan de Lurigancho would talk big about fighting back against the insults of his privileged classmates, “the reality was so different. They wielded their power carelessly, sometimes unconsciously.”⁵⁶

Oscar further underscores the challenge ahead of him when he recalls Pasco as a place that provokes an existential despair among the men working in its only industry, mining:

In Pasco, the very mountains move: they're gutted from the inside, stripped of their ore, carted away and reassembled. To see the earth move this way, to know that somehow, everyone you live with is an accomplice to this act; it's too unsettling, too unreal.⁵⁷

The miners refer to the pollution and illness they spit out as “the color of money,” which is exactly what Oscar calls the expectorate he hurls on the tied-up guard at the last burglary he performs. In multiple ways, therefore, the story documents how the move from Pasco to Lima has changed Oscar and not always in desirable ways. The events of the story create a heightened critical tension about which future directions Oscar will take without resolving these. Yet the story offers some hope in that Oscar says that he knew “the clown was lying,” leaving open the possibility that Oscar will one day remove the paint of aspirational whiteness from his person, exiting the role of Lima clown.

War by Candlelight, however, is not just about Lima and the United States, as Alarcón himself tells us: “Lima, of course, is only the Peruvian iteration of a global phenomenon. If I were Nigerian or Pakistani or Mexican, I could have written a very similar book—the place names changed, some altered details of the cultural landscape, but the essence would have been the same: an urban center defined by unbounded growth, social, political and economic instability, and dramatic cultural change,” suggesting that the quandaries Oscar faces are in fact quandaries facing the world.⁵⁸ The graphic novel further emphasizes its borderlands affinities and the hemispheric dimensions of the instability, change, and contested racial ideologies it addresses in the visual silhouette of Don Hugo, Marisol, and Oscar fleeing Pasco for Lima, an image of running figures that echoes the graphic signs posted on southern California highways in the 1990s warning motorists of crossing migrants.⁵⁹

The story and collection offer us some answers to these quandries in the relationship between Marisol and Carmela. If Don Hugo was as care-less with Carmela and his second family as he was with Marisol and Oscar, then the new family formation might also suggest an alternative to Oscar's white-aspiring mestizx identity. In contrast to Oscar, Marisol and Carmela embrace

their relationship to each other, forging a new family configuration and network of care between them. Side by side at the hospital where Don Hugo dies, at his funeral, and in sharing a home together following Hugo's death, Marisol and Carmela comfort and support each other. Perhaps recognizing their shared status as borderlands subjects in Lima, but certainly untroubled by racial difference, they see each other, and their joining together suggests a recognition of "linked fate."⁶⁰ In joining Marisol and Carmela together in new bonds of kinship, the text also alludes to the histories of community forged between African diaspora and Indigenous populations not only in Peru but also throughout the Americas, including Mexico, as discussed in Chapter Two, as well as the US, and Brazil.

SOY ANDINA: CENTERING BLACK PERU

This 2007 documentary film follows two New Jersey dancers, Cynthia Paniagua and Nélida Silva, on their separate return journeys to Peru to participate in Peruvian dance cultures.

Paniagua and Silva first meet in New Jersey when Paniagua seeks out classes on Peruvian dance, which Silva is already heavily involved in as an extracurricular activity. An immigrant from Peru, Silva is a part of a vibrant community of Peruvians engaged in the performance of traditional dances in New Jersey. Paniagua is from Queens, New York, with parents who are Puerto Rican and Peruvian, and the film intersects with her life just as she is finishing her undergraduate degree in dance at Hunter College. Silva returns to Peru to host her village's fiesta patronal, or annual festival in honor of her village's patron saint, which is an extended several-day affair including food, public procession and mass, music, and dancing. In serving as the host for the festival in Llamellín as a single-woman emigrant from her mountain village, Silva alters the tradition of festival patronage, typically hosted by resident heterosexual couples. Paniagua, meanwhile, travels to Peru to learn about Afro-Peruvian dance, which she briefly witnessed during an earlier family visit. Paniagua first lands in Lima for a few months and then travels throughout the country to learn from regional experts. Because their travel to Peru in the documentary is not the first time either has been there, the film also centers the ongoing character of the Peruvian American relationship to Peru and of the simultaneity of Silva's and Paniagua's lives in both Peru and the United States. Yet their dance interests are diverse; Silva partici-

pates in the performance of Quechua and mestizx dance traditions, while Paniagua is particularly interested in learning Afro-Peruvian dances. This discussion will focus primarily on Cynthia Paniagua's journey, one that reveals cultures ignored or obscured in predominant representations of Peru, but will also take up the relationship and communication between the two women documented in the film.

Soy Andina does much more than show us two dancers with interests in Peruvian dance and the diversity of Peruvian culture. By centering the journeys and ongoing experiences of these two women, the film departs from the model of the ethnographic film about the dances and cultures of others to instead explore transamerican lives and communities and subjects who meet across the geographies of relation in the Americas. In the case of Cynthia Paniagua and the work the film does to reveal Afro-Peruvian dance and culture to a US audience, this diaspora context turns out to have been an essential genesis of the Afro-Peruvian project itself, in that scholars date the revival of Afro-Peruvian cultural forms in mid-twentieth-century Peru to the influence of (African American) Katherine Dunham's dance troupe performances in Peru and the subsequent growth of study in Peru of African diaspora culture in the Caribbean and across the Americas. So the film makes something better known—Afro-Peru—as it recognizes the depth and breadth of the Afro-Peruvian project that was itself inspired by diaspora consciousness.⁶¹ As minoritized US subjects who are centered in the film, Paniagua and Silva are co-participants in these borderlands and diaspora cultures, shifting away from conceptions of the nation as the primary or proper frame for culture as they also disrupt ideas about the typical national subject as contained exclusively within the bounds of that nation in ways that prompt questions about the makeup of the nation itself. In this way, the film echoes Daniel Alarcón's observation: "As an American of Latin American descent I find it increasingly difficult to tell where Latin America begins and where North America ends."⁶²

Making Peruvian Dance in the US-Peru Borderlands

The "making" and "doing" of both Afro-Peruvian forms for Cynthia and *ser-rano huayno* forms for Néliida, therefore, emerge as a borderlands project, involving actors across the Americas who engage in dance practices in multiple locations to reproduce themselves as multiply defined borderlands and diaspora subjects. This documentary film unfolds largely in the observa-

tional mode as the camera follows the actions of each woman, alternating between their stories, as each pursues her love of dance in both New Jersey and Peru, following them as they move about New York and New Jersey in their every day life, as they travel to Peru, and in Peru among family and mountain village for Nélida and in Lima city life, dance school, and travels throughout varied regions for Cynthia.⁶³ Yet, as an early twenty-first century documentary, its observational mode does not advance an older era's focus on "universalizing conventions" but instead follows Jeffrey Geiger's view of the postmodern observational documentary in "effecting a displacement of the seemingly neutral 'we' of documentary towards asserting the subjectivity of the 'I.'"⁶⁴

In this postmodern observational mode, viewers only see and know what the women themselves experience and/or what they express; the filmmaker provides no voice-over narration or explanation of events, though the women themselves sometimes provide a voice-over to scenes. In the beginning, for example, Cynthia speaks to the camera about her experience as a dancer in New York, while Nélida provides a voice-over describing her life in New York as the film shows a montage of her movements and actions through the city. The women are shown communicating by email before, during, and after their travels to Peru. Their messages to each other sometimes appear on screen as subtitles while at other times the camera zooms in on the computer screen to show their communication, and often, we hear each woman in voice-over, speaking the email message, a choice that gives these scenes the feel of an intimate phone conversation. By showing us their social networks, the film presents Cynthia and Nélida as figures who represent a microcosm of larger phenomena, following a late twentieth-century trend in documentary film that "impels recognition of complex networks of local and cultural affiliations, interacting differentially with each other and with the nation" and represents the "complexity and mobility" of transamerican synergies.⁶⁵

Rather than an ethnographic film about Peru, the documentary carefully establishes parallels between the United States and Peru, making it a film that is as much about the United States as it is about Peru, even if the majority of the film is shot in Peru. For example, before the film's title appears on the screen, we see both Cynthia and Nélida performing Peruvian dances in New York. For Cynthia this happens on the platform of the New York City subway, where she meets and dances with an Andean music group to the

applause of the attentive crowd, before hopping on her train. In Nélida's case, the film shows her performing Peruvian dance down the avenues of New York in a parade. Viewers, therefore, first encounter Peruvian music and dance in New York, making the contemporary US city a site of Peruvian cultural performance, before taking viewers to Peru itself to witness the dance customs and festivals there through the eyes of Cynthia and Nélida.

The opening scenes of the film alternate between Peru and the United States, showing people on the move and in multiple forms of public transit, revealing the mobilities that both distance and bring together disparate groups. Scenes of Nélida's life in New York and the scenes of Peru dissolve into each other, emphasizing the porousness of borders that are continually crossed by Nélida, who, as she tells us in the voice-over to these scenes, has lived in the United States for eighteen years but travels back to her hometown of Llamellín at least once every year. This cinematic emphasis on travel, mobility, and modes of transportation runs throughout the film, with scenes from bus rides and taxi rides and walking in Peru appearing as frequently as minibus rides, subway rides, and walking in New York City and between New York and Paterson, New Jersey, with its substantial Peruvian American population.⁶⁶ While scenes in New York zero in on canyons of skyscrapers, scenes in Peru focus on the majesty of mountains via roads that traverse them. The film, therefore, presents both places marked by modern mobilities and modern technologies of mobility that have constructed the worlds through which Cynthia and Nélida move.

While we understand from the film that Cynthia and Nélida are only two of many who traverse the borderlands of Peru and the United States, the film also reveals them as ambitious, intrepid individuals engaged in major undertakings—for Cynthia, a yearlong independent study of dance in Peru funded by a Fulbright grant, and for Nélida, hosting her hometown's annual *fiesta patronal*, something never done before by a single woman. The film shows us the grittiness of the spaces they traverse, the vulnerabilities and worries they express, and the range of emotions they experience on these journeys, allowing viewers to see what it means physically and emotionally to live in the borderlands. In this way, the film is not merely a "celebration of globalization," but instead reveals the challenges of crossing cultural borders.⁶⁷ We witness, for example, Nélida angrily calling band members in the plaza "morons" (in translation) for refusing her request, as host, to play the appropriate music for the fiesta, and we wonder

if her gender or immigrant status matters here or if this is a tension around cultural change. In Lima we see Cynthia barely stifling her anger over last-minute changes to her final exam in dance, a situation she reads as underscoring her outsider status as cultural visitor despite her Peruvian heritage. The camera allows us to see New York and Peruvian streets, and it also shows us the makeshift and spare spaces that Cynthia and Névida and those around them use to practice dance both in the United States and in Peru—whether it's the foyer of a hall or a living room stripped of furniture. In *Soy Andina*, Cynthia and Névida emerge as subjects steering their own stories and journeys and, as women, often defying gendered expectations as they support each other in their endeavors.

Soy Andina emphasizes the back-and-forth dialogue between Peru and the United States in creating community through dance as it tracks each woman's journey, each side authorizing the other. When the film cuts between showing us Névida in Peru to showing us Névida in New Jersey working with younger children on Peruvian dance, it suggests that Névida's strong continued connection with her hometown of Llamellín is a bridge to the Peruvian American community in which she participates in the United States and vice versa. When, in the latter part of the film, we see Cynthia and Névida assisting each other with traditional costumes to dance in carnival festivities in Peru, audiences see how their involvement in the performance of Peruvian dance in the United States is also a bridge back to Peru and vice versa. Just as importantly, although the two women come to know each other in the United States, the carnival scene brings them together in Peru, suggesting a bond made in traversing borders. Because we never see them practicing dance in the kind of professional studio or theater space afforded to the practice of professional dance forms valued by a society, the film's ending scene of a formal, costumed performance on a grand stage with a large audience comes as a surprise to viewers but underscores the professionalism and mettle of participants in the troupe in creating a space in the United States for Peruvian dance, echoing the ambition and intrepidity of the film's two main subjects and suggesting the strengths of those inhabiting the borderlands and diasporas.⁶⁸ Just as importantly, viewers know that this formal stage is not a permanent home for the troupe but instead one of many found and created mobile spaces for performance that also acknowledge the migrations that have shaped Peru and that stretch across the hemisphere.

In Search of Afro-Peruvian Dance and Culture

A student of dance, Cynthia Paniagua's journey is one to learn more about the Afro-Peruvian dance form of *festejo* that she briefly learned about from an aunt on an earlier visit to Peru. The dance stuck with her because it was an inkling of something not much known, that is, Afro-Peruvian cultures, and because of her own interests as the daughter of a Puerto Rican father and Peruvian mother and a dancer of hip-hop. As we learn about her background, we hear a rap mix playing in the background that briefly samples "Guantánamera," a soundtrack that indexes her interests in a *latinidad* that is inclusive of multiple experiences.⁶⁹ Her Puerto Rican and Peruvian background and her New York experience contribute to her heightened awareness of and interest in the cultural forms of Black Latinx and Afro-*latinidad*. A later scene where she encounters a CD of the rap group N.W.A in Lima, happily holding it up to the camera as something she admires, indexes the spread of US cultural industries but also the particular power of rap, as Tricia Rose notes, as an expression of "black energy and creativity in the face of omnipresent oppressive forces."⁷⁰

That Cynthia Paniagua can, in *Soy Andina*, find and study Black dance forms in Peru, that is, that they exist and are known as such, owes much to the cultural work referenced earlier of Black Peruvian artists, musicians, composers, choreographers, and cultural communities. Contemporary recognition of Black dance forms in Peru and of Afro-Peruvian cultural contributions emerges from the work of Nicomedes Santa Cruz (1925–1992) and his sister Victoria Santa Cruz, who launched an Afro-Peruvian cultural revival in the 1950s that "peaked during the 1970s."⁷¹ Their father, Nicomedes Santa Cruz Aparicio (1871–1957), lived in the United States from the age of nine until he was a young adult, while Victoria Santa Cruz enjoyed a career as a professor of theater at Carnegie-Mellon University from the early 1980s until retirement and return to Peru in 1999, illustrating, once again, the hemispheric travels and interconnections of African diaspora peoples.⁷² Having witnessed the extraordinary work of the Katherine Dunham Company performing in Lima in 1951, the Santa Cruz siblings launched a cultural movement that "mobilized a new diasporic consciousness"; inspired the use of *afroperuano* as a self-descriptor; expanded Peruvian music, dance, and literature to include and acknowledge Afro-Peruvian forms and influence; and created professional performing companies that inspired later

generations of Afro-Peruvian performance.⁷³ When Katherine Dunham brought her dance troupe to Lima for a performance in the 1950s, notes Kirstie Dorr, “The political and cultural locus of Black expressive culture in Peru remained legally and discursively relegated to the ‘private’ spheres of the home, neighborhood associations, religious fraternities, and isolated coastal villages,” a situation the Santa Cruz siblings soon changed.⁷⁴ That Nicomedes and Victoria Santa Cruz were inspired by Dunham work’s and later by the negritude movement suggests that they engaged in diaspora as a process, enacting what Nadine George-Graves terms “diasporic spidering” in forging connections with other parts of the African diaspora, particularly in the Americas.⁷⁵

Although the Black population of Peru dates back to 1524 and was, in the mid-eighteenth century, half of the population of Lima, Blacks have not enjoyed the power of their numbers, which are today much smaller.⁷⁶ While some scholars suggest that a distinct Afro-Peruvian culture is not as deep and broadly embraced as is the African American culture or Afro-Cuban culture among Black populations of those nations, other scholars have demonstrated cultural continuations, new hybrid forms, and Black influence on what were criollo forms and have become national forms, a project in which *Soy Andina* participates.⁷⁷ When the Santa Cruzes launched a revival of Afro-Peruvian culture at mid-twentieth century, they were interested in distilling African-influenced elements of creolized music and dance and incorporating African-influenced elements of music and dance from the Caribbean into the forms and repertoires they reconstructed.⁷⁸ Their recovery project was driven not only by their knowledge of the continued practice of some dance forms, for example, *festejo*, but also by formal and scholarly research, creative inspiration and innovation, and a diasporic consciousness.⁷⁹ Nicomedes Santa Cruz famously created a new critical genealogy of the *marinera* dance form that affirmed its roots in *landó* and *zamacueca*, forms developed and practiced by Afro-Peruvians and led by the famous Cumanana troupe.⁸⁰ In 1969, the performance group Perú Negro, led by Ronaldo Campos de la Colina, came into existence and relied to a greater extent on “artistic ethnography” in drawing from the repertoires of Black music and dance with which they had grown up in Afro-Peruvian areas. Marina Lavalle, member of Black Perú, notes that they practiced at their home in the La Victoria neighborhood of Lima and worked on forms such as *festejo*, *zamacueca*, *landó*, and more.⁸¹ Both groups received significant national, hemispheric, and global recognition. Néstor Valdivia Vargas traces

how these mid-twentieth-century efforts of “recovery of Afro-Peruvian cultural manifestations” led to greater Black consciousness and more diffuse participation in Black Peruvian cultural expressions throughout Lima, which in turn gave rise to new research institutes and organizations aimed at mobilizing for the rights of Black Peruvians.⁸²

The Santa Cruz siblings, Ronaldo Campos, and others were forerunners in the development of scholarship that examines African diaspora cultures in Peru and the influence of African-descended Peruvians on national cultural forms. Raúl Romero, for example, discusses two famous instances when Andean, Creole, and Afro-Peruvian genres intermingle in a 1937 collection by Rosa Mercedes de Morales of Antiguous Pregones de Lima that includes “the Andean *huayno*, the *yaravi*, and the Creole *marinera* with genres which are now considered Afro-Peruvian, such as the *festejo*, the *socabon*, and the *agua de nieve*,” while he notes another important 1912 Lima concert that includes creole and Afro-Peruvian genres.⁸³ These dances and compositions continue in performance today, as we see in *Soy Andina* when Nélica Silva insists on the performance of *huayno* music at the village festival rather than the techno-cumbia the band is playing. We also hear Cynthia Paniagua describe her aunt dancing *festejo* at a family party, which sparks her interest in Afro-Peruvian dance, and witness her acquisition of expertise in the *marinera*.⁸⁴ Filomeno Ballumbrosio Guadalupe, the oldest son of a legendary Afro-Peruvian dance and music teacher, describes people in the 1970s traveling to the region of Chíncha, where he grew up, to learn about Black dance from his father.⁸⁵ Scholarship has since uncovered other forms that appear to have enjoyed a continued circulation among Peru's Black population, such as the *marinera* in the Malambo neighborhood described in the ethnographic account of Hugo Marquina Ríos.⁸⁶ The *marinera* dance form comes from the well-documented *zamacueca* form, with “swinging hips, twisting, rapid steps, the use of a handkerchief, the body movement of approaching and retreating,” which Nicomedes Santa Cruz viewed as a version of the *umbigada* in Brazil and the *vacunao* in Cuba, and is well documented as a favorite of Black Peruvians.⁸⁷ Therefore, although we might not, at first glance, associate the *marinera* that we see Cynthia perform in *Soy Andina* with Afro-Peruvians, particularly since it is now performed by primarily mixed-race peoples and fuses characteristics of African-influenced choreography that Brenda Gottschild describes with other cultural influences, the historical record shows otherwise.⁸⁸ And it's interesting that we see echoes of the swinging hips and swaying handkerchief of this dance in the Llamelín



Figure 12. Cynthia Paniagua takes her final exam in Afro-Peruvian dance at the Escuela Nacional Superior de Foklore José María Arguedas in Lima. From the documentary film *Soy Andina* (2007, dir. Mitch Teplitsky).

pueblo dances that Nélica Silva participates in in the highlands of Peru. In Lima, Paniagua also learns about *landó*, a Black dance form from the coast,⁸⁹ and performs it for her final dance exam with classmates,⁹⁰ an experience that is merely prelude to her travels across Peru to learn the significance and forms of Afro-Peruvian dance in their communities of origin, among people for whom they remain important cultural patrimony.

Departing Lima, Cynthia travels to Puno, Jauja, El Carmen, and north toward Piuria to learn dance from the local communities of Blacks and mixed-race peoples who practice and celebrate it.⁹¹ In northern Peru, she takes instruction from an expert in *marinera* and an expert in *tondero*. At Puno, the traditional dance capital of Peru, she witnesses the annual dance festival Fiesta de Candelaria, which lasts weeks, where she, and we as viewers, see multiple dance troupes and forms in parade. She also visits the famous Ballumbrosio family in El Carmen, where she learns *landó*, and we even see a glimpse of the elder Amador Ballumbrosio on camera watching

Cynthia's dance lesson. Cynthia winds up her regional tour in Piuria, where she learns the *tondero* and performs in a national competition at Lambayeque. Néstor Valdivia Vargas suggests that creolization has played a significant role historically in the synthesis of cultural forms in Peru, and the recognition of the continued survival of Afro-Peruvian cultural values and forms in what was formerly known as "criollo culture" has taken hold in some regions as a greater respect for the Afro-Peruvian influence in some cultural forms, such as the *tondero* in northern Peru.⁹² As the documentary reveals, although all of these are Afro-Peruvian dance forms, they are now practiced by Peruvians of all races, and while viewers see many mixed-race individuals practicing these forms, we also see specific communities of Black Peruvians, such as in El Carmen and in Piuria, maintaining these communal cultural forms.

Contemporary musical forms in Peru are influenced by Afro-Peruvian musical traditions, yet, as Kirstie Dorr notes, "These influences have consistently been minimized or disavowed."⁹³ Analyzing the work of Victoria Santa Cruz and her peers in the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond, Dorr observes that their methods "integrated community knowledge, oral tradition, and artistic speculation" and revealed the "choreographies such as *festejo* and *alcatraz*" as evidence of the resistance of the enslaved who, despite "stringent codes that forbade collective assembly and musical production," nonetheless gathered to enjoy "moments of conviviality while reclaiming their laboring bodies, sexual freedom, and creative expression."⁹⁴ The institutionalization of Peru's Black arts revival since the 1960s has, as Kirstie Dorr notes, produced a canon of Afro-Peruvian forms that "often rehearse familiar nationalist tropes of hetero-masculinized empowerment: the positioning of women as sexual objects rather than artistic subjects."⁹⁵ Neither Cynthia nor Néliida embraces such roles, which is perhaps why Cynthia departs dance school in Lima to learn in the regions, replicating the methodology of Victoria Santa Cruz to learn Afro-Peruvian dance forms.

Stereotypes, Racism, and Lost Histories in Recovering Afro-Peruvian Dance

At the Fiesta de Candelaria representations of Blacks emerge among two dance troupes that trouble the film's aim of learning about Black Peru, and of Cynthia's goal to learn about Black Peru more deeply by visiting the regions rather than staying in Lima. Two scenes from the Puno Fiesta de Candelaria are jarring to US viewers in that they appear to participate in racially stereo-

typing Blacks in ways that are reminiscent of now-discarded discriminatory representations in the United States.

The first scene captures a troupe engaged in the *Danza de la Morenada*, a Peruvian and Bolivian folkloric dance tradition with a long history, and the second scene captures a more contemporary troupe of breakdancers costumed in blackface. Since Cynthia offers no direct comments on these performances and the film provides no other authoritative voice-over, viewers must rely on what the camera frames to make sense of these performances for themselves. Since the attraction of the documentary is that it satisfies our desire for knowledge, this gap is unusual, but it does prompt us to rely on the visual framing more closely. The camera first shows a glimpse of the *Danza de la Morenada* from behind, over the heads of the band following them, and we can see a darkskinned woman with long braids following the main dancers. The camera then shifts to a view of dancers as they approach the camera, as rows of three to four dancers across slowly swirl and dip in elaborately embroidered and silver-bedecked costumes that jingle, rhythmically announcing their presence and matching their movement as they twirl *mat-racas*. The camera zooms in on the masks worn by the dancers, though the twirling of the dancers prevents a clear, still view. The masks uniformly display a dark Black face with protruding eyes and an enlarged or tattooed lower lip in red, white, and blue that extends over a long white beard. The dancers sport corncob pipes and bowler hats that are topped with feathers. Their silver and gold-bedecked costumes are circular, resembling rings of metal and topped by epaulets. The camera follows one dancer with a velvet sash draped across his shoulders as he turns, allowing viewers to see the lettering on the sash, which reads: “Presidente, Ing. Alfredo Hanan Canqui.” Some dancers carry a minidoll version of themselves in their hands. Briefly, we see a lone figure in black among the silver-bedecked dancers also swaying to the same rhythms. This man does not wear a black mask and is dressed in a colonial-era outfit of breeches and waistcoat with a wide brimmed hat adorned with a red feather. He carries a silver staff as he mimics the swaying and dipping of the other dancers. While many dancers wear white gloves, the camera reveals a few dancers with Black or darkskinned hands ungloved. The film, therefore, quickly captures multiple elements of this performance as significant to understanding its meaning and history, but it does not identify the dance or discuss its history or tradition in any way.⁹⁶

In a second scene, the camera focuses on a troupe of young men performing in the parade as breakdancers. The film shows them as a smiling

group posing together on the street and answering Cynthia's question about what their dance is, to which they answer, "Breakdance." The camera shows them wearing white cropped pants and red tied-at-the-waist shirts with blackened faces, arms, and torsos. One dancer sports a headscarf. In a segment that includes scenes of several other troupes performing at Puno, the above scenes go by quickly and, together with the other dances filmed, reveal significant diversity in performance traditions across the country. Cynthia revels in the richness of performance that we witness and conveys this in communication to Nélica, but she also notes that "traditions are changing," which serves as her only comment on the presence of the black-faced breakdancers.

The fact that these masked and blackface performances occur in Peru and not in the United States matters as much as it doesn't matter, since performers located in Peru are viewed by audiences in the US in this English-language documentary.⁹⁷ Kirstie Dorr's discussion of "performance geography" may be productive in this instance for considering the different audiences for performance:

Performance geography approaches the practice and circulation of musical performances as at once *in situ*, or "intelligible in the framework of the immediate environment and issues surrounding them," and *in flux*, or perpetually (re)shaping the very function and meaning of their contexts of elaboration.⁹⁸

It matters in that it requires those of us outside of Peru to consider the specifics of these performances in their context, to deepen our understanding of Peruvian performance cultures and racial histories. Considering questions about the authorship, origin, performance history, costume history, as well as the social history of Peru and the events or peoples that these performances reference will help to illuminate these scenes. Discussing Afro-Mexican dances, Anita Gonzalez observes that they can best be understood in the environment of the local community's religious or ceremonial event.⁹⁹ This is also true in Peru, as the evidence of Cynthia's travels reveals multiple local festivals in addition to the Fiesta de Candelaria in Puno, which draws people from localities all over Peru. It also doesn't matter that these scenes occur in Peru because we, the viewers, apprehend them from the perspective of our own locations and their particular histories. We bring our whole selves to our readings of the film and cannot ignore our apprehensions about what

we see. We are prompted to interrogate the relationship of these performances to the global circulation of primarily US African American cultural forms to the world as well as the historical circulation of colonial, imperial, and nationalist ideologies of race and racist imagery. Indeed, if the film constructs its subjects as dedicated to the performance of Peruvian dance and engaged in the performativity of Peruvianness through their borderlands back-and-forth, and if, as I have suggested, the two women represent a larger trend among Peruvian Americans, then we must account for the bidirectional flow of US and Peruvian cultural discourses.¹⁰⁰

Contrary to my first impression that perhaps this was a representation of colonial-era Black militias (the epaulets and suggestion of armor), which played a role in Peru as well as Mexico,¹⁰¹ a number of scholars agree that the *Danza de la Morenada* was originally a dance of African-descended peoples themselves about their work life in what is now Bolivia and Peru and was performed on the occasion of a religious celebration or procession. According to scholars, the *Danza de la Morenada* (Dance of Black People) has an extensive performance history. The name of the dance references a term sometimes used to describe Black people, *moreno*, that, in eras previous to the rise of Black consciousness movements was viewed as less offensive than “Black,” and sometimes used to describe Indigenous people. A photo taken in 1896 of *Morenada* dancers may be the earliest photograph of this performance, but even earlier paintings/drawings of the dance exist.¹⁰²

Views about the particular Black histories that this dance references, and the intent and purpose of the dance, vary widely, however. Some suggest that the costumes, with their extensive silver embroidery, reference the history of enslaved Black laborers in the silver mines of what is now Bolivia, that the exaggerated faces of the masks indicate the suffering of the miners, and that the slow dance movements reflect the burden of miners carrying their cargo. Others suggest that the costumes circular appearance and the dance movements reference the barrels used in wine production and the sway and sound of wine production on the Jesuit haciendas where Black slaves labored.¹⁰³ In the film’s scene described earlier, the presence of differently costumed figure with breeches and waistcoat might suggest a foreman or overseer. Scholars diverge as well on whether the performance in its entirety was meant to be satirical (for example, representing a Black foreman tricked into inebriation, then set to work crushing wine grapes, then mocked by others), or whether there were satirical elements of it (such as the Black and white foreman sometimes included).¹⁰⁴ Yet another thesis about the *Morenada* is that it began as a

dance of enslaved Africans but was later adopted by Indigenous peoples to represent their Black neighbors and the suffering they endured in the mines, hence the black masks with exaggerated features of suffering that include tongues hanging out (viewed as a protruding lower lip by others). Early photos of the Morenada show darkskinned, unmasked individuals dressed in circular-shaped, elaborately embroidered silver costumes, while later photos of this performance reveal the use of black masks. Over the years, the exaggeration of the facial features inscribed on these masks changes.¹⁰⁵ The image we see in *Soy Andina* of an exaggerated mouth, which may be a tongue or a tattooed lip or an enlarged lower lip, is common in more contemporary performances, but is also sometimes rendered more abstractly as not exactly the face of a person and may reflect a move away from the use of imagery that reads as racist to masks that convey an experience.

The problem of racist imagery and blackface in Peruvian performance is not a new one. Stereotypes of Blacks in Peru as happy slaves, happy servants, or lusty passionate dancers, as elsewhere, have long characterized the reception of Black dance in Peru.¹⁰⁶ And blackface also has a long tradition in the country. The 1940s artistic folklore group Pancho Fierro Company, which dedicated itself to the recuperation and performance of Black cultural forms, included both Blacks and white or light-skinned Peruvians who performed in blackface.¹⁰⁷ Yet that kind of performance in urban settings was later eclipsed by the work of Black cultural creators themselves, including Nicomedes Santa Cruz from the 1950s to 1970s and of his sister Victoria Santa Cruz from the 1960s to 1990s, who drew inspiration from movements around negritud, Black consciousness, and pan-Africanism. Both consciously sought to change the images of Blacks in circulation but also recognized how cultural performance can be appropriated to convey something else. Victoria Santa Cruz seems to suggest this when she says in an interview:

There was a series of things that some black people did, but they were all poorly done. Later, others put on skirts that didn't cover them up. Also, there was no interest, no need to discover: Who am I? There isn't. And it's terrible. They put this on and start to flirt with the whites and there's no progress.¹⁰⁸

Her reference to the commercialization of a performance without a consciousness of its significance for a specific Black population was also echoed by her brother. At one point in his career, Nicomedes Santa Cruz, who had revived some Black Peruvian performances that satirically challenged racist

logics, lamented that the commercialization of these had created a decontextualized “monster” that instead perpetuated racist logics.¹⁰⁹

In discussing Afro-Mexican dance, Anita Gonzalez observes that dances refer to specific Black histories and interrelations among groups.¹¹⁰ The *Danza de la Morenada* is claimed as national patrimony by both Bolivia and Peru¹¹¹ as one that represents the presence of an African-descended population historically and speaks to the fusions of cultures in the Americas. Indeed, as Heidi Feldman notes, “the afromestizo nature of Peru’s black expressive culture demonstrates . . . the relatively high level of mixture of indigenous and African-descended cultural traditions and peoples.”¹¹² Here Anita Gonzalez’s comments about reading Afro-Mexican performance may be relevant, since we do not know how those involved in performing the dance in *Soy Andina* self-identify, that is, whether they see themselves as descendants of the enslaved Africans whose presence they perform or whether they see themselves as the descendants of the Andean neighbors of enslaved Africans, or a combination of both.

It is likely, as Gonzalez observes about the different versions of Afro-Mexican dance in different regions of the country, that variations in performance and costuming in the *Danza de la Morenada* reflect “a diversity of perspectives about blackness” and the history and experience of Blacks in Bolivia and Peru.¹¹³ As Gonzalez observes:

Mexican dancers use impersonation to act out their own understandings about Afro-Mexican culture. . . . Dances by Afro-Mexicans reflect the spiritual beliefs of the community, coupled with expressions that spring from the reality of living in isolated communities where the daily pursuit of food, clothing, and shelter is difficult. . . . dances about Afro-Mexicans performed by neighboring communities reflect their understandings about black identities. Perceptions about blacks may come from media images but also from lived experiences or encounters.¹¹⁴

Research about interethnic and interracial relations in Peru, especially as it relates to the use of blackface in popular performance cultures areas outside of Lima, as Luis Rocca Torres observes, has not been extensive but is much needed.¹¹⁵ Rocca Torres notes the existence of a (patronizingly racist named) “*Danza de los negritos*,” which is different from the *Danza de la Morenada*, and is performed in Piura and Lambayeque, both towns that Cynthia Paniagua visits to learn about Afro-Peruvian dances, though not that particular

dance form.¹¹⁶ If we consider the case of the *Danza de la Morenada* that we see in *Soy Andina* in the context of the competing versions of the performance, the stereotypical features of the black masks worn by the dancers are at odds with some of the stated possible meanings of the dance and it is, therefore, important to consider this performance in light of the global circulation of racist imagery that indexes racial relations and the discrimination that Black Peruvians face as well as the performance history and meaning of the *Danza de la Morenada* in Peru.¹¹⁷

Similarly, the use of blackface by the breakdancers may be drawn from the history of any of the above performance traditions where blackface has been used uncritically, or it may be a contemporary, and racially charged, expression of racial differentiation. The incorporation of the breakdance into the traditional Puno festival, as Cynthia Paniagua observes, alters the tradition by incorporating a new urban performance tradition into a festival that largely references long-standing historical performances, as it also represents a claim to evolving traditions and a claim to continue to include Black expressive traditions in a major national dance festivals.

What work do these scenes do in the documentary film? As I discussed earlier, the camera takes particular care to frame these scenes for the audience in a way, I believe, that suggests the multiple issues in play. That framing also reminds viewers of the wide circulation of racist imagery in a way that helps to contextualize the reasons why one of the subjects of the documentary, Cynthia Paniagua, finds it hard to locate training in Afro-Peruvian dance forms in Peru. The work that this film does to tell an alternative story of Peru that includes Black Peruvian dance and Black Peruvian influence on national dance cultures is not undone by these scenes, but instead is deepened by revealing the long histories of African-descended peoples in Peru and the continued recognition of Indigenous and African diaspora interrelationship in Peru. This performance of the *Danza de la Morenada* and that of the breakdancers remind viewers of stereotyped views of Black people, yet they also engage the long history of Blacks and Black performance cultures in Peru and a continued dialogue with Black cultural forms in the Americas.

Enduring Afro-Peruvian Performance Forms and New Networks of Collaboration

Cynthia's first stop after the festival at Puno is to the coast to learn from the "masters of Afro-Peruvian dance," the Ballumbrosio family. The film screens

several black-and-white photos of this family that reveals their long history and dedication to cultural performance interspersed with scenes of children performing and then later Cynthia learning dance steps from Maribel Ballumbrosio in the street in front of their home before gathered residents.¹¹⁸ The Ballumbrosio family, though they live in a small Afro-Peruvian town in the region of Chincha, south of Lima, are known the world over as experts in Afro-Peruvian dance and music. The school of dance they run has become a much-visited site by those seeking to learn Afro-Peruvian dance and music forms, and the family has engaged in multiple artistic collaborations with individuals from around the globe.¹¹⁹ In a 2006 interview, Amador Ballumbrosio Mosquera, the patriarch of a large family who carry on his legacy, discusses his role in disseminating Afro-Peruvian music and dance. He makes clear that his ability to take up the occupation of mason and his ability to gain some land through Peru's 1968 agricultural reform make it possible for him to create music and dance, and to dedicate his life to it. But he also discusses how Afro-Peruvian dance is tied to traditions of religious worship of the Lady of Mount Carmel when he describes young Black people initiated into El Atajo tap dancers at "four years or older," providing an even wider picture of the significance of dance in everyday Black life in Peru.¹²⁰ Cynthia's visit to El Carmen, therefore, focuses in on an important family of Afro-Peruvian cultural creators with a long history in a unique region.

In a different documentary, *Los negros hablan sobre los negros* (1988), produced by Concytec Perú and created by filmmakers Ana Uriarte, Jorge Delgado, and Carlos Cárdenas, we learn more about the coastal region of Chinche and its Afro-Peruvian population.¹²¹ This film takes viewers to Guayabo, a small, agriculturally centered town with 90 percent Afro-Peruvian population. The family Ballumbrosio is also featured in this film as artists and cultural producers in the "cradle" of Afro-Peru, and already in 1988 they were much visited by those seeking knowledge of Afro-Peruvian dance forms. The film contributes to the scholarly debates on the differences and variations in choreographies of recovered dance, community dance, and commercialized dance forms of Afro-Peru, highlighting the variety of influences and interests that animate the performance of Afro-Peruvian dance. This film's narrator states that *tondero* and *marinera* music and dance are the result of the cultural mixture of cholo, white, and Black cultural influences. It interviews expert Dr. Wilfredo Franco on the *marinera* and shows a couple dancing *marinera* in the setting of a home party or performance. Franco notes the importance of this dance in the Black neighborhoods of



Figure 13. The elder Amador Ballumbrosio (on the far right) watches and listens as drummers play for dancers in El Carmen, Peru. From the documentary film *Soy Andina* (2007, dir. Mitch Teplitsky).

Lima, including La Victoria and Malamba, underscoring the degree to which these forms continued to live, in the 1980s, in the homes of Black Peruvians who reside outside of the region. *Soy Andina* shows us that unlike the 1950s and unlike the 1980s, Afro-Peruvian dance and music are no longer confined to the private spheres. They are, in fact, taught in Lima dance schools, enjoyed on the streets and in the communities of Black Peruvians and Black-descended Peruvians, flourish at Peruvian national dance competitions, and are performed among Peruvian migrants and their descendants in the United States as a valuable cultural inheritance.

Cynthia then continues north to learn *marinera* from El Chino Calderon, who turns out to be, as she tells us, “one of the best instructors, if not the best *marinera* instructor in the entire country.” When searching for *marinera* studios or teachers, Cynthia expresses shock at finding four pages of listings in the directory for mariachi musicians but no *marinera* musicians or studios, revealing how much Afro-Peruvian culture remains under the radar. Following this section, the film cuts to a *marinera* dance class in New Jersey



Figure 14. Girls perform traditional traditional Afro-Peruvian dance at the Ballumbrosio family studio surrounded with photos from family history. From the documentary film *Soy Andina* (2007, dir. Mitch Teplitzky).

with Nélica participating, and she comments on how children born in the United States are continuing to learn this performance tradition. Viewers can see that Afro-Peruvian dance traditions also continue to circulate throughout the Americas. Cynthia next goes north to Piuria to meet Jose Luis Fernandez, a specialist in *tondero*, a dance from the northern coast of Peru, first training with him at his dance school and then competing in the National Marinera and Tondero Competition, held at the University of Chiclayo. Fernandez describes the dance as “un juego amoroso,” or “love play,” that is common to the northern coast of Peru, and as we watch a few scenes of Cynthia in dance lessons we hear the instructor correcting her, telling her not to use a *marinera* gesture but a *tondero* gesture, highlighting the distinctiveness of each form. The championship includes competitors in all age groups, demonstrating a vibrant and ongoing dance practice of *tondero*. There are ways in which *Soy Andina* might better register Black Peruvians as significant to national culture. For example, in the scene menu of the DVD, only the visit to El Carmen and the Ballumbrosio family is labeled “Afro-



Figure 15. Maribel Ballumbrosio teaches Afro-Peruvian dance to Cynthia Paniagua. From the documentary film *Soy Andina* (2007, dir. Mitch Teplitsky).

Peruvian Dance,” although Cynthia’s study in Lima and her travels to learn the *marinera* and *tondero* are also Afro-Peruvian dances, though taught and performed by individuals and groups who are lighter-skinned than the Ballumbrosios and residents of El Carmen. Similarly, the hashtags attached to the film on YouTube are #Peru, #Andes, and #Llamellín, though not the largely Black areas of Peru such as #ElCarmen or #Chincha or #AfroPeru.

Soy Andina’s focus on two women dancers criss-crossing the Americas is significant. In Nélica’s hosting the town’s *fiesta patronal*, or Cynthia’s dancing the male part in her Lima dance final, or Cynthia drinking outside with a group of men watching the dancers at Puno, we see the disruption of gender norms mesh with the pursuit of traditional dance forms in ways that generate new borderlands performative subjects who create complex Peruvian-US identities and shift the meanings of traditional dances.¹²²

Two events in Peru structure Cynthia’s goodbye or *despedida*: her reunion with Nélica to dance together at Llamellín’s carnival celebration, and a going-away party with her Lima family that features the dance forms that

brought her to Peru for her year of study—except now she is the teacher to another generation of her family. When Cynthia returns to the United States, she tells us she feels it as a culture shock, reflecting, “I’m just not the same person anymore.” The film tracks her in winter weather as she catches a minibus from New York to Paterson, where she joins Nélica and her group, Ballet Folklórico. After some scenes of the two women practicing with their dance troupe, we cut to the two women having dinner on an outdoor patio in the city as the screen flashes “One Year Later.” We hear Cynthia say, “I’m never going to stop going to Peru. It’s my heart’s home.” The scene of the women sharing a meal together and then walking down city streets, revealing Cynthia is now pregnant, is intercut with scenes of their Ballet Folklórico group performing professionally, until slowly the intercuts end and we are just watching the Ballet Folklórico performance on stage as Cynthia talks about teaching her future child all the dances she has learned. When the stage curtains close on the performance, the film ends, but viewers know that the dance does not.

CONCLUSION

This chapter’s analysis of Peruvian American critical engagements with constructions of Blackness, Indigeneity, and *latinidad* in texts that address the circulation of anti-Blackness, as in Alarcón’s and Alarcón and Alvarado’s work, and center the expressive cultures of Black Peruvians, as in Teplitsky’s documentary about Paniagua’s journey, reveal characters and individuals wrestling with paradigms of affiliation and belonging that no longer serve. For Cynthia Paniagua in *Soy Andina*, living in the US-Peruvian borderlands allows her to cultivate a critical understanding of how nationalist or cultural nationalist imaginaries either erase histories and practices of Black creativity or ossify Black expressive forms. Just as the film invites viewers to delve more deeply into the histories of Afro-Peruvian experience and inspires critical questioning about forms of anti-Blackness, Paniagua’s experience of studying Afro-Peruvian dance there and participating in the film, which grew from years of summers spent in Peru among her own family, some of whom were Afro-Peruvian, deepened her own enduring commitment to understanding Afro-Peruvian dance on “kinetic, historical, and spiritual levels.” Not interested in taking up space or recognition that should go to Afro-Peruvians, Paniagua is, nonetheless, deeply interested in educating others

about Afro-Peruvian dance forms.¹²³ The characters in Alarcón's short fiction slowly awaken to the ways that colonial racial ideologies continue to haunt contemporary lives across the Americas, whether in Peru or New York. For Oscar in "City of Clowns" in particular, meeting his "hidden" Black family when his father dies prompts a reckoning with his own education in classist, racist, and sexist ideologies through his migration to Lima with his parents. Across these texts, migration and mobility prompt new challenges to old frameworks, including gendered ones, and bring individuals and characters into new relationships with one another that can fuel new solidarities or die on the altars of cultural and racial purity or male privilege. As twenty-first-century cultural productions, both Alarcón's and Teplitsky's/Paniagua's works evidence the influence of women-of-color theory and intersectional feminisms, in that race, ethnicity, and gender are repeatedly intertwined in these texts, posing new dilemmas and questions about freedom, and both gently nudge us in the direction of radical relational solidarity. The next and final chapter of this volume returns us to the circum-Caribbean where we began, albeit the eastern end of the region to consider Cuban American and Cuban portrayals of diaspora subjectivities that bridge ethnic/national differences.

CHAPTER FIVE

Black Cuban Life in Movements and Fictions of Social Change

This chapter pursues a reading of political essays, autobiography, and fictional texts set in Florida and Cuba that span the late nineteenth to the twenty-first century to emphasize the centrality of Black workers in the world-changing events of the turn of the century and beyond. These events include the struggles to achieve equality in living and working conditions, to end colonialism and neocolonialism in this hemisphere, and to defeat fascism in the twentieth century. The relationships in work, struggle, and revolutionary movement that these texts stage and embrace, among Black subjects of varied hues from differing ethnicities and nations, prove critical in the success of efforts for social change. This chapter will explore the intersecting diasporas of Black Cubans, Black Cuban Americans, and African Americans that emerge in the essays and speeches of José Martí, James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), José Yglesias's *A Wake in Ybor City* (1963), Evelio Grillo's *Black Cuban, Black American* (2000), and María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno's *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century* (2000).

In four of the above texts (Martí, Johnson, Yglesias, Grillo), Ybor City, Florida, a place shared by Black Cubans and Black Americans, figures as a prominent location. These texts reveal a Black Cuban activist community and the cultivation of bonds between Black Cuban Americans and African Americans in Ybor City, making it a site of intermingling diasporas, similar to the New York City of the middle to late twentieth century discussed in Chapter 3.¹ In approaching the space of Ybor City in Florida in Cuban American and African American literature, this chapter situates Florida in the circum-Caribbean and seeks to advance a deeper understanding of interre-

lated diasporas in this region to contribute to a vision of hemispheric literature that reveals Black subjects engaged in advancing the project of liberation across national boundaries despite those boundaries and in conversation with other parts of the diaspora.

In examining Martí's essays and travels, this chapter departs from the hagiography around Martí to recenter the significance of Black action in the hemisphere, particularly since that action is driven by the experiences of diaspora and borderlands subjects, including in Ybor City and central Florida.² This reading emphasizes the important role that Ybor City Black Cubans, including the influential Paulina Pedroso, played in changing world events by their support for independence and abolition in Cuba, creating Ybor City as a touchstone of radical Black diaspora movement. Ybor City's reputation is as one of the cradles of support for the late nineteenth-century struggle for Cuban independence much visited by José Martí,³ whose forward-thinking views on race are often cited as examples of the visionary leadership he provided to the Cuban independence movement, hovers in the background of Johnson's and Yglesias's texts, while Grillo's text overtly invokes another lineage back to Ybor City's earlier days, not through what was present, but through what was absent: photos or statues or any commemoration of the Black Cuban general Antonio Maceo, whose leadership was also pivotal in the struggle for independence.

This chapter's reading of Cuban María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno's autobiography attends to the ways that her narrative engages the anticolonial and/or anti-imperialist politics that Martí, Yglesias, and Grillo overtly address to reveal the centrality of Black political action in the diaspora and the gendered dimensions of diaspora subjectivity. Her narrative speaks to the power of the bridging of ethnic/national difference with other diaspora subjects. Reyita's narrative asserts multiple points of convergence with other Black subjects across their difference in the Americas through her memory of the transatlantic slave trade with respect to her own family origins and through her participation in national and hemispheric Black movements for social change. In these texts, wars for independence and against neocolonial domination often bring migrating diaspora subjects into contact with one another, yet these situations of shared experience across difference were undoubtedly fueled by the hemispheric context of white supremacy and racial hierarchy,⁴ as well as by cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual practices that were familiar or shared among disparate diaspora populations. This chapter examines the influence of Black Cubans in shaping Martí's thought and

action, the ways African American literature hails Black Cubans in considering social change, and the ways that work by Yglesias and by María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno advances the significance of radical relational thinking in social change.

COUNTERSTORIES OF BLACK CUBAN EXPERIENCE IN THE STORY OF CUBAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Before Ybor City there was Key West, as Gerald E. Poyo documents, a site of Cuban migration and settlement earlier than that of Ybor City in the nineteenth century,⁵ and with a diverse community of exiles strongly in support of the cause of independence that included both Black and white Cubans and a vibrant revolutionary press.⁶ Black and mulatto Cubans made up between 20 and 30 percent of the Cuban migrants in Key West, including several well-known leaders of color who would gain in prominence in the independence movement by virtue of the success of their organizing and publishing efforts both in Key West and later in Tampa / Ybor City and New York.⁷ In the early 1880s, for example, Afro-Cubans such as Cornelio Brito and Ruperto Pedrosa (later to become key figures in Ybor City) were among those who established “Sociedad el Progreso (Society Progress), which also became an important social and political center for the entire community,” while Afro-Cuban journalists Martín Morúa Delgado and Rafael Serra, who arrived in Key West in the same period, soon left for New York, where they engaged in publishing activities in support of independence beginning in 1883.⁸ In the late 1880s, as cigar factories formerly located in Key West relocated to the Tampa area and the newly constructed Ybor City,⁹ they brought with them the multiethnic, multiracial, and somewhat cosmopolitan workforce of Key West. By the 1890s, Ybor City was the “largest Cuban settlement in the United States at that time, surpassing Key West.”¹⁰ Ybor City, and not Key West, became known as the “Havana” of America.¹¹ Afro-Cubans comprised at least 15 percent of this immigrant Cuban population,¹² working, living, and interacting with white Cubans, African Americans, and other immigrants. Poyo’s work is important in recognizing and documenting Black self-organization among Cubans that predates their migration to Ybor City.

Late nineteenth-century Ybor City was home to many ethnic immigrants, including Afro-Cuban and white Cuban émigrés who were cigar factory workers, unionized, and politically active in movements against slavery

and for the independence of Cuba—so much so that José Martí was a memorable visitor to Ybor City, traveling there to address workers and raise funds to support the ongoing struggle.¹³ Considering the post-Reconstruction period in the United States generally, the tensions among Cuban independence fighters on the question of the abolition of slavery—which I will discuss in this chapter—the radical political history of Ybor City, and the self-organization of Cuban Blacks, it is likely that Ybor City of the late nineteenth century was the site of some fluidity in racial integration but unlikely to have been a racial democracy with equal access for all or even a society free of racism.¹⁴ Given the tendency to attribute later racial fissures in Ybor City’s Cuban American community exclusively to US Jim Crow policies, this is important to underscore and a perspective from which to consider the role of Ybor City Afro-Cubans in influencing the successful rhetoric and actions of José Martí in the struggle for Cuban independence from Spanish colonial rule.

Thousands of descendants of Afro-Cubans who arrived in the Tampa area in 1886 continue to reside in Florida.¹⁵ The societies that early Afro-Cubans participated in in the cigar town of Ybor City included emigrants from Spain with their own investments in radical and anarchist labor movements, and soon after emigrants from Italy as well.¹⁶ Nancy Raquel Mirabal finds that Afro-Cubans in the late nineteenth century also interacted with African Americans in Tampa and its environs in the spheres of education, health care, and entertainment.¹⁷ An early twentieth-century study of life for Blacks in the Tampa area also comments on the unique character of this society, noting its worldliness and attributing this to the presence and interactions of Black diaspora subjects:

The Negro element, constituting approximately 20% of the entire population, is cosmopolitan. . . . more than a third have migrated to Tampa from states other than Florida, while there is a considerable element of British subjects in addition to a large number of Cubans.¹⁸

As Mirabal observes, despite their significance in Ybor City and their interactions with other Black diaspora subjects, Afro-Cubans are “rarely included in the history of African Americans and/or Latinos in the United States.”¹⁹ Given the historical significance of an Afro-Cuban population and culture in Ybor City and Tampa—and one that routinely interacted with African Americans before Black Latinx and African American exchanges in the Harlem Renaissance,²⁰ a consideration of Cuban, African

American, and Cuban American literature about the Black diaspora in Cuba and Florida leads us to an alternative story of the region that involves multiple groups navigating diaspora as well as the borderlands of unbelonging in nation states.

BLACK CUBANS RID OUR HEMISPHERE OF COLONIAL RULE

In the late nineteenth century, the twin struggles for freedom from Spanish colonial rule and the abolition of slavery gripped the inhabitants of the island, though not everyone viewed these two struggles as equally important. Racial divisions and racist attitudes were common in the movement for independence and sometimes led to the exclusion of Afro-Cubans or their own withdrawal from activities in support of independence.²¹ The unsuccessful Ten Years War from 1868 to 1878 was followed by the also unsuccessful Little War from 1879 to 1880, and these efforts eventually led to the 1895 war for independence led by José Martí and Dominican general Máximo Gómez, which had severely crippled Spanish colonial rule when the United States intervened in the conflict in 1898 to impose its will on the newly independent nation in the Spanish-American War.

The decades-long struggle for independence and for the abolition of slavery in Cuba fueled migration from Cuba to the United States as businesses and individuals sought to escape the difficulties of war. Key West, Ybor City, and New York were key destinations for Cuban migrants and exiles, becoming sites of organizing to support the revolutionary struggles unfolding on the island itself. Cubans—both Black and white—frequently traveled between the island, Florida, and New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and many to other countries of the Americas (including Mexico, as discussed in Chapter 1).²² The discourse of Cuban elite migrants dominated in New York, while the discourse of Black and working-class Cuban migrants dominated in Florida.

Creole elites mainly associated with the milieu in which Martí operated in New York were interested in maintaining slavery for as long as possible, a fact that estranged them from that large segment of the population who were capable of waging a war to end colonialism: Black Cubans. The full support of Afro-Cubans and their participation in the battle for independence were absolutely pivotal in ensuring the success of the revolutionary movement, both in the Ten Years War and in the final war for independence.²³ As

Esther Allen notes, Blacks were the majority population on the island;²⁴ there would be no revolution without them.

Much working-class Cuban migration began in the 1860s and centered on Key West and then later Ybor City and West Tampa in Florida.²⁵ A multi-racial, nationalist, and activist population of Cuban exiles and migrants grew up in both these Florida sites, and each hosted key leaders of the struggle for Cuban independence. In October 1885, Antonio Maceo, a Black Cuban hero of the Ten Years War and the only revolutionary leader who had not surrendered to the Spanish at the end of that war, traveled to Key West to raise funds from cigar workers for a new revolutionary expedition. He was warmly greeted and celebrated by Cuban émigrés.²⁶ Later, in 1891, José Martí traveled to Ybor City to gain the support of its cigar workers and effectively launched a renewed movement to wage war for independence from Ybor City, with two of his most important speeches: “With All and for the Good of All” and “The New Pines.”²⁷ The participation of Ybor City cigar workers was key to the struggle. They welcomed Martí and the organizing efforts that soon led to the creation of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, an effort for independence that was supported for six years by forty-one cigar worker clubs of Ybor City and Tampa was key to the struggle.²⁸ Martí’s visits to these locales in an effort to build coalition with a racially diverse population of Cuban cigar workers makes his essays on the topic of race and revolutionary change significant for this discussion.

Since the early 1880s upon his arrival in New York, Martí had spoken out against racial prejudice among Cubans,²⁹ yet the scholarship on Martí also reveals a number of contradictions and shortcomings in Martí’s oeuvre on the question of race and abolitionism, as well as racist waffling on abolitionism among wings of the independence movement centered in New York and among both civilian revolutionary governments.³⁰ More than mere “blind spots” on race, these shortcomings become most evident in Martí on the question of abolition, the supposed violence of Blacks, and support for Black leadership of the independence movement. As Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof notes, “Martí’s idea of a Cuba with no Blacks or Whites could also hide persistent racism and racial inequality behind a mask of race blindness.”³¹

This chapter cannot offer a comprehensive examination of Martí’s voluminous work in print and instead focuses briefly on the topic of race and Martí’s relationship to Black workers and Black revolutionary fighters in order to bring the efforts of the latter into greater focus given the disparity in scholarly attention devoted to these subjects. Martí’s earlier speeches and

essays are peppered with paternalistic or stereotypical views of Black people, while later speeches and essays evince a stronger assertion of the equality of Black and white Cubans, indicating a shift, over time, in Martí's approach to building revolutionary movement, a shift that Black Cubans helped him to make.

In both his 1871 pamphlet against Spanish colonial rule, "Political Prison in Cuba," and his 1881 essay on the shallowness and acquisitiveness characteristic of North American life, "Coney Island," Martí makes the treatment of Black prisoners in the former and the treatment of Black workers in the latter hallmarks of disrepute, yet in both essays Blacks are figures in need of rescue.³² In work following his 1890–1891 closer associations with Black-led organizations for Cuban independence, Martí gave voice to stronger assertions of Black equality. In the 1893 essay "My Race," he challenges the colonialist schema of unchanging and essential races whose logics underwrote slavery in Cuba and in the United States³³ in an essay that is widely studied and reproduced because it represents a strong definitive statement on race in contrast to earlier sympathetic observations of Black Cuban suffering. While Martí emphasizes the abolition of slavery by the revolutionary movement in an earlier period of struggle that met with defeat, here he describes the Spanish abolition of slavery as an act of "pure cunning" that the Spaniards will use "to continue dividing Cuban blacks from Cuban whites" as he cautions white independence fighters that the new nation they seek "will not, in liberty, be able to deny the rights that the Spaniard recognized in servitude."³⁴ While the essay offers a strong critique of racism against Black men by white men, and clearly attempts to win white Cubans to accept Black Cubans, it does so by embracing the principle of color-blindness, which situates the Black struggle for Black rights that must necessarily continue after the abolition of slavery as its own kind of racism.³⁵ The essay overlooks both the history of degradation and repression that must be overcome through and after the independence struggle when he calls on Black Cubans not to "trumpet" their race as it also glosses the powerful economic and cultural advantages with which white Cubans will enter into independence. The essay reflects the unseen pressure of powerful economic interests with a stake in enforcing not a caste system but a new postindependence racial order.

As Ofelia Schutte observes, Martí's experiences of "different power arrangements of racial relations" throughout his travels, as well as his interactions with "numerous people of various races," undoubtedly influenced the development of his views, including those on the significance of race.³⁶

Some of Martí's more pointed critiques of racism follow on the heels of the Spanish announcement of abolition of slavery as he developed a stronger working relationship with Afro-Cubans, first in New York in 1890 when he joined in Rafael Serra's project of teaching Black Cubans and Puerto Ricans in New York in *La Liga*,³⁷ and second, in Ybor City, West Tampa, and central Florida, where he worked hand-in-glove with Black Cubans to consolidate support among the racially diverse population of Cubans.³⁸ José I. Fusté suggests that as part of Martí's "inner circle" in the Partido Revolucionario Cubano and a representative in the newly independent government, Black Cuban Rafael Serra's work to end colonialism and white supremacy was significant yet is seldom commemorated in Cuban history.³⁹ Nonetheless, this coalitional effort on both sides mattered to the struggle to end colonialism in this hemisphere. Lisandro Pérez suggests that "it was probably in *La Liga* where both men developed a close working relationship that made Serra trust Martí as a leader for all Cubans," underscoring how important that trust was in the further development of the anticolonial struggle.⁴⁰ Mirabal finds that efforts in the Tampa area were important to enacting an antiracist politics (though these were short-lived) when she notes that "it was necessary for Martí to actively incorporate Afro-Cubans into the nationalist movements and openly interact with the Afro-Cuban community."⁴¹ As Aline Helg notes, activism and advocacy among Black community communities had long been significant as Afro-Cuban intellectuals contributed to constructing a Cuban identity throughout the nineteenth century by creating "associations in the country and in exile that promoted instruction, culture, and morals among the 'race of color.'"⁴² In his collaborations with Rafael Serra's *La Liga* and with the Black Cuban workers of Ybor City, Martí placed himself alongside Afro-Cubans with a long history of involvement in revolutionary activity and self-organization in order to decisively advance the struggle for independence. Some of those Black Cubans, Rafael Serra among them, insisted on the need for Black political organization that wed the struggle for independence from Spain with that of racial equality and anti-imperialism, making the latter two of continued importance in Serra's political activism following independence.⁴³

After his visit to Ybor City and Tampa late in 1891, where he delivered the two well-known speeches mentioned earlier that include his forceful assertion of equality of all men, Martí's essays and speeches on race took on greater urgency and offered a stronger denunciations of racism in a way that seems to reflect a more open address to Black Cubans and other diaspora sub-

jects asserting that the movement for Cuban independence was also theirs, without entirely displacing white Cubans as an audience whose sympathies he remains intent on securing with the discourse of color-blindness. The 1892 essay, “A Town Sets a Black Man on Fire,” represents this shift in openly confronting the horror and terror of racist violence that African-descended peoples in the Americas have confronted since they were brought to this hemisphere. The 1894 essay “To Cuba!” defends the striking Black and white Cuban workers of Key West against a displacement engineered by their Anglo-American neighbors with the importation of Spanish workers. In arguing how Key West itself was “built by the poorest, neediest Cubans,” who included both the “dethroned master and emancipated slave,” Martí pays tribute to the organization and collaboration of working-class Black and white Cubans who made of Key West a destination, an economy, a city.⁴⁴ Martí’s final statement on race, one coauthored by Máximo Gómez, known as the “Montecristi Manifesto,” and written in the town of Montecristi in the Dominican Republic, suggests not only his enduring commitment in principle to equality but also perhaps a greater appreciation for Black Cuban life, experience, and historical significance.

The Montecristi Manifesto recognizes the pivotal role of Black Cubans in the final battle with Spanish colonialism in the Americas and the right of free Black people to participate in governing themselves. The essay acknowledges the significance and contributions of Cubans and exile communities from all backgrounds, whether “magnates or servants,” who undertook “efforts on behalf of the country’s persecution and misery,” deepened their experience of democratic organization and education, and “continued preparing, by their own self-improvement, for the enhancement of the nationality.” It also repeatedly underscores the equality of all Cubans when it observes that central to Cuba’s future stability is “the reciprocal admiration for the virtues equally distributed among Cubans who passed directly from the differences of slavery to the brotherhood of sacrifice, and the benevolence and growing capacity of the freed slave.”⁴⁵ The latter sentiment finds expression throughout the manifesto in statements that attribute “gifts of harmony and wisdom,” “identical nobility,” and “dignity” to all Cubans regardless of race or class.⁴⁶ The manifesto recognizes that the struggle for Black rights will continue after independence, albeit with a hint of condescension, when it notes that the new government “must find a manner of government that can satisfy both the mature and cautious intelligence of its literate sons and the necessary conditions for the assistance and respect of its

other peoples,” tempering Martí’s earlier emphases on how color-blindness will be the antidote to racial inequalities.⁴⁷ The racist and frequently repeated fears of the danger of racial violence against whites posed by freed Black peoples—the ways that white supremacist discourse made Haiti into a specter to be feared—were commonly deployed both against the independence movement and within it to limit Black power and contributed to whitewashing the extreme violence of colonial systems of enslavement. In the Montecristi Manifesto, Martí and Gómez do not foreground the exploitation of Black Cubans and, therefore, do not succeed in disregarding that racist discourse entirely. However, they vehemently protest, on behalf of Black Cubans, such an “unjustified fear of the black race”:

The revolution, with all its martyrs and generous subordinate warriors, denies indignantly, as the long experience of those in exile and those on the island during the truce denies, the slanderous notion of a threat by the Negro race.⁴⁸

In the unlikely event that such a minority emerged among Black freedom fighters, Martí and Gómez suggest, Black communities would themselves deal with them, recognizing Black self-organization and power: “The black race itself will extirpate the black menace in Cuba without a single white hand having to be raised to the task.”⁴⁹ The Montecristi Manifesto also challenges white threats to the success of the revolutionary movement and its future republic in several ways: It attacks those who have profited from colonial rule and wish to impede independence for all Cubans as corrupt and immoral while appealing to Spanish soldiers, craftsman, and clerks to choose freedom and equality over colonial rule; recognizes the historical record and proven role of Black Cubans in fighting for independence; and insists that the cross-racial respect it advocates must endure. In these ways, the manifesto bears the influence of Martí’s relationships with Rafael Serra and La Liga, with Paulina and Ruperto Pedroso, and with followers of Juan Gualberto Gómez and Martín Morúa Delgado and the Black Cuban workers of Ybor City.

The stories about Martí’s visits to Ybor City and Tampa are numerous, but an important one that remains key in linking Martí to Ybor City is the refuge he finds there in the home of Paulina and Ruperto Pedroso, among the best-known Afro-Cuban supporters of the struggle for Cuban independence and of Martí’s efforts in Ybor.⁵⁰ Local lore maintains that in an effort to embody

the racial harmony he advocated and in the Jim Crow South, Martí made it a point to walk the streets of Ybor City with Paulina Pedroso on his arm when he visited.⁵¹ This public display of intimate friendship between one of the city's best-known Black independence supporters and a white key leader of that movement in the American South was likely mutually beneficial in that it enacted the promised racial equality of independence while also providing an opportunity for Pedroso to communicate Black Cuban perspectives on the struggle to Martí—both actions that helped to cement Black support for that struggle. Some suggest that a key part of Martí's visits to the Tampa area (in addition to his visits to Key West, Ocala, and Jacksonville in this era) was to learn from the veterans of the Ten Years War, several of whom were now residing in the Tampa area, about what went wrong in that earlier effort for independence.⁵² Others suggest that of particular interest to him about Ybor's Afro-Cuban community was that it included individuals aligned with both of the two key currents in Afro-Cuban activism and thought who were allies in the struggle for independence, Juan Gualberto Gómez, whom he viewed as having a "race-conscious orientation," and the "more moderate and assimilationist" Martín Morúa Delgado.⁵³ The PRC (Cuban Revolutionary Party), led by José Martí, came to depend deeply on support from Cuban workers in Ybor City and West Tampa.⁵⁴

Ybor City, Tampa, and central Florida are important because the racially diverse population of Cuban cigar workers in Ybor City and central Florida entered into history when they made a coalition with Martí to wage the war for independence. While some suggest that Martí was worshiped by Afro-Cubans in Ybor City, the language of worship can only position Cuban cigar workers as passive followers or selfless guardians, as is the case with Afro-Cuban Paulina Pedroso, who is frequently represented as a loving, nurturing, and supportive Black mother to the cause. Nonetheless, she appears in several accounts as an important force in the independence movement.⁵⁵ For example, Nancy Hewitt critically examines the gendered constructions by Martí and the independence movement that positioned these female leaders as "mothers" first and foremost, while she reveals the significant sacrifices that Paulina Pedroso made in support of Cuban independence.⁵⁶ In this way, while references to Martí's leadership of the multiracial and multicultural coalition of cigar workers in Florida are numerous, they disclose little about the Black workers themselves who were actually leaders, supporters, and fighters in the struggle to end colonialism in this hemisphere. Such

characterizations overlook the participation of cigar workers, with their histories of radical self-organization and discipline in financial cooperation, as well as their ongoing links to communities in Cuba. They also erase from history Black motives for supporting the revolutionary movement, which Antonio Maceo gave voice to on two occasions in 1879 as the struggle to end slavery and racism—for the full “political and social rights” of Blacks—as well as independence.⁵⁷ In fact, author Jose Yglesias, whose novel I will discuss later in this chapter, critiques such characterizations of Black slavishness to Martí and the ongoing issue of racism:

I suspect that if indeed some Cuban black in Ybor City or Key West said, “We don’t understand him, but we are ready to die for him,” he was trying to please someone outside of his class or caste, just as American blacks for years kept out of trouble by telling whites what they wanted to hear.⁵⁸

Here Yglesias aims his fire at white accounts of Cuban Blacks as unknowing and servile in the struggle for independence, which are themselves suspect—“if indeed”—and instead explains such statements by recognizing Black Cuban cleverness. Learning what Black Cubans themselves thought about their involvement in changing the course of history in this hemisphere requires that we look to Black sources and consider knowledge circulating in Black communities. For example, it is telling that in 1924 the Union Martí-Maceo of Tampa published a pamphlet for circulation titled “Maceo: The Liberator of Cuba,” which places the Black Cuban general Antonio Maceo, without whom the war for independence would not have been won, on par with José Martí.⁵⁹ The scarcity of these sources is perhaps best epitomized by the event of the destruction by fire of Paulina and Rupert Pedroso’s Ybor City home before it could be preserved.⁶⁰ This discussion of Black organization in Ybor City and relevant Martí essays approaches the discussion of the Cuban independence movement from the vantage point of its Afro-Cuban participants and allows us to interrogate what and who is missing from the story of Cuban independence and transnational movement in support of it as it prompts us to consider those texts where we might learn more about Afro-Cuban experiences and histories in the United States and hemisphere. It also recognizes that the elimination of the last colony in the Americas and the independence of Cuba was possible only because of Black Cuban and Black Cuban American participation in and support for the battle for liberation.⁶¹

A COSMOPOLITANISM FROM BELOW IN CENTRAL FLORIDA

An African American writer who portrays the cigar towns of central Florida at the turn of the century as unique spaces of interrelationship between African American and Black Cuban subjects is James Weldon Johnson in his 1912 novel, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. The novel's protagonist is a man born of a white father and an African American mother who, once he gains consciousness of himself as African American in childhood, wrestles with the color line in the United States throughout his life, ultimately choosing to live his life passing for white. In narrating his life story, the Ex-Colored Man recounts his residences in and travels through Georgia; Connecticut; Washington, DC; Jacksonville, Florida; New York City; Paris; and Nashville, providing a chronicle of Black life in each of these locations and reflecting on the cultures and accomplishments of African Americans, the limitations imposed on them, and the violence directed against them. The narrator's wandering, his search for a home and a place of belonging, is thrust upon him as a young boy when his white father exiles the boy and mother in preparation for his marriage to a white woman. The young boy is again displaced when first publicly identified as Black, a "fateful day" that launches a "radical change" in his life, one driven by the removal of the security, safety, and privilege of whiteness.⁶² His personal exile from white citizenship in the nation, therefore, echoes the wider experience of African diaspora peoples that the novel so carefully constructs, and which critic Noelle Morrisette notes: "*The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* initiated this call to conscience [on segregation], placing black culture in multiple geographic, linguistic, and expressive modes that were indicative of the forced diaspora of black people in a global context."⁶³ Critic Robert Fleming notes the "ironic layer" of the novel, how the novel's language immediately suggests that the "narrator-protagonist is in reality disturbed, torn by doubt," a narrator who is "curiously aloof" toward Black people as he considers advantages and disadvantages of Black life in the United States.⁶⁴ As Fleming observes, through this "unreliable narrator who reveals more than he intends—indeed, more than he knows," the novel deploys irony to explore a vision of Black life rather than the strictly realist techniques adopted by others.⁶⁵ In this discussion, I want to focus on both the fictional Ex-Colored Man's experiences in Jacksonville and Johnson's biography and autobiography of growing up in this location to consider what, taken together, these texts might be suggesting about the relationship between Black Cubans and Black Americans.

As with other episodes in his life, the protagonist's description of his life in Jacksonville provides a glimpse of everyday Black life in this locale. When he arrives there, he asks another "colored man who had the appearance of a preacher" for directions to a "boarding-house for colored people."⁶⁶ The man guides him to an establishment where he encounters a "stout, brown-skin woman of about forty years of age. Her husband was a light-colored Cuban."⁶⁷ At breakfast, the Ex-Colored Man discovers a lively, even raucous discussion, conducted entirely in Spanish, at the breakfast table among a group of "eight to ten" cigar makers of whom "two, as I learned afterwards, were colored Americans," noting that "cigar making is one trade in which the color line is not drawn."⁶⁸ These passages suggest daily interaction between African Americans and Black Cubans in that the preacher knows to direct the visitor to a boardinghouse run by a Black woman who is married to a Cuban and where other darkskinned and borderlands subjects of apparently varied skin tones reside. Since all the cigar makers at breakfast are speaking Spanish, we can assume that the two "colored Americans" are Black Americans who have acquired Spanish, linguistic skills that the Ex-Colored Man himself will soon achieve. In fact, the Ex-Colored Man becomes so proficient in Spanish that he advances quickly through the ranks of cigar workers from his initial job as a "stripper" or stem remover to become a "reader" or *lector*, not only one of the highest-paying jobs in the factory but one that also confers a great deal of authority.⁶⁹ The lector's job was to read newspapers and literature to the cigar workers, an on-the-job educational benefit fought for by cigar workers and paid for by them as well. Although all reports on the demographics of cigar workers indicate that Black Americans were few in number in the industry,⁷⁰ the novel suggests that African American and Black Cubans knew each other and that, in the course of Black life in central Florida, they were, in fact, likely to encounter each other in some shared experiences.

Among the racially mixed population of Cubans, the protagonist learns a "practice" of Black life in diaspora, which emerges as something created in relationship to other diaspora populations and includes collective struggle for freedom and the perpetuation of knowledge about Black history and leadership.⁷¹ With the aid of his landlord's Cuban husband, he lands a job in the cigar factory where he quickly learns about the battle for the independence of Cuba that the Cuban husband is actively supporting financially through participation in a local "Jacksonville Junta." The narrative describes how cigar workers funded the struggle for independence with weekly contributions from their salaries, and describes the Cuban husband as praising the

leaders of this independence effort. Interestingly, the Cuban husband praises not José Martí, the figure best known in history and literature as representative of the struggle for independence, but “the Gómezes, both the white one and the black one,” as well as “Macéo and Bandera.”⁷² These references are to Máximo Gómez, leader of the revolutionary army, and Juan Gualberto Gómez, Afro-Cuban revolutionary, as well as two famous heroes of the independence struggle, both Afro-Cuban leaders of the insurgency: Antonio Maceo and Quintin Bandera. The portrayal of support among working-class Cuban characters for both Black and white revolutionary leaders here, and none of them from the criollo elite, is significant, and makes the novel a vehicle for telling an alternative history of Cuban independence. The scene of the Ex-Colored Man’s recruitment into support for Cuban independence also suggests an explicit desire to support Black Cubans fighting for liberty—people who had shared the same hardships, sacrifices, and experiences as US Blacks, and who could, therefore, lead a different kind of nation. Moreover, the novel immortalizes Black leaders of the struggle for independence, which for them was also a struggle for the abolition of slavery and for equality, in the pantheon of Black resistance. Confirmation that this is, indeed, a lesson about resistance, emerges when the Ex-Colored Man tells readers that his experience in Jacksonville awakens in him an awareness of the forms of resistance that Blacks employ to combat racism and fight for “social recognition.”⁷³ Thus, in Jacksonville, he acquires knowledge of Black life in varied classes and activities, forming his “initiation into . . . the freemasonry of the race” that dispels multiple myths about Blacks but is also knowledge generated by diaspora subjects in communication with each other.⁷⁴

It is tempting to view James Weldon Johnson’s career as a diplomat, with postings in Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, as the basis for the themes of his novel; however, his border crossing began much earlier in his life, in central Florida, as a young boy growing up in Jacksonville, where his African American father ensured that he learned Spanish from a young age.⁷⁵ Born into a Black middle-class family, to parents who had been born free in the Bahamas and Virginia, Johnson created a close bond with a young Cuban boarder whom the family agreed to take-in for several years, providing the young man with access to education in the United States and for Johnson an opportunity to deepen his fluency in Spanish. Johnson’s life story diplomatically makes known that the young boarder was the illegitimate son of a local cigar factory owner who was, nonetheless, fully provided for by the cigar factory owner, though we know nothing about the boy’s mother. In

this episode from his real life, we gain further insight into the bonds forged between Black Cubans and Black Americans as well as the exclusions that still operate among Cubans that would necessitate such a placement.⁷⁶ Morrisette suggests that Johnson's oeuvre demonstrates his understanding of "the dynamic processes of African American cultural practices, inclusive of multiple languages, geographies, and experiences,"⁷⁷ acknowledging a diversity of African American experience. My reading, therefore, aims to understand Johnson as enacting a diaspora practice of Black life in the Americas that routinely crossed multiple national boundaries in the service of Black equality and an author who reveals central Florida as a borderlands site for multiple diaspora populations.

Evidence of Johnson's enduring interest in and support of Black peoples throughout the Americas appears throughout his literary, diplomatic, and scholarly work and is equally evident in his personal papers. Johnson and his wife, Grace Nail, were avid collectors of all news about Blacks throughout the Americas through multiple newspaper clippings, research, books, debates, and events involving African diaspora in Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, Trinidad, Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Panama, Jamaica, and Grenada.⁷⁸ I note one letter in Johnson's correspondence that serves as an indication of his ongoing connections with Black Latin Americans in the United States. A September 1934 letter written on the stationery of Evander Childs High School in New York City by G. Torres Colón to James Weldon Johnson congratulates the latter on his appointment as visiting professor at NYU. Written in Spanish, it notes that this will surely impress young people of "our race" on the intellectual and professional opportunities for advancement:

Este nuevo paso adelante, mi querido Profesor Johnson, producirá, sin duda, excelentes resultados en la mente de los estudiantes y profesionales jóvenes de nuestra raza que tengan ambición de alcanzar puestos de honor en nuestro mundo intelectual. Este nuevo reconocimiento de sus méritos le dará a nuestra juventud una nueva perspectiva, y le exhortará a hacer serias investigaciones, a consultar libros de referencia, en su afán de imitarle a Ud. en la consecución de merecida fama y honores para sí mismos y para nuestra raza en general.⁷⁹

This new step forward, my dear Professor Johnson, will, without a doubt, produce excellent results in the minds of students and young professionals of our race who aspire to positions of honor in the intellectual sphere. This new

recognition of your talents will give our youth a new perspective, inviting them to engage in serious research and consult reference works in the desire to follow in your footsteps to secure well-deserved recognition and honors for themselves and for our race in general.

Morrisette's description of Johnson as a man "possessed not only of the hindsight of sixty-two years in America but a carefully considered knowledge of centuries of New World blacks"⁸⁰ well captures Johnson's voracious interest in African diaspora peoples and the practice of Black life in the Americas as one dedicated to exploring overlapping diasporas.

Despite his experience of the bonds between African American and Afro-Cuban cigar workers in the struggle for freedom, the Ex-Colored Man chooses the path of passing and individual wealth accumulation⁸¹ versus the more communally centered efforts of the overlapping diaspora communities he encounters. His decision to pass is also a decision to turn away from the diaspora networks his narrative represents, networks that James Weldon Johnson himself labored to cultivate, perhaps because he understood, as Morrisette and Singh observe, that "a nativist, exclusionary privilege of white citizenship and its racial order . . . has both national and global implications."⁸² The Ex-Colored Man's decision to turn away from "African-American community reinforces his return to White racist values."⁸³ As Valerie Smith notes: "The ex-colored man capitulates whenever obstacles confront him, choosing always material security and personal safety over more precious and elusive goals. This tendency leads to his ultimate renunciation of the possibility of living meaningfully as a black man."⁸⁴ The ability to "live meaningfully as a black man," or Black woman for that matter, becomes the subject, in the following analysis, of Cuban American, Cuban, and Dominican American texts.

THE CHALLENGE OF JOINING RADICAL POLITICS AND ANTIRACISM

Jose Yglesias's *A Wake in Ybor City* (1963) is a fiction that examines the legacy of radicalism and cooperation of the late nineteenth-century Cuban cigar worker communities of this Florida city. The novel centers on three working-class Cuban sisters—Dolores, Mina, and Clemencia—now elderly matriarchs of families with children in Ybor City, Miami, and Havana, as

the family gathers in the spring of 1956 to celebrate the return of Mina's daughters from Havana for a short visit. In the course of a few days, the family undergoes major shifts as one son is forced to flee for his life, another debates his future as he is drawn into underground support for the Cuban revolutionaries, a daughter struggles to find a place for herself, while another daughter works to consolidate the wealth and power she and her husband derive from their close association with the Batista regime as a child's life hangs in the balance.

This series of events prompts the family to come to each other's aid repeatedly in the course of a few days, and each member does so because of their loyalty to family, but also because an older radical cooperation remains a fabric of life in Ybor City. It is Roberto, son of Clemencia, who epitomizes the survival of this solidarity when he agrees to assist his former cousin-in-law in delivering weapons to be shipped to the insurgents fighting the Batista regime in Cuba, an action that recalls the *filibusteros* of Florida in the previous century.⁸⁵ Despite the risks it brings, Roberto's actions embody an ethos of radical cooperation that still survives among those raised in Ybor City. In the course of his action he meets an old childhood friend whose youthful radical activism remains unforgettable. The novel, therefore, suggests, or perhaps hopes, that the radical and progressive past of Ybor City can and does live on among its descendants.

However, in an echo of the debates among *independentistas* in the earlier period, the novel also suggests that this radical cooperation can only live on if the family confronts its own anti-Blackness, and that confrontation, echoing Martí's pivotal visit to Ybor City, takes place in Ybor. For much of the novel, the strong family ties celebrated by its characters do not extend to the Black character Consuelo—a relative by marriage—and, therefore, symbolically leaves out Afro-Cubans from the circle of solidarity. When we meet her, Consuelo is an elderly woman who lives in poverty and suffers from some memory loss. Years back, having been hired to nurse one of the uncles in the family back to health from influenza, she became his partner and bore him a child. Upon her entrance into the scene of a family reunion early in the novel, a gathering to which she had not been invited, the narrator states, "Once it was her hair that immediately gave her away, but now the thin ashen flesh had become black along the many deep wrinkles. Consuelo was an old Negro woman; there was no denying it."⁸⁶ Because her features are described as "giving her away"—that is, inadvertently or unfortunately revealing her—readers intuit that from the per-

spective of the novel's protagonists, hiding one's Blackness is preferable. Indeed, Dolores's daughter Clara suggests distance from Blackness is essential when she explains to another that Consuelo had a baby by her Uncle Cheo but adds, "Uncle Cheo didn't marry her, of course, and when he went off to Miami, he left us old Consuelo and her mulatto baby as relatives."⁸⁷ The three sisters and matriarchs vary in their degrees of racism, with Mina at one end advocating for inclusion, Clemencia representing a middle ground of acceptance but silence, and Dolores and her daughters Clara and Elena representing the most anti-Black position in their attitudes and cruel comments toward Consuelo.⁸⁸ The novel thereby suggests that this racism is traceable to the more conservative end of the family since those most vocal in sidelining Consuelo are Dolores, whose husband was a supervisor in the cigar factory, and her children, both daughter Clara, who is an opportunistic character, and daughter Elena, an ambitious woman married to an adviser of the dictator President Batista of Cuba. Elena openly expresses gratitude that her marriage to the influential and wealthy Jaime in Cuba has allowed her to escape the devalued category of Black Cuban.⁸⁹

The narrative exploration of ethnic, racial, and class solidarity thereby reveals some of the fissures that emerge between these social formations in the life of this family as it highlights the enduring struggle to achieve radical relational solidarity. The suggestion that a stronger sense of class solidarity aligns with aversion to ethnic and racial discrimination emerges in the depiction of the other two sisters and matriarchs, Clemencia, who feels ashamed for her racism, and Mina, who expresses acceptance of Consuelo. Yet it is Consuelo herself, despite her awareness of the family's racism toward her, who asserts her belonging by joining with others to sustain the family in times of crisis, both emotionally and financially.⁹⁰ The narrative tension between the three biological sisters and Consuelo thereby embodies the problem of whether radical racial relationality can be achieved, whether sisterhood will include Consuelo.

Isolated in old age since the passing of her son, Consuelo is never embraced with the same affection and love or even anger that family members shower on each other. For much of the novel, she remains at the edges, hovering, not quite connected, though many of the characters imagine themselves as radical and cooperative partisans of workers' struggles. The family's varied links to that radical past emerge in multiple scenes, for example, Clara's (Dolores's daughter) remembrance of her father taking her to see the steps where Martí spoke, or Clemencia recalling her husband's Bernar-

do's union radicalism, or Robert (Clemencia's son) recognizing a radical classmate from his junior high days involved in support for Cuban rebels, emphasizing a view of radicalism as support for armed struggle rather than racial equality.⁹¹ Yet these scenes also enact a remembering of the Ybor City past that each character has experienced, and the ideals and actions that fueled their younger selves and families—including Black and white collaboration in unions and the political struggles to end Spanish colonial rule and slavery—and that prompt or provoke each of the sisters in their contemporary lives.

The novel stages a contemporary recognition of this lesson from the past on the importance of racial equality to the struggle for broader social change in the reversal of Dolores's racist rejection of Consuelo and Consuelo's integration into the family. Dolores insists on including Consuelo in the wake for Clara's deceased child in a ceremony that then becomes the subject of debate and crisis as well as the stage for a kind of reunification of family where Dolores embraces Consuelo and eventually breaks with her own daughter Elena.⁹² Elena, who views the wake as a retrograde funeral custom not appropriate for a modern age, repeatedly tries to circumvent and then bully others into skipping it. Her mother Dolores is bent on having it but verges on a heart attack in the fight over it. Dolores, therefore, nearly gives her life in insisting that the ceremony proceed. Consuelo joins in the chorus of voices insisting that the controversial wake is a necessary celebration of life, even part of what defines them, but also emotionally expresses a wish that her own life be taken in lieu of Dolores's in response to the latter's heart attack. The wake then is a double-edged sword. Even as it seems to solidify a custom associated with the commemoration of the lives of Black children,⁹³ marking the family as at least partially Black (why else would Elena seek to escape this designation?), and fully restores Consuelo as part of the family despite her status as the common-law former wife—disrupting patriarchal heteronormative conventions—by incorporating a fourth sister/matriarch into the family, it foreshadows the end of Consuelo. These closing scenes of heightened crisis and choice involving several ultimatums restore Consuelo to the family. However, her fuller acceptance into the family rests on pairing Dolores's possible death with Consuelo's willingness to die for her, providing an ambivalent ending. The novel's climax embodies the progressive politics of Ybor City's past, suggesting it can be brought forward but not without fully including Consuelo and those she represents. Yet the inclusion here is so quick, dramatic, and conditional that it risks erasing the longer histories

of exclusion that Consuelo has endured. On the one hand, the two women are willing to sacrifice for each other, and their actions in favor of this particular ceremony suggest a commitment to supporting the persistence of Black life, yet readers know that Consuelo's sacrifice is greater.

In its portrayal of the inability to embrace racial integration, the novel mirrors the failures of the turn-of-the-century independence project. As Aline Helg observes, the Creole leading class of the independence movement

stuck to the old hope . . . that the blacks would disappear once the slave trade ended because of massive white immigration and miscegenation. Many Creole intellectuals proposed to imitate Argentina's process of "whitening" through European immigration.⁹⁴

Helg's comments remind us of the emergence of "whitening" efforts throughout Latin America in the early twentieth century, including José Vasconcelos's work in this period discussed in Chapter 2, as symptomatic of post-independence backlash in the case of Cuba and postrevolution backlash in the case of Mexico. This critical reading of Yglesia's work suggests that the dismantling anti-Blackness remains central to the project of social justice at every level and in every era.

BONDS BETWEEN BLACK CUBANS AND BLACK AMERICANS

Evelio Grillo's account of his childhood and youth in the Ybor City of the 1920s and 1930s and his young adult life in the army during World War II in *Black Cuban, Black American* (2000) grapples with the questions of racial/ethnic difference and racial relationality among Cubans and between Cubans and African Americans.⁹⁵ As Susan Greenbaum notes, "In the United States, Black Cubans are invisible, to some extent unthinkable. The popular construction of Cuban American identity stands in deliberate opposition to blackness."⁹⁶ Grillo's narrative confirms this when he reveals that although white and Black Cubans lived in Ybor City and worked in the same cigar factories, in most other aspects of life, including education, transportation, and access to social services, segregation reigned. This situation brought Afro-Cubans and African Americans into greater contact and sympathy, creating networks of African diaspora-descended peoples in central Florida in the

early twentieth century in which Grillo participates. As Grillo states, “black Cubans and black Americans” were bonded to each other in “play, school, work, friendships, love, sex, and marriage,” citing multiple examples of Black Cuban and Black American exchange, recreation, and society.⁹⁷ Grillo credits his participation in this environment, in vibrant African American communities, and his attendance at a historically Black college in the segregated South for his enduring sense of community, self-worth, and success.⁹⁸

Grillo’s narrative contrasts the depth of his engagement with Black Americans in contrast to the superficiality of his association with white Cubans in ways that suggest a long-standing color line. He describes how the lives of white and Black Cubans intersected in the Cuban American enclave of Ybor City, though his narrative does not convey much depth to these interactions. For example, Cubans of both races share the same public streets in their town but cannot equally enjoy all of its establishments, since the movie theater is segregated. He notes that “a white Cuban or two might show up at the spiritualist séances to which my mother dragged me weekly,” but those white Cuban participants remain nameless and faceless individuals in the narrative.⁹⁹ Grillo indicates that Black Cubans and white Cubans used the same grocery store, attended the same baseball games, and participated in same unions, but notes that “black Cubans did not share recreational activities with white Cubans.”¹⁰⁰ The result is that these interactions do not provide sufficient evidence of racial harmony between white and Black Cubans. In this way, Grillo’s autobiography subtly challenges the view that divisions among Black and white Cubans were only the result of US Jim Crow policies, and instead points toward an interrogation of white supremacy as it circulates among Cubans in a way that echoes the analysis in this chapter’s previous discussion of race in the Cuban independence movement.¹⁰¹

In contrast, in describing interactions between Black Cubans and Black Americans, Grillo conveys such a frequency and depth of consonance and experience in everyday exchanges, business transactions, entertainment/leisure, education, the cultivation of self-knowledge, and opportunities for advancement that his text suggests a strong diaspora consciousness. While never erasing the linguistic, cultural, and religious difference between African Americans and Black Cubans, Grillo details many quotidian conditions and situations that “bonded young black Cubans to black Americans.”¹⁰² Given this interaction, Grillo notes that intermarriage between Black Cubans and Black Americans was not uncommon, reminding us of the Ex-Colored Man’s registration of this fact earlier in this chapter.¹⁰³

However, three sites in particular emerge as pivotal in Grillo's education in diaspora, and contributed to creating in him a strong sense of self as Black subject of the Americas: his home and family, the educational sphere, and the Black Cuban community center La Union Martí-Maceo. He highlights the importance of the Black autonomy and agency he gained through these spheres when he tells us that in school, "I had made it clear that I was not subject to 'de-Negrofication,' a term that many will understand who have served on the margins of powerful white institutions. I reserved the right to 'think black,' and to 'feel black,' on social issues, whatever the circumstances."¹⁰⁴ His insistence here on the validity of his embodied and lived experience as a Black Cuban man in the United States as lens for understanding the world around him suggests the insufficiency of nationalist, assimilationist, idealist, or universalist paradigms in circulation around him that attempt to condition the terms on which Black subjects can participate in national society, placing him in conversation with multiple texts in this chapter and volume that explore geographies of relation over those of nation.

His family experiences are key in educating Grillo about being Black in the United States and the hemisphere. His mother, who attended primary school in Jacksonville and builds a close friendship with her African American neighbor Mrs. Byna, babysitter for Evelio, appears to have integrated both Black Cuban and African American influences into Grillo's childhood. As a very small child he travels with his father to Cuba, where tragically his father dies from tuberculosis, but Grillo recalls the loving support from his many aunts and uncles in Cuba. The family connection to Cuba remains strong as his brothers also later return there both for health and for vocational training. Grillo fondly remembers his mother's elaborate and multi-generational Noche Buena celebrations in Ybor City, which often included Black American friends. A cigar worker, Grillo's mother also introduces him to her coworkers, the space of the factory, union meetings, and their Black *lector*, providing him with a firsthand experience of a Black worker organization as well as an informal education in the role of Black cigar workers in supporting the Cuban war for independence. And it is Grillo's mother, by pawning her engagement ring, who facilitates his upward mobility by making his journey to Washington, DC, for a better education possible, while his brother Henry assists him there with housing and employment. Through his family and home experience, Grillo gains a sense of himself as a Black person and as a Cuban.

Grillo's discussion of the pivotal role that his mother plays in raising him, teaching him, and encouraging his journey north is often overlooked in discussions of this memoir, which tend to focus on the pivotal role of Mr. Martin in leading Grillo to seek a better education in Washington, D.C. As Grillo tells it, the African American Mr. Martin is able to provide both opportunity and significant encouragement to his young and fatherless self, and he remains deeply appreciative of the lessons learned from Mr. Martin, not the least of which is that many support his success and his success must in turn support the many. Nonetheless, Grillo credits his mother and home life in equally important ways with instilling cultural pride and aspirations to achievement though he recognizes the limitations imposed on her as a single, working-class mother. Perhaps even more importantly, as he prepares to leave north for school, he notes the "wistfulness" in his older sister Sylvia's face, and remarks on the fact that even though all of her brothers leave home to pursue opportunities, she cannot. In writing about this gender disparity, Grillo acknowledges that Sylvia, too, deserved opportunity.¹⁰⁵

The formal educational sphere becomes a pivotal site for Grillo's acquisition of greater knowledge of the history and accomplishments of Black subjects as well as critical consciousness about the intersections of power and difference in the Americas. First, in a segregated Catholic school, and later in a segregated public school, Grillo sorts through his difference from other diaspora subjects (linguistic, religious) as well as the shared experiences of discrimination and histories of resistance. Entering a segregated public high school that is nonetheless led by Black teachers and administrators provides a major shift in perspective since its curriculum examined Black excellence and creativity in multiple fields, centered Black culture, and promoted the continued struggle for freedom and equality—a strong contrast to his Catholic elementary school education and upbringing. In public high school, Grillo gains an education about leading African American figures of his day such as Paul Robeson and Langston Hughes and two fellow Floridians, James Weldon and James Rosamond Johnson, as well as historically significant African American figures such as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. His autobiography makes plain that in the struggle for social justice an educational and cultural environment that values the histories and experiences of racialized minorities matters, echoing this point in the earlier discussion of Johnson's fictional text. Grillo flourishes under the tutelage of outstanding and dedicated Black teachers and administrators, and he credits this experience with his ability to grow educationally and intellectually. Grillo's

high school immersion in a curriculum that values Black culture and knowledge eventually leads him, via the supportive and guiding hands of Mr. Martin, a leading Black businessman, north to study at Dunbar High School and build relationships with important Black mentors at Howard University. These experiences become pivotal steppingstones to Grillo's later and deeper involvement in struggles for Black equality, both as a student at Xavier College and as a member of the segregated US military in World War II. Written in the twenty-first century, Grillo's retrospective narrative emphasizes the importance of a nonracist education and highlights the wider structures of white supremacy that Black Cubans and Black Americans are always engaged in resisting.

A third important sphere of influence in Grillo's racial and ethnic formation is his and his family's participation in the community organization Union Martí-Maceo, named for both the Black and white Cuban leaders of the independence movement. A site of social events for what he describes as a mostly Black community, participation in this group undoubtedly also deepened Grillo's appreciation for the legacy of radical cigar workers in Ybor City and his own racial consciousness. Until his high school education, Maceo is the only Black hero he knows. In remembering him, Grillo's narrative echoes the efforts of Black Cubans in the Union Martí-Maceo of Ybor City to combat the erasure of Black accomplishment, heroism, and world-changing action by publishing, in 1924, of a pamphlet titled "Maceo, the Liberator of Cuba" containing the printed version of speech given by Dr. Bernardo Ruiz Suarez in New York in 1923. Ruiz Suarez's speech begins with praise for Martí and notes that "it would be an act of notorious injustice not to point out in rapid review other names of other men, no less illustrious, who adorn the firmament of the Republic of Cuba as a covering of resplendent stars," including Quintin Bandera, Jesus Rabí, Díaz, Cebreo, Sanchez, and Figueras. He then turns to his main topic: Antonio Maceo, whom he describes as "like a star of the first magnitude in the Cuban constellation of Suns" whose heroic deeds, patriotism, dignity, and military genius serve as inspiration.¹⁰⁶ The text recognizes his global impact when it states, "Maceo erased from this continent the tyranny of the conquerors" and compares him to Bolívar, Washington, and Lincoln.¹⁰⁷ As the pamphlet confirms, Grillo grew up among Black Cubans who continued the struggle for social recognition and equality among their compatriots and within the larger contexts of the United States, Cuba, and hemispheric borderlands that they navigated, even if with limited resources. In this way, Grillo's text

in 2000 and the Union Martí-Maceo's pamphlet in 1924 both wrestle with an "antiblackness [that] is pervasive *as* climate," as Christina Sharpe observes, and "necessitates changeability and improvisation" as well as "knowledge to survive."¹⁰⁸

Thinking about the fictional work of James Weldon Johnson and José Yglesias alongside the autobiographical memoir of Evelio Grillo allows us to consider alternative histories of migration and mobility for Ybor City and the United States that explicitly include Black Cubans and interactions, exchanges, and networks with Black Americans, histories that recognize the multiple borderlands and diasporas converging on the space of Florida and their interconnections with and similarities to those in other parts of the United States. Centering race and ethnicity in this analysis allows us to qualify or modify what constitutes "radical" and to question who is excluded from "labor politics" defined by whiteness. This examination of Afro-Cuban and African American literature offers us a sense of what the struggles for Black freedom, liberation, and fulfillment meant to Black radicals and Black writers of the African diaspora, how frequently they worked around idealized notions of white citizenship to craft liberatory agendas with other diaspora populations in the borderlands between nations and ethnicities.

WRITING AFRO-CUBAN WOMEN INTO HISTORY

As remarked in María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno's life story, told to her daughter Daisy Rubiera Castillo and published as *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century* (2000),¹⁰⁹ she is a descendant of Afro-Cubans who fought in the war of independence. Born in 1902, Reyita still carries within her the memory stories of her ancestors, both as enslaved human beings and as participants in the war for independence, as she recalls and narrates key moments in her own life experience as a Black Cuban woman in the twentieth century. Her account reveals both the everyday workings of racist ideologies in her life as well as the organized and informal cultural, social, and political life of Black Cubans in resisting those ideologies. In this way, her narrative suggests the alternative, and defining, touchstones of another Cubanidad, the Afro-Cuban experience, as it also intervenes to shore up a gap in knowledge about Black life and history.

In contrast to the silenced Consuelo of José Yglesias work or the Ex-Colored Man who cannot live his Blackness in any meaningful way, María de

los Reyes Castillo Bueno's *testimonio* joins Evelio Grillo and the generations of Black Cubans and African Americas who built relationships with each other in central Florida, as a subject choosing to align herself with others in navigating the diasporas and borderlands of the Americas. Her narrative repositions Afro-Cubans as central to struggles for liberation as it also documents the quotidian effects of racist ideologies that endure as they impact her in both deeply intimate and broadly social spheres.

In the political sphere, Reyita's testimony creates a genealogy of Black struggle in the Americas that traverses national boundaries and ethnicities as it also foregrounds Black activism in Cuba to achieve both independence and socialist revolution. It is in this personal narrative that is also a historical counter-narrative that she grounds her self-love, which she passes along to her children, as one learned from her African grandmother Tatica and the struggle of her ancestors against slavery and for independence. History is made personal when she remarks on the Spanish abolition of slavery in 1886 that frees her grandmother, Tatica, who joins her husband Basilio in fighting the war for independence of 1895. Later, Castillo Bueno's mother Isabel also joins the *Mambís* and meets Reyita's father, Carlos Castillo Duharte, "the only black man Isabel would ever share her life with."¹¹⁰ Her grandmother on her father's side, Mamacita, also "joined the insurrection [of 1895] with all her children."¹¹¹ In contrast to José Martí's critique of Spanish abolition in 1886 as "pure cunning," she asserts the power of the *Mambí* army to have forced Spain's hand as she also underscores the fact of the difference that abolition makes in Black Cuban self-governance and the participation in the ongoing war for independence, a perspective absent from Martí's essay on the topic.¹¹² In this regard, her narrative is not unlike *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and *Black Cuban, Black American* in making known Black Cuban heroism, organization, and revolutionary power through a literary text. In using the only avenue open to her to contribute to Black history, Castillo Bueno's narrative draws attention to the lack of attention to Black history in prevailing texts. She explicitly critiques this when, after describing the brutal attacks on members and supporters of the Independent Colored Party that she witnessed in the early twentieth century, she observes: "During that time no one cared about the truth. But . . . after the triumph of the revolution it didn't occur to anyone to interview the people who lived through all that. . . . Now, I wonder, why haven't the historians gone into the details of what happened?"¹¹³

Castillo Bueno's *testimonio* draws a direct line between the nineteenth-century anticolonial and abolitionist struggles of her ancestors in Cuba and

the activities of her two sons in the 26th of July movement, effectively positioning African diaspora as a historic and central revolutionary force for change in Cuba. Her revelation about learning that her sons, Monín and Nené, are involved in the 26th of July movement to overthrow the dictator Batista follows her discussion of scenes of discrimination at the hands of business associates of her husband and her own recognition of a racialized economic order, effectively validating the revolutionary activities of her sons.¹¹⁴ But she goes further than validation by situating them in the genealogy of Black struggle she constructs when she tells us: “They were an honour to the *Mambí* tradition of my ancestors and my father.”¹¹⁵

Castillo Bueno herself is the school, movement, and connective tissue linking the radical and world-altering activities of her ancestors to those of her sons through a life of social justice work. As a young woman willing to work to create a society free of discrimination, she joins the Pan-African Marcus Garvey movement of the 1920s, attending meetings on Africa and African life and joining in the recruitment, fundraising, and social events through which the group cohered.¹¹⁶ As one of the few venues where poor Blacks could enjoy themselves, Garvey gatherings held a broader social significance in creating a place for Black cultural expression.¹¹⁷ Working alongside the many Jamaicans she meets in the organization, Castillo Bueno appreciates the ethos of equality among disparate Black subjects that characterizes the organization, and when the group faces persecution and some Jamaicans are deported, she carries this lesson forward in her life with a commitment to “prevail over discrimination” in Cuba.¹¹⁸ When hired as a nanny in a position that quickly turns into teaching all the young children in Báguanos, Castillo Bueno acts to ensure the opportunity is available to all: “The families of the few black pupils in my little school couldn’t afford the monthly fee, and I didn’t charge them when I saw their eagerness to learn.”¹¹⁹ In this way, Castillo Bueno enacts her own version of affirmative action with the aim of equalizing opportunity for Black Cubans. In the 1940s, married and with children, Castillo Bueno joins the Popular Socialist Party because “they fought for, among other things, equality between blacks and whites and between men and women,” making her home available to the party for meetings and participating in fundraising and newspaper sales, even involving her daughter in these efforts as well.¹²⁰

Side by side with her activism, Castillo Bueno cultivates an Afro-Cuban spiritual and religious life, primarily in the place of home but sometimes also

in public space. Her heterodox spiritualism is a hybrid mixture of Black diaspora Orisha devotion and Catholicism with the practices of Allen Kardec, which she calls *espiritismo cruza'o* or *espiritismo de cordon*.¹²¹ This hybrid spirituality reveals the ongoing coexistence of Indigenous and diaspora worldviews alongside European beliefs in this hemisphere, making these both important indices of lives resistant and alternative to Western modernity and modes of making alternative worldviews recuperable in the present. In describing the hybridity of her practice and belief, she reveals not only that performance and print cultures inform and support it but also that her hybrid spirituality also connects her to the historic struggles of Black Cubans. For example, she notes that Saint Lazarus and the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre are avatars for the Orishas. The Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, linked to the province of Santiago, Cuba, was venerated as the Virgin de los Mambises in the nineteenth century and is well known as the Catholic face of the Orisha Ochún or Oshun, divinity of rivers and fresh waters, sexuality, love, pleasure and beauty, while Saint Lazarus is well known as the Catholic avatar of Orisha Babalú Ayé, lord of the earth and associated with disease and healing.¹²² Castillo Bueno's description of dancing and singing to Iyá, the largest of Santería drums, as a child and as an adult; her spiritual visions as a child; her practice of honoring the spirits of her *antepasados* and making room for them in her house; and her practice of spiritual healing with herbal medicine emerge throughout the narrative and effectively convey uniquely Black Cuban spiritual experiences, practices, and beliefs that populate her life throughout the entirety of the twentieth century and involve not just her alone, but wider communities of practice and belief.¹²³ In this way, she situates Black Cuban spirituality at the very center of Cubanness.¹²⁴

Castillo Bueno's narration of moments of political activism and solidarity repeatedly, and subtly, invokes the idea of "family" in a way that draws our attention, as readers, to the significance of this relation and term in her life. Her memory of her grandmother is tied up with memories of her grandaunts and the kidnapping, capture, and enslavement that brought them to Cuba. Her memory of work as a village teacher is similarly bound up with being incorporated into both a nuclear family as a nanny and a wider social family as a teacher. The notion of family is present in her description of the ideals of the Garvey movement—"We were going to be one big family and, most importantly, without racial discrimination"—and again when describing her work for the Popular Socialist Party, where she also makes a distinction between her own nuclear family and a larger Black family.¹²⁵ In contem-

porary discourse, the language of “family” can signal nationalist or patriarchal assumptions. However, in Castillo Bueno’s *testimonio*, this does not serve essentialist or racially exclusive nationalist ways, despite her youthful views of the Garvey movement. Indeed, we need not read her expression of desire for “one big family” in adolescence as romantic or utopian if we instead recognize this as a naming of both the new kinds of affiliations that geographies of relation can yield and the practice of Black life in the Americas, relations that do not gloss the differences between Jamaican Blacks and Cuban Blacks or among Cuban Blacks but recognize, “most importantly,” the joint cause of battling racial discrimination.

The question of what Black family means in this text matters not only to Castillo Bueno’s narrative but to other Black diaspora narratives. I am reminded of the exchange cited by Kamran Javadizadeh between Claudia Rankine and Lauren Berlant on the invocation of “family” in *Citizen: An American Lyric* that leads Rankine and then Javadizadeh to reflect on the “spontaneity and tenuousness” of “ad hoc family” in her poetry and of Black families in actuality.¹²⁶ Christina Sharpe, also reflecting on Rankine’s words about family, a family joined “in the wake,” though here in the context of the murders of nine Black people at Emanuel AME Church in South Carolina, observes: “To be in the wake is to live in those no’s, to live in the no-space that the law is not bound to respect, to live in no citizenship, to live in the long time of Dred and Harriet Scott.”¹²⁷ Castillo Bueno and her Black children occupy a “no-space” that her white husband does not, which impacts her repeated and evolving sense of what constitutes “family” and resonates with the observations of Rankine and Sharpe on the structures of white supremacy that wider notions of Black kinship contest. Sharpe also struggles with the language for describing and defining the “facts of displacement and the living in and as the displaced of diaspora,” finding some validity in Glissant’s notion of “knowing ourselves as part and as crowd,” but ultimately settling on “Black being in the wake.”¹²⁸ The discussion of terms here—family, kinship, as part and as crowd, Black being in the wake—embodies the ongoing act of reaching for a way to theorize and understand Black diaspora life that I suggest also characterizes Castillo Bueno’s narrative, perhaps most tellingly in the distinctions she makes between the lives of herself and her Black children and that of her white husband.

In this regard, Castillo Bueno’s description of her friendly relationships with queer Black diaspora subjects Saraza, Silvio, and Juan Pesca’o, people who were allowed to participate in “the Santiago carnivals up until 1959,”

indicates that, indeed, her view of kinship is not confined to biological and heteronormative nuclear family models.¹²⁹ She acknowledges both Silvio and Juan Pesca'o as Black diaspora subjects but speaks admiringly of all three as possessed of mettle, beauty, intellect, and self-respect. This further supports a reading of Castillo Bueno's repeated invocation of "family" when discussing Black diaspora as a vocabulary that revises predominant conceptions of the term as only applicable to patriarchal, heterosexual, nuclear families, perhaps in some ways similar to Chicana feminist visions of the need to "make *familia* from scratch" in the borderlands that retains viability in a genealogy of Black thought that seeks to theorize and understand Black diaspora.¹³⁰

Given the degree to which Castillo Bueno reveals how the fierce external racism of society was internalized in her own family and manifested through colorism in her mother's discrimination against her, as well her frank discussion of the limitations of her marriage, the latter, and more complex, versions of "family" seem appropriate for understanding her invocation of this term.¹³¹ The racism and colorism she experienced as well as the gendered discrimination she encounters shape the social and cultural climate through which Castillo Bueno moves through life, all the while carefully crafting a life resistant to anti-Blackness for herself and her children, seizing agency as a woman and as a Black subject when she could, and intervening in the wider sphere beyond her immediate nuclear family to forge a Cubanidad that would fully include them. In this way her *testimonio* speaks to an expanded sense of "family" that is synonymous with activist diaspora subject.

Castillo Bueno punctuates her narrative with multiple scenes of racist aggression that, taken together, convey the quotidian anti-Blackness and gender discrimination she encounters and contests. From an educated cousin disappeared for defending Blacks in court, to the rape and abuse her mother endured, to the racist exclusion of her son from an educational scholarship competition, and her husband's treatment of her and her children as servants to him, her narrative poses and considers the interplay between racist aggression or microaggression, internalized racism in the form of colorism, and gendered subordination.¹³² She tells us openly that the fierceness of this "weather," to use Christina Sharpe's term, leads her to seek a white man as husband, an aspect of her narrative worth some examination. On the one hand, Castillo Bueno, as her mother Isabel did before her, distinguishes between whites, mulattos, and Blacks, and turns to the racist language of *adelantados* to convey the alleged superiority, of lighter-

skinned relatives.¹³³ Her decision to marry a white man, she emphasizes, was not because she disliked Black men, but rather, having experienced racism and colorism, she sought to mitigate these in the lives of her children.¹³⁴ Yet, unlike her mother Isabel, who cuts herself off from all Black expression in her life “to maintain an appearance” of what we presume is fictional whiteness and prevents Reyita from equal participation in social events,¹³⁵ Castillo Bueno embraces Black cultural expression in many forms, including carnival fiestas, spiritualism, and *comparsas*, and promotes her children’s inclusion in all school and social events.

Although the scene when Castillo Bueno and Antonio Rubiera meet suggests mutual flirtation and falling in love, the chapter opens with her declaration that she prayed to the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre for a decent white husband.¹³⁶ In this way, Castillo Bueno communicates the significance of her own will, desire, and prayer in directing her life. While her husband Rubiero breaks from his racist family for marrying her, he, nonetheless, on a number of occasions in Castillo Bueno’s telling, exhibits low expectations for his children, a lack of faith in their abilities, an unwillingness to be with them in public, an obtuseness about the discrimination they and Castillo Bueno face, and the view that they should not attempt to exceed their station in life. While she does describe moments of tenderness between herself and her husband and reminds us that she loves him, Castillo Bueno does not let readers forget that she and her husband occupy very different positions in society. In doing so, she takes on the topic of Black love and adds another layer to the meaning of “family” in Black Cuban life, a recognition that this term never signifies only the romantic, patriarchal, nuclear family but instead the sometimes painful and often complex relations set in motion among diaspora and borderlands subjects.¹³⁷

CONCLUSION

The texts that this chapter has analyzed repeatedly feature individuals and fictional characters who are forced into migration and mobility by their status as descendants of African diaspora peoples who are prohibited from full recognition and belonging in the colonies and nations they traverse, that is, borderlands subjects, too. We can intuit some of the gendered dimensions of diaspora for subjects such as Paulina Pedroso in Grillo’s narrative attention to the experiences of his mother and sister; in Yglesias’s interrogation of race,

gender, and class intersecting in the lives of the three Cuban American sisters; and, especially, in Castillo Bueno's *testimonio*, underscoring the importance of radical relational framework for reading. In considering political essays, history, autobiography, and *testimonio* alongside fictional novels, this chapter foregrounds the fictiveness of social change—the always unrealized aspiration, the fictions of social movements that emerge in the aftermath of those movements, as well as the role of fiction and imagination in enacting social change. In examining texts that span the Caribbean as well as a century, this chapter suggests that Black writers and activists reveal to us individuals and communities continually engaged in making radical, revolutionary, and lasting change toward Black equality in this hemisphere, often in concert with or in dialogue with other African diaspora-descended actors. Indeed, such interconnections across difference but without erasing difference have been key in solidifying progressive social change. Meanwhile, through fictional texts about social change, Black authors create counterhistories and counternarratives to challenge not only the absence of Black and gendered subjects and their experiences in other fields and spaces but also the Black perspective on that experience, revealing to us characters working through the complexity of ethnic, racialized and gendered constraints they face, allowing us to imagine with them other possible worlds.

Conclusion

The “Interdependency of Different Strengths”

In undertaking a relational analysis of Chicana, Latina, African American, and Latin American literary, performative, and cinematic texts across the span of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, this study has been guided by the theoretical and conceptual insights of diaspora and borderlands theory, feminist women-of-color theory, and contemporary critical literary and cultural studies. The focus here on geographies of relation has been driven by an interest in fostering the study of diaspora and borderlands difference in our hemisphere as interrelated phenomena in ways that can deepen our understanding of the distinct social, political, and cultural contexts that inform these differences in specific locations and times in our hemisphere, allowing us insight not only into how “major systems of oppression are interlocking,” as the authors of *This Bridge Called My Back* and the Combahee River Collective observed long ago,¹ but also how diaspora and borderlands subjects critically navigate their interrelation. The understanding of difference that Anzaldúa calls us to in *Borderlands / La Frontera* rests on this kind of historical and contextual analysis. In pursuing an analysis that foregrounds a radical relational perspective by considering the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender, this study explores how intimately these are linked, and it contributes to the expansion of methods of reading that are grounded in an analysis of geographies of relation as constitutive of the Americas. This study reveals the complexities of the gendered diaspora and borderlands subjects’ negotiation of their difference in the Americas in relation to other gendered diaspora and borderlands subjects in ways that recognize how difficult is the terrain of relationality that these texts traverse and how much further there is to go while also revealing the resolve that emerges

over and over again in this particular archive of the need to address the knot. In concluding this discussion, I turn to Nelly Rosario's 2003 novel, *Song of the Water Saints*, to underscore the ways that the intersectional problematic is repeatedly addressed and foregrounded in literature of the Americas that exceeds the borders of national literatures. Rosario joins in the pathbreaking literary directions opened by Dominican American writers Loida Maritza Perez, Julia Alvarez, and Junot Díaz in crafting realist and historical fictions centered on Black Dominican characters and histories. In Loida Maritza Perez's riveting 1999 novel *Geographies of Home*, we witness the fragmenting effects of racist and patriarchal ideologies in their transnational dimensions on a Black Dominican American family in New York. Julia Alvarez's rich historical fiction *In the Name of Salomé* (2000) recovers the life and story of the overlooked Black Dominican woman poet laureate of the nineteenth century Salome Ureña for a contemporary audience in a narrative that centers questions of empire in also considering the history of the United States and the Dominican Republic. Alvarez's epic novel critically examines white-oriented criollo society of the nineteenth century and the whitewashing of Dominican Blackness. Junot Díaz's 1996 story collection *Drown* explores the experience of racialization for his Dominican American protagonists, and his 2007 novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, takes up the devastating limitations of patriarchal and white supremacist ideologies in the lives of his Dominican and Dominican American characters while illuminating the terror of life under the Trujillo dictatorship. Rosario's novel joins this significant new vein of Latinx literature that foregrounds Black Dominican voices and explores the inseparability of ethnicity/race and gender.

WHEN RESTLESSNESS IS RESISTANCE

While the anti-Haitian violence of the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic has been a subject of fictional consideration, and it is again in Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* (2003),² Rosario's novel begins not in the period of the Trujillo dictatorship but instead in a period of US occupation, reminding us of the early twentieth-century occupations of Veracruz, Mexico, home of Toña La Negra, discussed in Chapter 1, and situating its protagonist, Graciela, as a diaspora subject in search of freedom, akin to Castillo Bueno, Grillo, and the Black workers of Ybor City discussed in the previous chapter.

In taking up the restless protagonist of this novel, Graciela, this conclusion deepens the gender critique that emerges in Castillo Bueno's narrative while exploring how this Dominican American novel joins the other texts addressed in this study to foreground movements of Black persistence, resistance, and freedom while also constructing a radical diaspora relationality in the process of that resistance. Here, Audre Lorde's words on the power of difference ring true, though I repurpose them to address gender and racial relationality rather than the denial of queer and Black women in white feminist movement that she addressed:

Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively "be" in the world generate as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters.³

If the fictions and films addressed in this study repeatedly remind us of the need to address the multiplicity within diaspora and borderlands, to challenge the whitening, assimilative, and patriarchal logics of nationalisms that fuel empire and neocolonialism, then Lorde's insistence on the "creative function of difference," possible only if "acknowledged and equal," proves apt for thinking about this novel's deft interweaving of national, imperial, racial, and gendered ideologies in the story of its restless protagonist.

Song of the Water Saints opens in the early twentieth-century US military occupation of the Dominican Republic, which lasted from 1916 to 1924, and focuses on the coming of age and the life of Black Dominican Graciela under that occupation. The second half of the novel has two foci: Graciela's daughter Mercedes's life from postoccupation to the beginnings of democracy on the island—including the Trujillo era, and life in New York; and between New York and the Dominican Republic for Mercedes's children and grandchild Leila from 1967 to the end of the century. Across the century, the novel knits together the lives of these women—Graciela, Mercedes, Leila, and briefly, Leila's mother Amalfi—as figures who seek escape from the constraints of political and military domination, gendered expectations, and/or racialized hierarchies. A restless character, Graciela displays perpetual dissat-

isfaction with the limits of her life, and her yearning for something more makes her an anomaly among her family and community and an atypical mother. She feels the pressure of her peers and family to conform, yet she cannot. As Graciela's voice sagely notes in describing how her own desires and needs exceed the normative expectations: "How much can a foot do inside a tight shoe?" Graciela's rhetorical question here echoes Lorde's challenge to practices of tolerance or inclusion rather than the difficult and creative practices of community- or coalition-building that require the negotiation of difference but also promise a more radical change.

The first chapter, "Invasion," foregrounds the political and military imposition that the US occupation represents. In my classroom experience, readers are much more likely to focus on the passion between Graciela and Silvio that is exploited and abused by the photographer Peter West to create "exotic" images he will sell to the occupying marines, or the violent punishment that Graciela receives at the hands of her parents in this chapter than the violence of military occupation itself. However, the violence of the military occupation, particularly its combined racism and misogyny, is the overarching context of Graciela's life and reverberates throughout the novel (as well as the novels discussed above), as do the necessarily subtle or hidden acts of resistance that are also ever present despite that violence.

The subject of stories exchanged among Dominicans and a pervasive presence in every aspect of everyday life, the occupation becomes so encompassing as to define the air: "Graciela and Silvio could not distinguish the taste of gunpowder from salt in the air of El Malecón."⁴ The novel reveals the rule of US Marines on the island to be one characterized by extreme racist and misogynist violence and debauchery—"suspected *gavillero* rebels gutted like Christmas piglets; women left spread-eagled right before their fathers and husbands; children with eardrums drilled by bullets"—under the administration of Woodrow Wilson.⁵ The brief focus on Woodrow Wilson's hand in the occupation, whom readers will recognize as a singular force in strengthening segregation in the United States, highlights the racist dimensions of the occupation.⁶ It thereby reveals, as Lorgia García Peña suggests, a "suppressed history" of US empire that allows readers insight into its "lasting consequences" and the migrations and diasporas it impels⁷ while also positing this history as important to the kinds of solidarity that might be enacted across diaspora difference in the Americas. The brief mention of Woodrow Wilson crafts a bridge between African Americans and Dominican Americans, one that repeats later in the novel when Leila expresses her sense of

betrayal upon hearing her grandmother Mercedes dismiss Leila's Dominican American experience as an inauthentic one characterized by cultural affinity with Black Americans.⁸

The novel's protagonist, Graciela, repeatedly attempts to escape her circumstances, yet escape is not primarily about one's will or choice. Graciela witnesses racist marine violence against another Black woman on her way home from the market, and in flight from that scene she rushes home to find the marines also beating her own family and soon turning on her as well. The brutality of their racist occupation is inescapable. Years later, when she spends a year in a local convent trying to recuperate from illness, she learns from the nun Sol Elisa that the US Marines murdered Sol Elisa's grandfather, who had been a part of the *gavillero* movement resisting the occupation.⁹ Graciela's life, therefore, unfolds within a regime of racist and misogynist occupation, which leaves no opportunity for escape and suggests that her restlessness, beyond a desire to know and experience the world or chafing against the demands of motherhood—both of which are entirely reasonable characteristics in Graciela—also represents a resistance to this domination that cannot be openly spoken.¹⁰ Her containment has been noted by critics who have commented on the novel's portrayal of Graciela's erotic desires as a search for a subjectivity taken from her by, as Omaris Zamora suggests, “the dispiriting violence of the pornographic gaze” of occupation, or as part of a character, as Yomaira Figueroa suggests, whose desires for erotic satisfaction and liberation are linked in resistance and manifested in the episodes where Graciela abandons her home to seek knowledge or adventure.¹¹ Jill Toliver Richardson also finds that the novel's female characters are “continually challenged, attacked, and blocked in the public and masculine arena of American and Dominican landscapes,” highlighting Graciela's and Leila's relationship to feminist struggles more broadly.¹²

However, gender is not the only bar to their mobility. Richardson suggests that Graciela is a figure who “parallel[s] the predicament” of the native described in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, whose poverty circumscribes movement and opportunity, in this way linking Graciela's fate with that of other formerly colonial subjects in the Caribbean.¹³ The novel furthers a connection to other Afro-Caribbean subjects, as both Richardson and Figueroa suggest, in its portrayal of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Atlantic religiosities as resources and practices in resisting colonial and postcolonial domination, underscoring the practice of Black life in the Americas in cultural as well as political dimensions.¹⁴

The impact of racist occupation is not the only source of anti-Blackness among characters in the novel, which also explores the painful history of Dominican-Haitian relations and the ways these are memorialized in popular performance rituals that reinscribe predominant white Hispanist privilege and racism, as Lorgia García Peña finds, toward Black Dominicans and Haitians among Dominican *criollo letrados*.¹⁵ This unfolds most poignantly in the novel's Carnival scene and aftermath when Graciela discovers her daughter Mercedes mercilessly beating one of the children who has donned blackface in the ritual reenactment of Dominican independence from Haitian rule. Shocked by her daughter's behavior, Graciela violently grabs and shakes her, and then herself becomes the focus of blows from the gathered children, who appear to see her as the symbolic Haitian to be beaten back. As her partner Casimiro grabs her both to stop her from beating Mercedes and to stop the other children from pummeling her, she hears the "honey-colored" mother of the child that Mercedes was viciously beating protesting, "Your daughter sure as hell knows we ain't no Haitians!"¹⁶

The scene undercuts the popular mythology of Dominicans in denial of their own Blackness by revealing to readers a much more complex scene. This ritual reenactment of historic events between Dominicans and Haitians involves blackface but betrays little sense among the Black adult characters present at the scene, and of varied hues, that such an event represents anti-Blackness. That the ritual commemoration of the end of Haitian rule features in the novel rather than a celebration of independence from Spanish colonial rule is telling in this regard as it suggests the regime's promotion of difference from Haitians as a key national project. Children with a variety of skin tones are revealed to be dressed in blackface. And all the adults—from Gabriela who grabs her, Mai who hisses as she pulls her away, and the objecting mother of the other child—agree that there was no place for Mercedes's viciousness in the event, rejecting any passionate animosity against Haitians or the darker-skinned. When the children turn on Graciela as she disciplines Mercedes, a tension emerges: Are they reading Graciela as the new Haitian to be attacked in the ritual enactment because of her darker skin, or are they protesting her disciplining of Mercedes? Despite existing in a community of mixed-race and darkskinned Dominicans, Mercedes's tortured self-shame about her own Black lineage, driven, in part, by resentment at her Black mother, who is insufficiently attentive to her, is displaced onto the child playing the Haitian. And the other children project this onto Graciela when

she intervenes. We, along with Graciela, glimpse the seed of anti-Blackness emerging in the prescriptive nationalist reenactment of independence from Haiti. Mercedes's resentment of her Black mother Graciela derives both from her inability to inhabit normative motherhood and from her withholding of knowledge of her biological father. The novel thereby constructs a scene in which patriarchal gender norms are central to the development of anti-Haitianism and anti-Blackness in Mercedes—oppressions that cannot be disentangled and, therefore, cannot be solved in Mercedes's life. Readers are left to consider this further warping of national political culture under US occupation, especially since it coincides with the absence of any avenue save guerrilla revolt for expressing a desire for freedom from that occupation.

Song of the Water Saints makes it evident that Mercedes's violence at Carnaval is driven by resentment toward her non-normative mother as well as self-shame and preceded by her enjoyment of another violence, a lesson learned from the local grocer and father figure Mustafá. The force of the racist occupation is ever present, which may inspire Mercedes to secure privileges for herself based on her lighter skin and "white blood" from her deceased biological father, Silvio.¹⁷ The teaching of her mentor Mustafá, a father figure to her, is no small influence in the life of a girl with so few resources. Even though they themselves are also Black, Mercedes and Mustafá exhibit the most virulent anti-Black and anti-Haitian attitudes in the novel. Described as a "lanky Syrian man with violet skin and a nose thin as the edge of paper," Mustafá takes Mercedes under his wing, teaching her how to run his kiosk, which she eventually takes over.¹⁸ Mustafá and his wife Adara teach Mercedes to hate Haitians through their harsh treatment of a young, seemingly homeless Haitian boy who hangs around the kiosk begging for a few days in the weeks prior to Carnaval before disappearing, specifically telling her "never to behave or compare herself to people like that little boy, never to act so hungry, so slave-minded, so indolent, so black."¹⁹ Mustafá and Adara contribute to cultivating in Mercedes a sense of superiority to other darkskinned subjects and specifically Haitians, which is not only based on a supposed racial difference in Mercedes's mind but national and ethnic difference as well as class biases and concerns over respectability that take precedence over compassion. Yet despite the exclusive nature of their racial solidarity, Mercedes and Mustafá are painfully and horrifically reminded that they, too, can be the victims of the racist discourses they embrace when Mustafá returns from the west without his left hand, having been read as an alien Haitian himself due to "his violet skin, in his inability to pronounce *parsley*."²⁰

As the mother who is not a mother, who cannot make herself fit into the tight shoe, under occupation, of loving wife, devoted daughter, mother, and caretaker and who instead longs for adventure, travel, and erotic pleasure, longs to fully know herself and what she is capable of, Graciela represents the imperfect struggle to live a radical racial relationality. In becoming the object of the children's attack in the Carnaval scene who must be rescued by her husband, we see the intense policing of her Black body and life that she endures under a nationalist regime. She cannot attain freedom from this in her lifetime, but she returns in spirit to her great-granddaughter Leila, for whom a closer approximation may be possible, though not without confronting the new complexities of what this might mean in twenty-first century New York and the Dominican Republic.

Finally, while focused on the Dominican Republic, the novel nods to the shared experience of US military occupation across the Caribbean and Latin America when the narrator observes that the eight-year-long occupation of the Dominican Republic was "a battle between lion and ant. And when an ant pinched a paw, the lion's roar echoed: in Mexico, Panama, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic."²¹ This circum-Caribbean history reminds us not that each of these nations and the racialized and gendered occupations they experienced are the same but that their multiple experiences of domination by US military and economic interests coupled with the specific colonial histories of both exploitation and resistance in each provide powerful motivations for the formation of diaspora bonds across the borderlands of the Americas and the cultivation of the liberatory Black practice of life in diaspora that they portray.

Notes

Introduction

1. Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Spinsters / Aunt Lute, 1987), 78.

2. Anzaldúa removes the hyphen from “darkskinned” in her work, a choice that signals an enduring lived experience as it gestures toward coalition. This project retains this unique spelling in working with this conception.

3. That earlier work takes up texts not discussed in this volume. See Theresa Delgado, “‘Angelitos Negros’ and Transnational Racial Identifications,” in *Rebellious Reading: The Dynamics of Chicana/o Cultural Literacy*, ed. Carl Gutiérrez-Jones (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for Chicano Studies, 2004), 129–143; Delgado, “Singing ‘Angelitos Negros’: African Diaspora Meets Mestizaje in the Americas,” *American Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2006): 407–430; Delgado, “Latino/a Literature and African Diaspora,” in *Companion to African American Literature*, ed. Gene Jarrett (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 376–392.

4. Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 73.

5. M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 8.

6. The “radical” in this formulation follows in the path of *This Bridge Called My Back* in asserting the necessity for overturning gender subordination by never separating this concern from those of race or class. See Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, “Introduction, 1981,” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 40th anniversary ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), li–lv.

7. Stuart Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad,” *Small Axe* 6, ed. Annie Paul and Christopher Cozier (September 1999): 2.

8. Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora,” 5.

9. Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora,” 9. Addressing Caribbean cultures, he notes that the hyphen in “Afro-Caribbean” reveals this boundary crossing as it also creates a new diaspora network of cultures that harkens to Africa without essentializing or fixing it, employing it to signal what has been “suppressed”: “Race

remains, in spite of everything, the guilty secret, the hidden code, the unspeakable trauma in the Caribbean. It is ‘Africa’ that has made it ‘speakable,’ as a social and cultural condition of our existence.” See Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora,” 14.

10. Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora,” 10.

11. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Theorizing Diaspora*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 244.

12. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5.

13. Paul Gilroy, “Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a ‘Changing’ Same,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1991): 112–113, <https://doi.org/10.2307/779262>

14. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 48, 50; James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), 37–44.

15. Richard L. Jackson, *Black Writers in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979); Richard L. Jackson, *The Black Image in Latin American Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976); Richard L. Jackson, *Black Writers and Latin America: Cross-Cultural Affinities* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1998).

16. Jackson, *Black Writers in Latin America*, xi, x, 8.

17. Jackson, *Black Writers in Latin America*, 11, 14.

18. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 82.

19. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 3.

20. The need for a different kind of knowledge project is also taken up by Sylvia Wynter, writing in the very different context of the aftermath of the Los Angeles rebellion, when she reiterates her 1984 call for Black and ethnic studies to engage in “rewriting knowledge” (62). See Sylvia Wynter, “‘No Humans Involved’: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” in *No Humans Involved*, ed. Erin Christovale (Los Angeles: Armand Hammer Museum; New York: Delmonico Books / D.A.P., 2021), 32–65.

21. Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xiv, [https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/2027/heb00595](https://hdl.handle-net.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/2027/heb00595)

22. Both Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans are incorporated into the United States as ethnic minorities through the violence of conquest.

23. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 14, 2.

24. For example, see Daniel Martinez HoSang and Natalia Molina, “Introduction: Toward a Relational Consciousness of Race,” in *Relational Formations of Race: Theory, Method, and Practice*, ed. Natalia Molina, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and Ramón A. Gutiérrez (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019) and Perla M. Guerrero, *Nuevo South: Latinas/os, Asians, and the Remaking of Place* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017). Meanwhile social geographers Michelle Daigle and Margaret Marietta Ramírez nod to a relational approach in stating that “we

understand decolonial geographies to be a diverse and interconnected landscape grounded in the particularities of each place, starting with the Indigenous lands/waters/peoples from which a geography emerges, and the ways these places are simultaneously sculpted by radical traditions of resistance and liberation embodied by Black, Latinx, Asian, and other racialized communities” (1). See Michelle Daigle and Margaret Marietta Ramírez, “Decolonial Geographies,” *Antipode* Vol. 0 No. 0 (2018): 1–7, <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1111/anti.12455>.

25. Hong and Ferguson distinguish this from traditional comparison that assumes the cultural coherence of nation and/or glosses difference in favor of a “presuming a commonality” (11). See Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, “Introduction,” in *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, ed. Kyungwon Hong and Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 19, 16, 11.

26. Hong and Ferguson, “Introduction,” 16.

27. As Cedric Robinson observes, the ethnic and cultural stratifications through which early capitalism functioned continued into the emergence of nationalism and racial capitalism. See Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, revised and updated Third Edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 26–27.

28. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1, 8.

29. David Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 19, 30.

30. Édouard Glissant’s work on relation resonates here in some respects. Although Glissant’s elaboration of relationality often unfolds as a new universal of human interaction in contrast to older systems of filiation, he outlines a sense of relation identity in his 1990 work that resonates with women-of-color theory in that it embraces “conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures” circulating outside of systems of filiation (nation, monoculture) and thinking of land as “place where one gives-on-and-with” (144). His work is very much in conversation with Anzaldúa’s conception of new mestiza consciousness when he links creolization and “the idea of Relation” together by describing these as capturing the process of cultural change through diffraction that yields new cultural formations created by those in relation (34). He also hints, as Anzaldúa does, at the tie between relationality in the social/culture sphere and with the land/environment. See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997 [1990]), 144, 34. Similarly, Cedric J. Robinson also discusses the Tongan worldview of “relatedness” in his analysis of a Black radical tradition. See Robin Kelly, “Why Black Marxism? Why Now?,” foreword to Robinson, *Black Marxism*, xxvi.

31. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 2.

32. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 76.

33. Silvio Torres-Saillant, “Dominican Blackness and the Modern World,” in *Perspectives on Las Américas: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation* (Mal-

den, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 279–281, 284; Torres-Saillant, “Racism in the Americas and the Latino Scholar,” in *Neither Enemies nor Friends: Latinos, Blacks, Afro-Latinos*, ed. Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 290.

34. In her last book, published posthumously, Anzaldúa continues to describe herself using the terminology she has by then revised and infused with new meaning, to be discussed in Chapter 2: “Chicana/mestiza.” See Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 3.

35. Peter Wade, Carlos López Beltrán, Eduardo Restrepo, and Ricardo Ventura Santos, “Introduction,” in *Mestizo Genomics: Race Mixture, Nation, and Science in Latin America*, ed. Wade, Beltrán, Restrepo, and Santos (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 14–15.

36. For example, Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof notes the importance of working-class Black diaspora interconnections in the space of early twentieth-century New York’s “multiethnic Black world” in animating both African American and hemispheric projects for freedom. See Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, “The World of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg,” in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, ed. Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 84. Similarly, Petra R. Rivera-Rideau invokes Jacqueline Nassy Brown’s term “diasporic resources” to name the ways that dialogue and borrowings across the different locations of Black populations in the Americas can “produce alternative definitions of blackness that respond to their localized experiences of racial exclusion.” See Petra R. Rivera-Rideau, “Introduction: Reggaetón Takes Its Place,” in *Remixing Reggaetón: The Cultural Politics of Race in Puerto Rico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 15.

37. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, “Introduction: Nation, Migration, Globalization. Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies,” in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 8, 1, 2.

38. Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 72.

39. While scholars sometimes employ the term “diaspora” to refer to subjects who exist beyond the bounds of the nation, as in the Mexican diaspora or the Salvadoran diaspora, and to call attention to the necessity of emigration, I reserve the term in this study to refer exclusively to African-descended peoples of the Americas whose ancestors were forcefully brought to this hemisphere. I extend Anzaldúa’s conception of borderlands to the Americas, where borderlands subjects are those inhabiting the tense space not only between different cultures, nationalisms, and gender binaries, but also those living in the shadow of empire.

40. Just one more note on terminology: I capitalize “Black” throughout but maintain the lowercase spelling in quotations.

41. Roberto Santiago, ed., *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings* (New York: One World / Random, 1995).

42. For further discussion of African diaspora consciousness in Cruz’s work see Theresa Delgadillo, “Another Cubanidad, Another Latinidad: Latinx African

Diaspora in Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics*," *Latino Studies Journal* 16, no. 3 (2018): 341–360.

43. For example, see Marta E. Sánchez, "*Shakin' Up Race and Gender*": *Intercultural Connections in Puerto Rican, African American, and Chicano Narratives and Culture (1965–1995)* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); María E. Cotera, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez, and the Poetics of Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Lynn Mie Itagaki, *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and the Crisis of Racial Burnout* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

44. See William Luis, *Dance between Two Cultures: Latino Caribbean Literature Written in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997); Suzanne Bost, *Mulattas and Mestizas: Representing Mixed Identities in the Americas, 1850–2000* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Lorgia García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

45. Commenting on how traditional one-way discourses of acculturation and assimilation cannot account for the transnational and transcultural "movements of people and cultural practices," Lenz observes that diaspora discourses upset the notion that one has a single "'homeland' and situate the inter- and cross-cultural exchanges in a repoliticized dynamic framework of often enforced migrations." See Günter H. Lenz, "Toward a Politics of American Transcultural Studies: Discourses of Diaspora and Cosmopolitanism," in *Re-framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, ed. Winfried Fluck, Donald E. Pease, and John Carlos Rowe (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 396.

46. Tejumola Olaniyan and James H. Sweet, eds., "Introduction," in *The African Diaspora and the Disciplines* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 14.

47. Georg Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism, and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994), 7, 12, 36, 56; see also George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

48. Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, against Margins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 39.

49. Hong and Ferguson, "Introduction," 9.

50. For further discussion of hispanophilia, see García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*; Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Epilogue: Problematic Paradigms, Racial Diversity and Corporate Identity in the Latino Community," in *Latinos Remaking America*, ed. Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco and Mariela M. Páez (Berkeley: University of California Press; Cambridge, MA: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2002), 435–455.

51. Authors in the original text use capitalized "Latinidad" and lower-case *b*. Petra R. Rivera-Rideau, Jennifer A. Jones, and Tianna S. Paschel, "Introduction: Theorizing Afrolatinidades," in *Afro-Latin@s in Movement: Critical Approaches to Blackness and Transnationalism in the Americas*, ed. Rivera-Rideau, Jones, and Paschel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 11.

52. Lisa Sánchez González, *Boricua Literature: A Literary History of the Puerto Rican Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Sonia Saldivar-Hull, *Feminisms on the Border* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Rosa Linda Fregoso, *Mexicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

53. For example, see Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*.

54. Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

55. José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 25.

56. Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 243, 20.

57. Nancy Raquel Mirabal, “The Afro-Cuban Community in Ybor City and Tampa, 1886–1910,” *OAH Magazine of History* 7, no. 4 (1993): 19–22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25162907>; Nancy Raquel Mirabal, *Suspect Freedoms: The Racial and Sexual Politics of Cubanidad in New York, 1823–1957* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

58. Frances R. Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

59. Luis, *Dance between Two Cultures*, 38.

60. Anita González, *Jarocho’s Soul: Cultural Identity and Afro-Mexican Dance* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004); González, *Afro-Mexico: Dancing between Myth and Reality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

61. García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*.

62. Dixa Ramírez, *Colonial Phantoms: Belonging and Refusal in the Dominican Americas, from the 19th Century to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Yomaira C. Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas: Radical Mappings of Afro-Atlantic Literature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020).

63. Jill Toliver Richardson, *The Afro-Latin@ Experience in Contemporary American Literature and Culture: Engaging Blackness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

64. Antonio López, *Unbecoming Blackness: The Diaspora Cultures of Afro-Cuban America* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 11.

65. Melissa Castillo-Garsow, ed., *¡Manteca! An Anthology of Afro-Latin@ Poets* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2017).

66. I rely on Native American scholar Gerald Vizenor’s theory of survivance (rather than Jacques Derrida’s) as the dynamic, inventive, and playful enduring in the present of Native peoples. See Gerald Vizenor, ed., *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

67. Mary Helen Ponce, *Hoyt Street: Memories of a Chicana Childhood* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).

68. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 67.

Chapter 1

1. Movimiento Nacional por la Diversidad Cultural de México, “Afrodescendencia: Inclusión, Reconocimiento, Igualdad,” 2011, 35.

2. A few versions of her name circulate. Here I rely on Rafael Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra* (Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico: Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad y Puerto de Veracruz, 2012). Some sources report her name as María Antonia del Carmen Peregrino Álvarez.

3. See B. Christine Arce, “Between La Habana and Veracruz: Toña La Negra and the Transnational Circuits of Música Tropical,” in *Archipelagos of Sound: Transnational Caribbeanities, Women and Music*, ed. Ifeona Fulani (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2012), 79, 71; B. Christina Arce, *México’s Nobodies: The Cultural Legacy of the Soldadera and Afro-Mexican Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017).

4. Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, “The Golden Age Otherwise: Mexican Cinema and the Mediations of Capitalist Modernity in the 1940s and 1950s,” in *Cosmopolitan Film Cultures in Latin America, 1896–1960*, ed. Rielle Navitski and Nicolas Poppe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 241–242.

5. Delgadillo. “Singing ‘Angelitos Negros,’” 409. The Mexican critic Emilio García Riera suggests that the 1948 Mexican film “estaba bastante inspirada en una novela de Fannie Hurst, *Imitation of Life*,” while the director of the film locates the birth of the idea for the film in a conversation with a light-skinned couple at the Argentine airport about their Black son. See Emilio García Riera, *Historia documental del cine mexicano*, vol. 3, “Época Sonora, 1945–1948” (Mexico, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1971), 283–284; 284; *Joselito Rodríguez, Imagen del sonido: Correspondencia, 1931–1947* (Mexico City: Coordinación de Difusión Cultural de la UNAM / Dirección General de Actividades Cinematográficas, 2002), 55.

6. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 20–21.

7. Gabriela Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos en la escena mexicana 1920–1950* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), 91, 90.

8. Emmanuel Jiménez Portilla, director, “Toña La Negra ‘La Sensación Jarocha,’” TVMÁS on *YouTube*, November 17, 2020, *Radiotelevisión de Veracruz*, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEdiux-Vq4Q>, 41 minutes.

9. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 37–39.

10. Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 93.

11. Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 94.

12. For further on African American and Latinx (Cuban and Puerto Rican) in early to mid-twentieth-century music scenes in New York see Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities, 1917–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Adriana Bosch, senior producer, *Latin Music USA* (Boston: WGBH and BBC, 2009), distribution by PBS.

13. “El mambo implicó una renovada invitación al trópico imaginario,” says Gabriela Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 96. However, Pulido Llano also notes that Dámaso Pérez Prado’s description of his music and of the mambo dance “en nada refleja la supuesta ‘atmósfera voluptuosa y carnal’ que provocara el mambo en la metrópoli mexicana.” See *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 101. Also see Merry Mac Masters, *Recuerdos del son* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1995), 122–123.

14. Samuel A. Floyd Jr., Melanie L. Zeck, Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr., *The Transformation of Black Music: The Rhythms, the Songs, and the Ships of the African Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 96. See also Yvonne Daniel, *Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

15. For more on Mexico’s cultivation of ethnic dance and festivals in this period see Manuel R. Cuellar, *Choreographing Mexico: Festive Performances and Dancing Histories of a Nation* (Austin: University of Texas, 2022), 15–16, 24–25.

16. González, *Jarocho’s Soul*, 53.

17. For more on Mexican intellectuals studying Afro-Mexico see Theodore W. Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 20. The first major study of Black Mexican populations was published in 1946 by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán.

18. I adopt the gender-neutral spelling here; rather than “mestizo” or “mestiza,” I use “mestizx” when referring to universal group.

19. These are not the same set of films that Sergio de la Mora examines in his work on Mexico’s brothel/cabaret films, though there is some overlap, making relevant his observations on how the genre generally promotes “sexist gender ideologies.” See Sergio de la Mora, *Cinemachismo: Masculinities and Sexuality in Mexican Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 14.

20. Dolores Tierney, *Emilio Fernández: Pictures in the Margins* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 135.

21. Tierney, *Emilio Fernández*, 142.

22. Pulido Llano suggests that the *caberetera*/rumbera films embody a stereotype of the erotic and savage with origins in Cuba that is incorporated into Mexican popular culture in the first half of the twentieth century. See *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 13.

23. Leopoldo Gaytán Apáez, “Músicos y cantantes negros en la época de oro del cine mexicano: Los alegradores de la vida,” *Cronopio: Periodismo Cultural*, July 8, 2015, <https://www.cronopio.mx/creacionliteraria/musicos-y-cantantes-negros-en-la-epoca-de-oro-del-cine-mexicano/>

24. Gaytán Apáez, “Músicos y cantantes negros.”

25. Armando Pous, *Toña La Negra: La sensación jarocho* (Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico: Editora de Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 2022), 51, 53.

26. Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 62, 66, 101.

27. See Fernando Muñoz Castillo, *Las reinas del trópico: María Antonieta Pons, Meche Barba, Amalia Aguilar, Ninón Sevilla, Rosa Carmina* (Mexico City: Grupo Azabache, 1993), 127, 211.

28. 1950s star Maria Victoria comments that despite the fact that Toña La Negra was one of the first Mexican performance superstars, she has not received the kind of recognition that other artists have enjoyed. See Jiménez Portilla, “Toña La Negra ‘La Sensación Jarocha,’” 2020.

29. Elisabeth Cunin and Odile Hoffmann, ed. *Blackness and Mestizaje in Mexico and Central America* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2014), 93.

30. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 7. Pous also notes the ways that Toña La Negra and Agustín Lara were mutually important to each other’s career, for example, by chronicling how frequently he composed for her, how frequently her interpretations were hits, and how much they were tied together in performance venues and media coverage of the era. See Pous, *Toña La Negra*.

31. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 68–71.

32. Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 82–101.

33. Frances R. Aparicio, “Edifying Rhythms, Feminizing Cultures,” in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald M. Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 95–112.

34. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 11.

35. *Toña La Negra “La Sensación Jarocha,”* directed by Emmanuel Jiménez Portilla with screenplay by Martín Rafael Blanco Lamas, begins by chronicling the arrival of Hernan Cortés in 1519 to what would become known as the Villa Rica de la Veracruz and then asks viewers to consider who were the first settlers and how Mexico’s “third root” (its Black population) came into being, situating Blacks as foundational to the history of the formation of Veracruz and what will eventually become Mexico. By beginning the story of Toña La Negra in this way, the documentary asserts the centrality of her people and her art in the national imaginary.

36. Toña “La Negra,” biography by *AllMusic*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/to%C3%B1a-la-negra-mn0000618935/biography>

37. Her professional name at the time was “La Negra Peregrino.” See Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 16–20.

38. In a 1934 interview, Toña La Negra mentions her success on Radio XEU in Veracruz before arriving in Mexico City in 1932, where she also performed on air, then, with her brother Manuel, sought out Agustín Lara, and fifteen days later was featured on the radio powerhouse XEW. Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 58; see also Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 21.

39. Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 92, 94; Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 35; Jiménez Portilla, “Toña La Negra ‘La Sensación Jarocha.’”

40. Armando Pous observes that Son Clave de Oro made its live performance debut in May 1934 at the Teatro Politeama in Mexico City and was made up entirely of cousins and brothers of Toña La Negra and her first husband, Guillermo Cházaro Ahumada. Later it would include her second husband, Víctor Ruiz Pazos and singers Chepilla, Mascovita y Cascarita. See Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 61.

41. Jiménez Portilla, director, “Toña La Negra ‘La Sensación Jarocha.’”

42. For discussion of Toña La Negra’s performance of *son* music see Arce, *México’s Nobodies*.

43. See Jiménez Portilla, “Toña La Negra ‘La Sensación Jarocha,’” and Pous, *Toña La Negra*.

44. Andrew Grant Wood, *Agustín Lara: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 101–102.

45. González, *Jarocho’s Soul*, 1.

46. Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas, *The Africanization of Mexico from the Sixteenth Century Onward* (Lewiston, ME: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 42.

47. Jorge A. Barrientos Silva is the director of the group Recuerdos del Son, which focuses on Afro-Caribbean musics. See Jorge Barrientos Silva, interviewed by Froylán López Narváez, Episode 349 in the *Mi otro yo* series, Radio Educación, Mexico City, February 27, 2006, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

48. Partial transcription of lyrics. Jorge A. Barrientos Silva and Recuerdos del Son, “Homenaje Peregrino,” digitized 33/13 RPM, Colección Dirección General de Culturas Populares e Indígenas, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

49. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 11–12.

50. Charles Ramírez Berg, introduction, *Cine Mexicano: Posters from the Golden Age, 1936–1956*, ed. Rogelio Agrasánchez Jr. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 18. Eugenia Meyer notes that in 1948 Mexican president Miguel Alemán Valdés tasked Mexican film producer Gregorio Walerstein with gathering information on the improvement of Mexican film distribution throughout Latin America, which included visits to Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Trinidad, Venezuela, and Panama. Eugenia Meyer, *Gregorio Walerstein: Hombre de cine* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica / Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2013), 61.

51. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*; Aparicio, “Edifying Rhythms, Feminizing Cultures”; Arce, “Between La Habana and Veracruz.”

52. González, *Jarocho’s Soul*, 9.

53. David F. García, “The Afro-Cuban Soundscape of Mexico City: Authenticating Spaces of Violence and Immorality in *Salón México* and *Víctimas del pecado*,” in *Screening Songs in Hispanic and Lusophone Cinema*, ed. Lisa Shaw and Rob Stone (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 169, 170, 172.

54. Perhaps further evidence of musical transculturation in Mexico is that Manuel Peregrino, Toña La Negra’s brother, known for a time as El Negro Peregrino professionally, was a member of the norteño conjunto Río Bravo when he died in July 1963. See Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 154.

55. For more on this see Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, vol. 1: *1902–1941, I, Too, Sing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 2, 45; Eartha Kitt, *Thursday’s Child* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1956), 85; Eartha Kitt, *Alone with Me* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1976), 117; Kevin A. Yelvington, “The Anthropology of Afro-Latin America and the Caribbean: Diasporic Dimensions,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 227–260; Richard Jackson, *Black Writers and Latin America: Cross-Cultural Affinities* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1998), 53–60.

56. Quoted in Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 66. Figueroa Hernández cites José Ramón Garmabella's biography of Pedro Vargas as the source.

57. See Héctor Madera Ferrón, "Homenaje a Toña La Negra," XEW/Televisa Radio, November 25, 1982, Fonoteca Nacional de México. Since Lara precedes Antonia Peregrino in death, this appears to be an earlier interview replayed on the occasion of the homage.

58. See Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 31–33. Wood's biography of Lara also recognizes Antonia's initiative in the meeting. See Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 81.

59. See Wood, *Agustín Lara*.

60. Wood notes that Lara began claiming a Veracruz origin after returning from a trip there in 1929, but he met Antonia Peregrino in Mexico City, when she visited him at home to launch their collaboration. See Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 40; also Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 28–33.

61. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 33; Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 81. A written collection of Lara's lyrics (below) attributes the lyric and music for "Lamento jarocho" and "Oración caribe" to his sister, María Teresa Lara

62. Julio del Razo notes that he migrated from Veracruz because of what he had heard about Son Marabú and Son Clave de Oro. See Pulido Llano, *Mulatas y negros cubanos*, 95.

63. María Teresa Lara, "Lamento jarocho," in *Agustín Lara: Cien años, cien canciones*, ed. Mario Arturo Ramos (Mexico City: Editorial Oceano, 2000), 62. English translation is mine.

64. Lara, "Lamento jarocho," 62. *Spotify* shows this version of "Lamento Jarocho" sung by Toña La Negra on the LP collections titled *Lo mejor de lo mejor*, *Inmortales de Toña La Negra*, *Noche Criolla*, *Toña La Negra: Imprescindibles*, and others, *Spotify*, accessed August 2021.

65. Agustín Lara, *Lo Mejor de Agustín Lara*, vinyl LP, released by RCA Victor in Venezuela in 1971 and in Mexico in 1978, accessed August 19, 2021, <https://www.discogs.com/Agustin-Lara-Lo-Mejor-De-Agustin-Lara/master/1319890>

66. María Teresa Lara, "Veracruz," in *Agustín Lara: Cien años, cien canciones*, ed. Mario Arturo Ramos (Mexico City: Editorial Oceano, 2000), 116.

67. My translation of "Mira, yo no hubiera podido escribir ninguna de sus canciones, per de lo que sí estoy segura es de que las he interpretado todas con el espíritu con que él las escribió para mí. Agustín fue el mayor compositor de México. ¿Por qué? Porque entre nosotros había una comunicación interior fabulosa." Quoted in Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 53.

68. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 103.

69. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 84.

70. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 80.

71. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 40–41.

72. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 20.

73. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 31, 14.

74. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 41, xvii, 160.

75. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 44. Tlacotalpan, Veracruz, was also the town where Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, who would later research Afro-Mexico, grew up. See Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*, 142.

76. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 44–45.

77. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 44.

78. Wood, *Agustín Lara*, 180–181. Whether a similar gift was made to Toña La Negra is not mentioned in any of the sources consulted for this study.

79. Toña La Negra, “Lara y yo/50. Mensaje de Agustín. Popurrí, et al. Toña (La Negra),” no date, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

80. Nonetheless, the English Wikipedia page on Agustín Lara does not even mention her among notable performers of Lara’s compositions. See “Agustín Lara,” Wikipedia, accessed July 29, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agustín_Lara

81. See Leopoldo Gaytán Apáez, “La negritud a través de sus canciones en el caribe hispanio 1950–2000” (MA thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, November 2008), 1. Gaytán Apáez includes one chapter that takes up several songs by Caribbean artists that he reads as oral histories in verse about the African diaspora experience.

82. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 73–77.

83. See Gaytán Apáez, “La negritud,” 57.

84. Consider Ashon Crawley’s work on how a new Black collectivity can be constituted through choreosonics. Ashon Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). “Choreosonics” is useful here especially since it is not period-specific and avoids the flattening of difference that some theories of global or transnational circulation tend toward. The objects and artists I examine here and in previous work articulate an awareness of specific differences in multiple ways, making us aware of the difference of subjects who occupy the same places, the difference of subjects from one place to those in another, rather than a new global, even as they engage each other as interlocutors within geographies of relation.

85. For more on how these social traditions form part of a Black radical tradition see Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

86. Multiple spellings of this deity’s name circulate in different parts of the world. I use the Spanish-inflected version. Solimar Otero and Toyin Falola state that “Yemoja is a deity known in Yoruba-based Afro-Atlantic religious cultures for her ability to dominate natural phenomena, especially aquatic zones of communication, trade, and transportation such as oceans, rivers, and lagoons. She is also associated with women, motherhood, family, and the arts.” See Solimar Otero and Toyin Falola, “Introduction,” in *Yemoja: Gender, Sexuality, and Creativity in the Latina/o and Afro-Atlantic Diasporas*, ed. Solimar Otero and Toyin Falola (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), xix.

87. María Teresa Lara, “Oración caribe,” in *Agustín Lara: Cien años, cien canciones*, 79. English translation is mine.

88. On *Spotify*, “Oración Negra” appears on *RCA 100 años de música: Toña La Negra* collection, while “Reina Africana” appears on the *Lo mejor de lo mejor* collection. Mexican singer Lydia Fernandez attributes “Reina Africana” to Eliseo Grenet in 1982 interview, though this doesn’t appear as a Grenet composition in other archival sources. See Héctor Madera Ferrón, “Homenaje a Toña La Negra,” XEW/Televisa Radio, November 25, 1982, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

89. Lorgia Garcia Peña notes the criminalization and suppression of “Afro-religious practices and practitioners” during US occupation of the Dominican Republic in the early twentieth century. See Lorgia Garcia Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 60.

90. See Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 139.

91. Nonetheless, the documentary also includes interviews and footage of “brujos” who participate in “black magic” in Catemaco in a location they have decorated with flaming pentagrams, recreations of temples, and altars. “Expediente Cuatro—Brujos de Catemaco,” *TVMÁS on You Tube*, Radiotelevisión de Veracruz, July 25, 2019, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkbEGMGLuA4>

92. Frances Aparicio discusses this song in the repertoire of Toña La Negra in *Listening to Salsa*, 175–176. This song appears on the album *Música de ayer*, published by RCA Camden in Mexico in 1959 and in 1961. See Toña La Negra, *Discogs*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.discogs.com/To%C3%B1a-La-Negra-M%C3%BAsica-de-Ayer/master/1627815>

93. See discussion of previous work on this text in the introduction.

94. “Solitude (1934),” accessed August 11, 2021, <https://www.jazzstandards.com/compositions-1/solitude.htm>

95. While *Spotify* attributes authorship of this song to Antonio Escudero Alonso, Armando Pous credits Miguel Pous as the writer and suggests an original publication date after 1958. See Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 141. Miguel Pous also discusses how Toña La Negra opened doors for him by performing two of his songs, “Somos Iguales,” and “En Mi Soledad” in a radio interview with Héctor Madera Ferrón on the occasion of a tribute to Toña La Negra. See Colección Radiópolis, “María Antonieta del Carmen Peregrino Álvarez (Toña La Negra) /8. Homenaje,” Fonoteca Nacional de México.

96. On *Spotify* this song appears on the albums *Cancionera nació* (2015), *Arráncame la vida* (remastered 2020), *La sensación jarocho* (remastered 2019) (though here perhaps mistakenly attributed to Trio Los Presidentes), and *Lo mejor de lo mejor* (1998) (also perhaps mistakenly attributed to Trio Los Presidentes).

On *Spotify*, a second, and different, song titled “En Mi Soledad” appears, but this appears to be a composition credited to Trio Los Presidentes that also appears on the albums *Caleidoscopio musical* (2012) and *La voz* (Remastered 2014) on *Spotify*. This second song credited to Trio Los Presidentes has nothing in common with Billie Holiday’s “In My Solitude.”

According to *Discogs*, a “En Mi Soledad” is also on the A-side of the album titled *Toña La Negra—siguen los exitos de Toña La Negra*, published by RCA International in Peru (LPPS-157) date unknown; on *Caleidoscopio musical con Toña La Negra*, published by RCA Victor in Mexico in 1958, but also published in the Dominican Republic, the United States, Colombia, and Venezuela; on the 1961 album *La Sensación Jarocha, Volume III*, published by Arcano Records in the United States with other releases, dates unknown by RCA Victor, RCA Victor Mexicana, and RCA Camden in Venezuela, Mexico, and the United States (this same album was released in Ecuador in 1979). However, it is not known which song of the two with same title these represent (one attributed to Trio Los Presidentes, the other to Antonio Escudero Alonso or Miguel Pous). This publishing record, nonetheless, gives a sense of the hemispheric reach of Toña La Negra’s art. See Toña La Negra. *Discogs*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.discogs.com/To%C3%B1a-La-Negra-La-Sensaci%C3%B3n-Jarocha-Vol-III/master/1060641>

97. Farah Jasmine Griffin, *If You Can’t Be Free, Be a Mystery* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

98. Jessica McKee and Michael V. Perez, “Introduction,” in *Billie Holiday: Essays on the Artistry and Legacy*, ed. Perez and McKee (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019), 3.

99. Michael V. Perez, “In Stereotragic Hi-Fidelity: Performing Billie Holiday,” in *Billie Holiday: Essays on the Artistry and Legacy*, ed. Michael V. Perez and Jessica McKee (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019), 25.

100. Griffin, *If You Can’t Be Free*, 136. Aparicio suggests that critical listeners must also consider the different gendered meanings that emerge when Toña La Negra’s changes a song’s address to a male lover versus a female lover. Frances Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa*, 138–139, 152–153.

101. Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, 64–65.

102. Rafael de Paz, who wrote “Con el Alma en los Labios” and arranged “Oración Negro,” tells us that despite Lara’s musical scores, “ella le daba la vuelta a una frase y cambiaba, o se atrasaban o se adelantaba pero hacia su cosa de alla con un gusto, con una especie de creatividad que era de maravilla. Y resulta que Toña hacia de cada melodía una creatividad especial de ella.” See Héctor Madera Ferrón, *Homenaje a Toña La Negra*, 1982, *Televisa Radio*, Fonoteca Nacional de México. Musician and composer Chucho Rodríguez, who began working with Toña La Negra in 1942 as part of Son Clave de Oro, echoes this when he describes how difficult it was to accompany her because of her play with pace and scale, saying: “Ella robatiaba la música.” Interviewer Héctor Madera Ferrón notes that Tarraza, Arevalo, and Rodríguez were her best accompanists. See Héctor Madera Ferrón, “Especial TLN / 81.2 Entrevista a Marilú y Chucho Rodríguez,” Fonoteca Nacional de México.

103. Precious Fondren, “The Harlem Hellfighters Were War Heroes. They Came Home to Racism,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2021.

104. See page on Rafael Hernández Marín on Wikipedia, accessed August 3, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael_Hern%C3%A1ndez_Mar%C3%ADn

105. Marc Anthony's version adds a final declaration of solidarity in verses declaring that "yo soy hijo del Borinquen y eso nadie va cambiar" and "hasta el día en que yo muero . . . yo te adoro Puerto Rico y eso nadie me va quitar."

106. Toña La Negra, *Discogs*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.discogs.com/To%C3%B1a-La-Negra-Interpreta-A-Rafael-Hernandez-y-Pedro-Flores/master/1068704>

107. Toña La Negra, *Discogs*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1235431-To%C3%B1a-La-Negra?page=1>

108. Since this latter version is only one minute and seventeen seconds long, while the version published in 1964 is two minutes and forty-three seconds long, it appears that Toña La Negra did perform and record the song in its entirety, though not on all albums. This information is from recordings available on *Spotify*, which provides no original publication date.

109. *Discogs* lists this an album re-released in 2004 in Europe. See <https://www.discogs.com/To%C3%B1a-La-Negra-Con-El-Acompa%C3%B1amiento-Del-Conjunto-De-Pablo-Peregrino-Lamento-Cubano-/release/8522324>, accessed August 3, 2021. It also shows a Mexican release of 45 RPM seven-inch vinyl record; see <https://www.discogs.com/To%C3%B1a-La-Negra-Y-Conjunto-De-Pablo-Peregrino-Lamento-Cubano-Alla-Va-/release/11919983>, accessed August 3, 2021.

110. For more on citational practices of gender see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

111. As Cohen notes, "By the 1920s, liberal theories about racial disappearance had defined blackness negatively as foreign, regional, dangerous, and invisible" (*Finding Afro-Mexico*, 55). This context heightens the significance of Toña La Negra's appearances in film.

112. See Margaret J. Bailey, *Those Glorious Glamour Years: Classic Hollywood Costume Design of the 1930s* (London: Columbus Books, 1982). Hazel Carby says that for women blues singers "physical presence was a crucial aspect of their power . . . all the sumptuous and desirable aspects of their body reclaimed female sexuality from being an objectification of male desire to a representation of female desire." Quoted in Kimberly Mack, *Fictional Blues: Narrative Self-Invention from Bessie Smith to Jack White* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), 78.

113. She also dances briefly in *Amor vendido*, which is notable for its rarity. If she wears a sleeveless gown on film, it is usually paired with a sheer shawl/scarf, as in *La noche es nuestra* (1951). See Figueroa Hernández, *Toña La Negra*, unpaginated photos. An archival photo shows her in a strapless gown in performance, and a newspaper story about her features a photo of her breastfeeding. See Jiménez Portilla, "Toña La Negra 'La Sensación Jarocha.'"

114. González observes in her discussion of *jaroch*o dance that "rural performance styles tend to accentuate African characteristics, while urban and staged versions adopt the more upright posture and articulated hand/skirt movements of Spanish social dance forms," a pattern that suggests a performative adaptation to the prevailing norms of distinct locations. See González, *Jaroch*o's Soul, 59.

115. Blues singer Mamie Smith, who began recording in the 1920s, discusses the importance of dress in one interview, stating, “I feel that my audiences want to see me becomingly gowned.” Quoted in Mack, *Fictional Blues*, 62.

116. Mack, *Fictional Blues*, 63.

117. Maricruz Castro Ricalde, “Rumberas, pero decentes: Intérpretes cubanas en el cine mexicano de la edad dorada,” *Hispanic Research Journal* 21, no. 1 (2020): 74.

118. Castro Ricalde, “Rumberas, pero decentes,” 74.

119. See Bailey, *Those Glorious Glamour Years*, 18–52.

120. One wonders how racism and sexism impacted perceptions of her since some sources describe Toña La Negra as demanding or temperamental, while others describe her as dedicated, frank, spontaneous, and rigorous. Pous notes that Toña La Negra’s attempt to tour on her own in 1933 without Lara’s management, led to a falling-out between the two, though she remained professionally cordial and respectful of his work throughout her life. Pous also notes a later episode, in 1970, when Toña La Negra left a show over unequal treatment when the management refused to give her a dressing room equal to the size and quality of the dressing room given to Pedro Vargas. See Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 55, 166.

121. See Pablo Pérez Rubio, *El cine melodramático* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2004), 40.

122. Several versions of the legend are easily found online, including a 2020 animated short by the Compañía Nacional de Teatro produced by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, “La leyenda de la mulata de Córdoba,” accessed August 12, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9ps4OKL2n8>. An opera version of the legend debuted at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City in 1948, further underscoring Veracruz as an important part of Mexico. See “La mulata de Córdoba,” accessed August 12, 2022, https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_mulata_de_C%C3%B3rdoba

123. Laboriel, born in Honduras, enjoyed a significant acting career in Mexican cinema, appearing in several films between 1948 and 1970.

124. Raúl Cervantes Ayala and Héctor González, “Toña La Negra,” “*Inmortales XEW*,” Televisa Radio/XEW, November 8, 1988, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

125. “Nueva grandeza Mexicana,” Museo de la Ciudad de México, September 7, 1967, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

126. Other selections include songs by the Beatles, a Celia Cruz song by Sonora Matancera, Leadbelly, Credence Clearwater Revival, Ravel, Pedro Flores, Rigo Tovar, and Albita Rodríguez.

127. Armando Ramirez interviewed by Laura Barrera, “El soundtrack de una vida,” Instituto Mexicano de la Radio, March 7, 2008, Fonoteca Nacional de México.

128. For more on contemporary Afro-mestizx peoples see Oswaldo Gutiérrez Bayardi, director, *De raíces a ramas* (Universidad de las Américas Puebla: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 2001).

Chapter 2

1. Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2003).
2. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 86.
3. Bobby Vaughn, “My Blackness and Theirs: Viewing Mexican Blackness Up Close,” in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, ed. Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 209–219.
4. José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 [1925]).
5. Agustín Basave Benítez, *México mestizo: Análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992).
6. Cesáreo Moreno, “An Historical Survey: Afro-Mexican Depictions and Identity in the Visual Arts,” in *The African Presence in México* (Chicago: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 2006), 78.
7. Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 135.
8. Moreno, “An Historical Survey,” 78.
9. Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 142–143.
10. John R. Chávez says: “The use of the term ‘Chicano,’ derived from *mexicano* and formerly used disparagingly in referring to lower-class Mexican-Americans, signified a renewed pride in the Indian and mestizo poor who had built so much of the Southwest during the Spanish and Anglo colonizations.” See John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 130; see also Ernesto Chávez, “¡Mi Raza Primero!” (*My People First!*): *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966–1978* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 8.
Neil Foley notes that at mid-twentieth century, “Mexican identity, like whiteness itself, fissured along lines of class, nationality, language, culture. Few of their immigrant parents identified themselves as whites; they were always mexicanos. Many middle-class Texas Mexicans, however, were moving out of the ethnoracial borderlands between blackness and whiteness by constructing identities as Americans and embracing whiteness.” See Foley, *The White Scourge*, 211.
11. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 82.
12. José Aranda emphasizes the expansive and paradigm-shifting nature of Anzaldúa’s theorizing and its impact on moving the field and expanding its possibilities for thinking biculturally beyond the nation. See José F. Aranda Jr., *When We Arrive: A New Literary History of Mexican America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 33, 34–35.
13. An earlier version of portions of this first part of the chapter were published in my essay “Enacting Decoloniality,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 203–215.

14. Quoted in Randy J. Ontiveros, *In the Spirit of a New People: The Cultural Politics of the Chicano Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 24.

15. “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” in *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, ed. Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomelí (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998 [1989]), 1.

16. José Aranda reminds us, as well, of the dangers of assuming that “Chicano” or, in contemporary terms, “Chicanx” signals a homogenously unified populace not subject to racial, political, economic, and gendered divisions. Aranda, *When We Arrive*, 5.

17. Hong and Ferguson, “Introduction,” 6, 2.

18. “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” 1.

19. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 26. For more on how eugenics and “race science” advanced race-based hierarchies in both scientific and public health discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); and Miroslava Chávez-García, *States of Delinquency: Race and Science in the Making of California's Juvenile Justice System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). As Cedric J. Robinson notes, “Contrary to broadly received opinion, scientific thought is not transcendent; it exists within historical and cultural matrices.” See Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 54.

20. The 1960s and 1970s relationships between Chicano and African American and Indigenous movements for civil rights as well as the era’s consciousness, or lack of consciousness, of racial multiplicity among Chicanos has been taken up by numerous scholars of the movement, revealing events and experiences of coalition-building between groups, tensions between groups over resources or political representation, as well as racist tensions. See, for example, Lauren Ariza’s *To March for Others: The Black Freedom Struggle and the United Farm Workers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Max Krochmal and J. Todd Moye, ed., *Civil Rights in Black and Brown: Histories of Resistance and Struggle in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021); or Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 40th Anniversary Edition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021).

21. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 25.

22. Didier T. Jaén, “Introduction,” in Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, xvi–xvii.

23. Jaén, “Introduction,” xiii, xix, xxiv, xvi, xxix.

24. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 37.

25. Joseba Gabilondo, “Afterword to the 1997 Edition,” in Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 100; Maya Socolovsky also discusses how Anzaldúa “adapts” and “refigures” Vasconcelos’s ideas. See Maya Socolovsky, *Troubling Nationhood in U.S. Latina Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 66.

26. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 5, 13.

27. See Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 28.
28. On rape in conquest see Matthew Restall, “‘He Wished It in Vain’: Subordination and Resistance among Maya Women in Post-conquest Yucatan,” *Ethnohistory*, 42, no. 4, “Women, Power, and Resistance in Colonial Mesoamerica” (Autumn 1995): 577–594. On illegitimacy see Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 18.
29. Ben Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Cambridge, 2018), 12–13.
30. Vinson, *Before Mestizaje*, 13, 15.
31. Vinson, *Before Mestizaje*, 85, 92, 172–173.
32. Vinson, *Before Mestizaje*, 102, 131.
33. Basave Benítez says: “La intelectualidad criolla no tenía más remedio que valerse del indígena para legitimarse en su pugna contra Europa, por otro le parecía imposible considerer a semejante espécimen su compatriota” (*México mestizo*, 19). See also Carlos López Beltrán, Vivette García Deister, and Mariana Rios Sandoval, “Negotiating the Mexican Mestizo: On the Possibility of a National Genomics,” in *Mestizo Genomics: Race Mixture, Nation, and Science in Latin America*, ed. Peter Wade, Carlos López Beltrán, Eduardo Restrepo, and Ricardo Ventura Santos (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 87–88.
34. Vinson, *Before Mestizaje*, 91.
35. Vinson, *Before Mestizaje*, 91, 34, 37, 62, 87.
36. Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 72–77.
37. Winthrop R. Wright, *Café con Leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).
38. Charles Ramírez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).
39. Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 3rd ed. (New York: Continuum, 1994 [1973]), 9, 62.
40. “South Carolina legislators passed the colony’s first slave law, ‘An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves,’ in 1690, stipulating first and foremost that ‘in his Majesty’s plantations in America, slavery has been introduced and allowed, and the people commonly called negroes, Indians, mulattoes and mustizoes, have been deemed absolute slaves.’” See Tiya Miles, *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley’s Sack, a Black Family Keepsake* (New York: Random House, 2021), 133.
41. Bárbara C. Cruz and Michael J. Berson, “The American Melting Pot? Miscegenation Laws in the United States,” *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 4 (2001): 80, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163474>
42. Robinson, *Forgeries*, 46–47, 49, 52.
43. Robinson, *Forgeries*, 53.
44. Raymund A. Paredes, “The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States,” in *New Directions in Chicano Scholarship*, ed. Ricardo Romo and Raymund Paredes (Santa Barbara: Center for Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1984), 139–165.
45. Foley, *The White Scourge*, xiv.

46. Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 215, 220–221.

47. Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race*, 217.

48. Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race*, 221, 229–231. Lux and Vigil, in earlier work, also note the racial differentiation among “castizos” or “criollos” on the one hand and “mestizos” and “indios” on the other hand in colonial and newly independent Mexico. See Guillermo Lux and Maurilio E. Vigil, “Return to Aztlan: The Chicano Rediscovered His Indian Past,” in *The Chicanos: As We See Ourselves* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), 1–17.

49. Foley, *The White Scourge*, 41–42.

50. Chávez-García, *States of Delinquency*, 65–66; Laura E. Gómez, *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism* (New York: New Press, 2020), 151; Carlos Sandoval and Peter Miller, director, *A Class Apart* (2009).

51. George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 191.

52. Chávez-García, *States of Delinquency*, 66–67. Chávez-García also notes the correlation between these views of Mexican-origin people and restrictive immigration changes in the same era.

53. See Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 35–36.

54. The collection they edit reveals an array of readings on Latin American and US contexts for reading mestizaje, some of which work to uncover how white supremacy continues under the guise of mestizaje discourses in Latin American texts, while others examine the disruption mestizaje poses to white supremacy. See Monika Kaup and Debra J. Rosenthal, “Introduction,” in *Mixing Race, Mixing Culture: Inter-American Literary Dialogues*, ed. Kaup and Rosenthal (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), xxv.

55. Robert E. Park, “Human Migration and the Marginal Man,” *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928): 893, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2765982>

56. Rafael Pérez-Torres, “Alternate Geographies and the Melancholy of Mestizaje,” in Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 320.

57. These cross-cultural solidarities continue beyond the movement in many ways. For example, see Sylvia Wynter, *Do Not Call Us Negroes: How “Multicultural” Textbooks Perpetuate Racism* (San Francisco: Aspire San Francisco, 1990), 44.

58. For more on critiques of patriarchal nationalism in Chicano Movement see Alma M. García, *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Ontiveros, *In the Spirit*.

59. Theresa Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

60. Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999), 108.

61. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 2nd ed., 109.

62. In studying the figure of the China Poblana, Martha Chew Sánchez suggests that “Mexican national identity has been forged on an abstract mestizaje that is defined by whiteness—that is, by the Spanish blood that Mexicans have. Chinese and other groups from Asia have been defined as permanently foreign and therefore racially ineligible to be a part of Mexican history and Mexican identity.” See Martha Chew Sánchez, “Deconstructing the Rhetoric of Mestizaje through the Chinese Presence in Mexico,” in *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, ed. Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 234–235.

63. Lee Bebout, *Mythohistorical Interventions: The Chicano Movement and Its Legacies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 166.

64. Aranda, *When We Arrive*, 33.

65. Mario Obando observes that research on interracial solidarity is also important in discussions of anti-Blackness, and argues that not engaging in “the messy work of the ways Black, Latinx, Chicanx, American Indians and Asian Americans are and have worked to generate dialogue and activist practice together” runs the risk of “eras[ing] critical histories, practices and theorizations that could otherwise spark capacious interracial solidarities.” See Mario Obando, “Centering Interracial Solidarity,” *Latinx Talk*, September 1, 2021, accessed June 18, 2023, <https://latinxtalk.org/2021/09/01/centering-interracial-solidarity/>

66. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 2nd ed., 99.

67. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 80; Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 23–27.

68. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 1st ed., 82.

69. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 2nd ed., 101.

70. Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 269.

71. Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006), 22; Alicia Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 8; Alicia Arrizón, “Mestizaje,” in *Keywords for Latina/o Studies*, ed. Deborah R. Vargas, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 135.

72. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 35, 27.

73. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 42, 48–49.

74. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 49.

75. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 3.

76. Anzaldúa, “Geographies of the Self—Re-imagining Identity: Nos/otras (Us/Other) and the New Tribalism,” in *Mapping Latina/o Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Angharad N. Valdivia and Matt Garcia (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 44.

77. Anzaldúa, “Geographies of the Self,” 50, 49, 46.

78. Gloria E. Anzaldúa, “Now Let Us Shift . . . the Path of Conocimiento . . . Inner Work, Public Acts,” in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transfor-*

mation, ed. Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2002), 540–578.

79. See Delgado, *Spiritual Mestizaje*.

80. Arrizón makes plain the applicability of transculturation to Chicano cultures.

81. Myriam Gurba, “Falling in Interracial Love Won’t Destroy White Supremacy,” *Luz Collective*, April 22, 2021, 1–17, accessed April 23, 2021, https://luzcollective.com/falling-in-interracial-love-wont-destroy-white-supremacy/?fbclid=IwAR1yHbqEntX3MpHHuS9PuUx2Q-UZ4o5MYZI8Qf_oB4xM8cooliaPVoiFE0c

82. Cruz and Berson, “The American Melting Pot.”

83. Cruz and Berson, “The American Melting Pot,” 82.

84. Lourdes Alberto, “Coming Out as Indian: On Being an Indigenous Latina in the US,” *Latino Studies* 15, no. 2 (July 2017): 249.

85. Luz María Martínez Montiel, “Afroamérica: La tercera raíz,” in *Festival Oaxaca Negra*, ed. Lucía Mercedes Pérez Rojas, and Nemesio J. Rodríguez Mitchell (Ciudad Universitaria, Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades, 2015), 19–27.

86. Ricardo F. Vivanco-Pérez, *Radical Chicana Poetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 155–156.

87. Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006), 48, 45.

88. For more on a shift away from considerations of “strands” in national origins or ancestry and turn toward research that focuses on creating new ways of appraising ongoing collective cultural diversity while also examining the problems of discrimination and racism present in Latin American countries in order to reveal these and work to eradicate them, see Elisabeth Cunin, Odile Hoffmann, Juan Manuel de la Serna, and María Elisa Velázquez, “Prólogo,” in *Debates históricos contemporáneos: Africanos y afrodescendientes en México y Centroamérica*, ed. María Elisa Velázquez (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2011), 10.

89. Ramón Saldívar suggests that a “dialectics of difference” captures “subjectivity in process attempting to resist the absolutizing tendencies of a racist, classist, patriarchal bourgeois world that founds itself on the notion of a fixed and positive identity and on specified gender roles based on this positive fixation.” See Ramón Saldívar, *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 175. José David Saldívar suggests that a dialectical approach to difference in the Americas “questions as much as it acknowledges the Other” and that “by mapping out the common situation shared by different cultures, it allows their differences to be measured against each other as well as against the (North) American grain.” See *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 4.

90. Another paradigm for reading ongoing links among Mexicans on both sides of the border is “Greater Mexico.” See José E. Limón, *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States and the Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1998).

91. Adriana Estill, “Mexican Chicago in Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo*: Gendered Geographies,” *MELUS: The Society for the Study of Multi-ethnic Literature of the United States* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 101.

92. Tereza M. Szeghi, “Weaving Transnational Cultural Identity through Travel and Diaspora in Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo*,” *MELUS: The Society for the Study of Multi-ethnic Literature of the United States* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 162, 165.

93. Szeghi, “Weaving Transnational Cultural Identity,” 167, 171. The continuous negotiation of multiple cultures that the Reyes family experiences on both sides of the US-Mexico border are indicative, for Szeghi, of diaspora identities (166), yet I depart from Szeghi’s use of diaspora to define Chicana and Mexican cultures in flux or the mobility of Chicana and Mexican persons and reserve this term to describe the unique status of Black mobilities and immobilities in the Americas.

94. Ontiveros, *In the Spirit*, 170–196.

95. Olga L. Herrera, “Finding Mexican Chicago on Mango Street: A Transnational Production of Space and Place in Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*,” in *Bridges, Borders, and Breaks*, ed. William Orchard and Yolanda Padilla (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 104.

96. Herrera, “Finding Mexican Chicago,” 106.

97. Herrera, “Finding Mexican Chicago,” 119.

98. Cultural identity is “constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth.” See Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 237.

99. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 234.

100. Diana Taylor suggests that “cultural memory is, among other things, a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection.” See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 82.

101. Appadurai tells us that “imagined worlds” are “multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe.” See Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 31.

102. Socolovsky, *Troubling Nationhood*, 78, 66, 80. Socolovsky perhaps leans too much in the direction of installing the mestiza as a new universal subject.

103. Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2003), 77.

104. Vivancos-Pérez, *Radical Chicana Poetics*, 140.

105. Vivancos-Pérez, *Radical Chicana Poetics*, 148, 149.

106. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 34.

107. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 140, 141.

108. Michael Innis-Jimenez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Migration to South Chicago, 1915–1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 61, 67, 70 (for Mexican and African Americans residing in same neighborhoods), 59 and 70 (for discussion of racialization of Mexicans in Chicago relative to Blacks); Lilia Fernandez,

Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 104, 132, 136, 182 (on interracial cooperation between Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and African Americans).

109. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 140.
110. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 141–142.
111. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 141.
112. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 156.
113. Bill Johnson González, “The Politics of Translation in Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo*,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2006): 13–14.
114. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 85.
115. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 89.
116. See Chege Githiora, *Afro-Mexicans: Discourse of Race and Identity in the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), 118, 8. Some Mexicans use the term *moreno* to describe their own mixed Indian and Black heritage. See Laura A. Lewis, “‘Afro’ Mexico in Black, White, and Indian: An Anthropologist Reflects on Fieldwork,” in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, ed. Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 187–188.
117. For example, see Tenoch Huerta’s *Orgullo Prieto* (Mexico City: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, 2023).
118. Estill, “Mexican Chicago,” 107.
119. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 302–303.
120. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 28–29.
121. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 258.
122. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 64.
123. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 36.
124. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 65–66.
125. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 245.
126. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 282–283.
127. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 284.
128. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 288.
129. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 199.
130. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 112.
131. See Charles H. Rowell’s “Blacks in Mexico: A Selective Bibliography,” *Calaloo* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 503–504. Earlier Mexican scholarship includes Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra en México* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984 [1946]), and more recent work includes Luz María Martínez Montiel, *La cultura Africana, la tercera raíz, simbiosis de cultura* (Mexico City: Editorial Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993).
132. Githiora, *Afro-Mexicans*, 41.
133. See J. Jesús María Serna and Fernando Cruz, eds., *Afroindoamérica: Resistencia, visibilidad y respeto a la diferencia* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina e el Caribe, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,

2014); Nemesio J. Rodríguez Mitchell and Lucia Mercedes Pérez Rojas, eds., *Festival Oaxaca Negra* (Mexico City: UNAM Programa Universitario de Estudios de la Diversidad Cultural y la Interculturalidad, 2015); Githiora, *Afro-Mexicans*; Luz María Espinosa Cortés and Juan Manuel de la Serna Herrera, eds., *Raíces y actualidad de la afrodescendencia en Guerrero y Oaxaca* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Médicas y Nutrición Salvador Zubirán and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2012); Rodolfo Muzquiz, *Bailes y danzas tradicionales* (Mexico City: IMSS, Coordinación de Promoción Cultural, 1988); Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall, eds., *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México: Studio etnohistórico* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984); Sandra Harvey, “Unsettling Diasporas: Blackness and the Specter of Indigeneity,” *Postmodern Culture* 31, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2020.0026>

134. Luz María Martínez Montiel, “Oaxaca Negra: Afroamérica. La tercera raíz,” in *Festival Oaxaca Negra*, ed. Nemesio J. Rodríguez Mitchell and Lucia Mercedes Pérez Rojas (Mexico City: UNAM Programa Universitario de Estudios de la Diversidad Cultural y la Interculturalidad, 2015), 20.

135. This is also the skin color used to describe the children of Indigenous and African parents in Gayl Jones’s novel *Palmares* (Boston: Beacon, 2021).

136. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 73.

137. For more on racist standards of beauty see Mónica G. Moreno Figueroa, “Displaced Looks: The Lived Experience of Beauty and Racism,” *Feminist Theory* 14, no. 2 (2013): 137–151.

138. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 74.

139. Sánchez refutes Aguirre Beltrán’s view of Black Mexicans in Guerrero as aggressive by reading “cimarrones belligerantes” as referring to Black workers opposed to monarchical rule and paving the way for bourgeois individualism and new notions of freedom in this hemisphere, citing the 2007 work by Adano Bernasconi on the Black shipbuilders brought to the coast by Cortés in the early sixteenth century. José Arturo Motta Sánchez, “Algunas noticias históricas relativas al poblamiento afroide del litoral del Mar del Sur y el académico fenómeno del cimarronaje en la Costa Chica,” in Espinosa Cortés and de la Serna, *Raíces y actualidad*, 117. Sandra Harvey discusses the significance of enduring local narratives of Afro-Mexican origin in the Costa Chica in a shipwreck created by captives in mutiny and their “multirootedness” as diaspora subjects and Black-Indigenous “intra-relation.” See Harvey, “Unsettling Diasporas.”

140. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 239.

141. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 239.

142. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 305, 306.

143. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 146.

144. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 211.

145. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 425.

146. Patricia Penn-Hilden, “How the Border Lies: Some Historical Reflections,” in *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century*, ed. Arturo J. Aldama and Naomi H. Quiñonez (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 152–176.

147. For more on these see Espinosa Cortés and de la Serna Herrera, *Raíces y actualidad*.

148. For example, Arturo García Hernández’s biography of her, *No Han Matado a Tongolele*, appeared in 1998, with a prologue by Carlos Monsiváis that suggests that Tongolele is representative of a new sexual freedom and suggests that the appreciation for exotic dance is an antirepressive challenge to reigning moral orthodoxies, though whether gender orthodoxies or racial orthodoxies are challenged is not addressed.

149. Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 226–227.

150. For more on Spanish-language movie houses in the U.S. in the early and mid-twentieth century, see: Rogelio Agrasánchez, Jr., *Mexican Movies in the United States: A History of the Films, Theaters, and Audiences 1920–1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2006); Rogelio Agrasánchez, Jr., “Memories of Spanish-language Movie Theaters,” Edinburg, TX: Agrasánchez Film Archive, 2008. <https://www.mexfilmarchive.com/documents/71.html>

151. Pous, *Toña La Negra*, 156–157.

Chapter 3

1. Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets* (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1997 [1967]), 235. Part of this chapter previously in *Theories of the Flesh*.

2. Sánchez González, *Boricua Literature*, 111.

3. Eleuterio Santiago-Díaz and Ilia Rodríguez, “Writing Race against Literary Whiteness: The Afro-Puerto Rican Outcry of Piri Thomas,” *Bilingual Review / La revista bilingüe* 31, no. 1 (January–April 2012–2013): 13.

4. Arlene Torres, “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña ‘Ej Prieta de Beldá,’” in *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations*, vol. 2, ed. Norman E. Whitten and Arlene Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 285–306. Torres suggests that despite discourses that thwarted “attempts toward the development of black consciousness,” Black Puerto Ricans “were actively involved in political struggles to assess and define the extent to which they were truly part of the Puerto Rican nation” (295).

5. Felicia Blake echoes Sanchez Gonzales’s contextualization of the narrative as reflective of “emerging oppositional consciousness” among Puerto Ricans who sought to counter anti-Blackness among Puerto Ricans. See Felice Blake, “What Does It Mean To Be Black? Gendered Redefinitions of Interethnic Solidarity in Piri Thomas’s *Down These Mean Streets*,” *African American Review* 51, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 98. For further on gender and sexuality in Piri Thomas’s memoir see Sánchez González, *Boricua Literature*; Sánchez, *Shakin’ Up Race*. For further on homophobia in Thomas’s narrative see Michael Hames-García’s chapter “Resistant Freedom: Piri Thomas and Miguel Piñero,” in *Fugitive Thought: Prison Move-*

ments, Race, and the Meaning of Justice (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

6. Santiago-Díaz and Rodríguez offer another reading of this text as a “border” text that is excluded from both the North American literary canon and the Puerto Rican canon due to its employment of vernacular languages and dialects as well as English publication. See Santiago-Díaz and Rodríguez, “Writing Race—Against Literary Whiteness,” 23.

7. Since Thomas later reveals that his father was actually Afro-Cuban, his narrative elides Afro-Cubanidad. See López, *Unbecoming Blackness*, 142–147.

8. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, “The African Presence in Caribbean Literature,” in *Africa in Latin America: Essays on History, Culture, and Socialization*, ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, trans. Leonor Blum (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984), 103–144.

9. Considering the question of gender, I note that Kardecist Spiritism, like another diaspora-informed worldview, Candomblé, has been recognized by scholars as “more generally tolerant than the Roman Catholic church” of homosexuality. Matory credits Brazilian scholar Délcido Monteiro de Lima’s *Os homoeróticos* (1983) with this observation. See J. Lorand Matory, “Gendered Agendas: The Secrets Scholars Keep about Yorùbá-Atlantic Religion,” in *Dialogues of Dispersal: Gender, Sexuality and African Diasporas* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 22.

10. Judith Bettelheim, “Caribbean Espiritismo (Spiritist) Altars: The Indian and the Congo,” *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 2 (June 2005): 312–330.

11. Anthony B. Pinn, “Orisha Worship in the United States,” in *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, ed. Larry G. Murphy (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 246, 250.

12. For further on intersectionality see Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: Norton, 1995), 357–383; and Brittney Cooper, “Intersectionality,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2016), 385–406. For further on “multiplicitous selves” see Mariana Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).

13. Vega presents the unlikely 1950s with its fusion of sacred and secular music and emerging civil rights movements as another factor in the development of feminist consciousness for Afro-Latinas, tracing alternative genealogies for Latinx feminisms. For further on this see Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), and Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Gender and Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 2.

14. Matory, “Gendered Agendas,” 24–28; see also Roberto Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

15. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 21, 124.

16. Marta Moreno Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 268.

17. For example, together with Wande Abimbola, in 1983 Vega organized the first World Conference of Orisha Tradition and Culture in Nigeria. See Matory, “Gendered Agendas,” 35.

18. Marta Moreno Vega, “The Yoruba Orisha Tradition Comes to New York City,” in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, ed. Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 245.

19. Pedro Pietri, “Puerto Rican Obituary,” in *The Prentice Hall Anthology of Latino Literature*, ed. Eduardo R. del Rio (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 444–451.

20. Miranda González, director, *Brujaja*, performance screened October 23, 2021, at Urban Theater Company / Puerto Rican National Museum, Chicago. Written by Melissa DuPrey.

21. Bhabha’s insight on minority discourse is useful here: “Minority discourse sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic in-between of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy. It contests genealogies of ‘origin’ that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority. Minority discourse acknowledges the status of national culture—and the people—as a contentious, performative space.” See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 157.

22. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 2.

23. Scholars Charles Keil and William C. Banfield, among others, have analyzed the dynamic relationship between so-called separate spheres of the “secular” and “sacred” in black music. Keil eschews rigid distinctions between sacred and secular in Black music in order to recognize the dialectical relationship between these spheres in Black music. Charles Keil, *Urban Blues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 [1966]), 32–41. Banfield suggests that “spiritual-based music” is foundational to all forms of black music formed in the diaspora and communicates distinctive views about being the world, while also observing that soul music is a “secular version of spirit-filled, depth-delivered, purposeful church singing.” William C. Banfield, *Cultural Codes: Makings of a Black Music Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 7–9, 157.

24. Anthony B. Pinn echoes Vega’s observation in dating the emergence of Santería in New York to 1946, adding that musicians played a key role in these communities. Pinn cites Joseph Murphy’s work on this as well. See Pinn, “Orisha Worship,” 246.

25. Vega, “The Yoruba Orisha Tradition Comes to New York City,” 246.

26. Vega, “The Yoruba Orisha Tradition Comes to New York City,” 246.

27. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 115–116.

28. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 242–243.

29. Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora,” 5.

30. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 153.

31. See, for example, Fernandez, *Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Lazz*; Glasser, *My Music is My Flag*; and the PBS documentary series *Latin Music USA*.

32. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 128.

33. For further on the significance of music in creating Black identities and diaspora communities see Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 73–81, 124, 203; Gaytán Apáez, “La negritud a través de sus canciones en el caribe hispano 1950–2000,” 16, 30.

34. Juanita Heredia, *Transnational Latina Narratives in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 68.

35. For further on questions of gender and leadership in Yoruban religious communities and their diasporic counterparts, see J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

36. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 259.

37. Ysamur Flores-Peña, “Candles, Flowers, and Perfume: Puerto Rican Spiritism on the Move,” in *Botánica Los Angeles: Latino Popular Religious Art in the City of Angels*, ed. Patrick Arthur Polk (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2004), 88–97.

38. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 194.

39. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 193.

40. The more holistic spirituality of African-descended religious views, as Luis Barrios suggests, may be the reason why many Afro-Latinas/os who maintain these practices may also be involved in Pentecostalism (252–253). He asserts that “divine possession or the trance state (*montarse*), where there is a combination of emotional and bodily experience and expression, is among the strongest pillars of both Pentecostal and African-based religious practices” (258). Furthermore, he argues that possession/*montarse* counteracts racism: “This body full of joy and sadness, of acceptance and rejection, this body colored black that society rejects because of racism, is accepted by a divinity that enters into the body and reaffirms it as its son or daughter” (258). See Luis Barrios, “Reflections and Lived Experiences of Afro-Latin@ Religiosity,” in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, ed. Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

41. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 54.

42. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 94–95.

43. Telia U. Anderson, “‘Calling on the Spirit’: The Performativity of Black Women’s Faith in the Baptist Church Spiritual Traditions and Its Radical Possibilities for Resistance,” in *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader*, ed. Harry J. Elam Jr. and David Krasner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 127.

44. André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15.

45. Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, 15, cites C. Nadia Seremetakis, “The Memory of the Senses, Part I: Marks of the Transitory,” in *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, ed. Seremetakis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 12.

46. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 153–154.

47. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 154.
48. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 158.
49. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 159.
50. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 162.
51. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 191.
52. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 154.
53. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 197.
54. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 82.
55. Following Grosz, “The subject is marked as a series of (potential) messages or inscriptions from or of the social (Other). Its flesh is transformed into a body organized, and hierarchized according to the requirements of a particular social and familial nexus. The body becomes a ‘text’ and is fictionalized and positioned within myths and belief systems that form a culture’s social narratives and self-representations. . . . the consequences of this are twofold: the ‘intextuation of bodies,’ which transforms the discursive apparatus of regimes of social fiction or knowledge, ‘correcting’ or updating them, rendering them more ‘truthful’ and ensuring their increasingly microscopic focus on the details of psychical and corporeal life; and the incarnation of social laws in the movements, actions, behaviors, and desires of bodies—a movement of the text into the body and the body outside of itself and into sociocultural life” (119). See Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 119.
56. Marta Moreno Vega, “Afro-Boricua: Nuyorican de Pura Cepa,” in *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latina Diaspora*, ed. Marta Moreno Vega, Marinieves Alba, and Yvette Modestín (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2012), 77.
57. Vega, “Afro-Boricua,” 78.
58. Vega, “Afro-Boricua,” 92.
59. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 210.
60. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 212.
61. Pinn, “Orisha Worship in the United States,” 246.
62. Pinn, “Orisha Worship in the United States,” 247.
63. Vega, “The Yoruba Orisha Tradition Come to New York City,” 239.
64. Kathy J. Ogren, “‘What Is Africa to Me?’: African Strategies in the Harlem Renaissance,” in *Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*, ed. Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley (London: Verso, 1994), 25, 32.
65. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 240–241. Vega’s text uses a hyphen between “African” and “American,” a style that this chapter and volume doesn’t employ.
66. See Randolph White, “Here Is Why Puerto Ricans Crowd Harlem! The Inside Story of Harlem’s Puerto Ricans,” *New York Amsterdam News* (1943–1961), City Edition, June 3, 1950, 1.
67. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 184.
68. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 251.
69. Vega, *When the Spirits Dance Mambo*, 251.
70. Including the struggle for local control of schools in Latinx and African American neighborhoods—see Christopher Bonastia, *The Battle Nearer to Home:*

The Persistence of School Segregation in New York City (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022); the introduction of affirmative action in City University of New York admissions; and the establishment of Nuyorican Poets Café in 1973 on Lower East Side.

71. Cited on “James Baldwin,” Poetry Foundation, accessed September 26, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/james-baldwin>

72. “James Baldwin,” Poetry Foundation.

73. HoSang and Molina, “Introduction,” 11.

74. Bill Mullen suggests that Baldwin “underwent a re-evaluation of his personal and political life” between 1968 and 1977 based on his support for the Black Panther Party and engagement with “black feminisms, Third World feminism, and queer liberation politics” and his determination to “remain a radical political conscience.” See Bill V. Mullen, *James Baldwin: Living in Fire* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 134, 135. Laila Amine’s analysis of Baldwin’s work finds that while he “fashioned a myth of Parisian color-blindness” in early work, he “challenged or tempered this myth in post-1960 fiction that coincided with the increased police repression of Algerians in the capital, including the 1961 Paris police massacre of peaceful demonstrators.” See Laila Amine, *Postcolonial Paris: Fictions of Intimacy in the City of Light* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 66.

75. Amine, *Postcolonial Paris*; Mullen, *James Baldwin*.

76. Mullen, *James Baldwin*, 149.

77. As Mullen notes, on the occasions of the US bicentennial and the trial of the Wilmington Ten, Baldwin publicly reiterated his analysis of how US minorities—including Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Mexicans, African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans—shared conditions of oppression in the United States. See Mullen, *James Baldwin*, 162–163.

78. Rosa Bobia discusses French, African, and US critics Edwards, Aldridge, Broyard, Pinckney, Oates, Bryant, Detweiler, and Mosher in her comprehensive review of the criticism of this novel. See Rosa Bobia, “If Beale Street Could Talk: The French and American Criticism of James Baldwin’s ‘Prison Parable,’” *Revue LISA / LISA e-journal*, Writer’s Corner, Literary Studies, January 1, 2005, accessed November 10, 2021, <http://journals.openedition.org/lisa/609>

79. Leeming cited in Rosa Bobia, “If Beale Street Could Talk.”

80. Yoshinobu Hakutani, *Cross-Cultural Visions in African-American Modernism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), 74, 76.

81. Trudier Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 137–140.

82. Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin*, 10.

83. Yoshinobu Hakutani suggests that Tish is “a compassionate and lovable woman; her pregnancy also inspires others to have love and hope.” For Hakutani, Tish conveys “Baldwin’s concept of love and liberation” and “only through her vision can the reader learn to know the meaning of love and humanity.” See Hakutani, *Cross-Cultural Visions in African-American Modernism*, 74. Douglas Field suggests that Baldwin’s focus on the power of love in this tale reflects the endur-

ing influence of his engagement with religion and spirituality, albeit not in institutional forms. See Douglas Field, *All Those Strangers: The Art and Lives of James Baldwin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

84. James Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (New York: Vintage International, 2018 [1974]), 7.

85. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 37.

86. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 39.

87. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 38.

88. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 92.

89. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 93.

90. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 117.

91. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 103.

92. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 119.

93. Magdalena Zaborowska, *Me and My House: James Baldwin's Last Decade in France* (New York: Duke University Press, 2018), 225.

94. Zaborowska, *Me and My House*, 221.

95. The quotation in the title of this section is Sharon Rivers's observation after returning from Puerto Rico. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 185.

96. Zaborowska, *Me and My House*, 250.

97. Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin*, 143.

98. Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin*, 152.

99. Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin*, 153.

100. Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin*, 153.

101. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 169.

102. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 165; emphasis added.

103. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 165.

104. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 165–166.

105. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 185.

106. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 167.

107. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 174.

108. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 142.

109. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 155.

110. Robert J. Corber discusses the film adaptation's inability to capture this imperfection, especially in the figure of Frank Hunt, a figure that the novel both critiques and understands. See Robert J. Corber, "Romancing Beale Street," *James Baldwin Review* 5 (2019): 178–190, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7227/JBR.5.12>

111. Richard Beck, "The *Paris Review* Perspective," in *Critical Insights: James Baldwin*, ed. Morris Dickstein (Ipswich: Salem Press, 2010), 17.

112. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 192.

113. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 88.

114. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 194, 197.

115. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 7.

116. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 193.

117. Corber, "Romancing Beale Street," 180.

118. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1st ed., 154.

119. Rahul Hamid, “Bringing Love to the Screen: An Interview with James Laxton,” *Cineaste* 45, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 35.

120. Hamid, “Bringing Love to the Screen,” 36.

121. Zaborowska is discussing and citing Baldwin’s text *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* in relation to *Beale Street*. Cited in Zaborowska, *Me and My House*, 225.

122. Manuel Betancourt, “Emily Rios on Filming That Heart-Wrenching Scene Opposite Regina King in ‘If Beale Street Could Talk,’” *Remezcla*, December 10, 2018, accessed November 17, 2021, <https://remezcla.com/film/interview-emily-rios-beale-street-talk/>.

123. Betancourt, “Emily Rios on Filming.”

124. While this may be about telling a different story, it might also echo the different experiences of author and filmmaker in relation to Latinx populations. While Baldwin grew up in New York City at a time when the Puerto Rican population was expanding—a time experienced by Piri Thomas and Marta Moreno Vega as well, Jenkins grew up in a Miami where the first generation of post-1959 Cuban Americans predominated. In general, this generation was lighter-skinned than later generations of Cuban immigrants and enjoyed more economic and social advantages in comparison to Blacks in Florida.

125. Perhaps another reason for this difference is that Jenkins is of an age to have lived through the African American rebellion of 1980 protesting the police murder of a young Black man, Arthur McDuffie, by four white cops, including a white Cuban American cop, Alex Marrero. For further on white Cuban American and African American relations in this context see López, *Unbecoming Blackness*, 165–171.

126. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 169.

127. Barry Jenkins, “If Beale Street Could Talk,” adapted from the novel by James Baldwin (Official White Script, September 25, 2017; Pink Revisions July 2, 2018), 95.

128. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, 19.

129. Sophie Gilbert, “Ava DuVernay Does True Crime Differently in *When They See Us*,” *The Atlantic*, May 29, 2019.

130. Steven N. Lipkin, *Docudrama Performs the Past* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 2–3.

131. Garrett McGrath, “Love/Hate: New York, Race, and 1989,” *Wilson Quarterly*, Fall 2014, <https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/summer-2014-1989-and-the-making-of-our-modern-world/lovehate-new-york-race-and-1989>

Chapter 4

1. Néstor Valdivia Vargas observes that Black Peruvian organizations and individuals employ varied terms for describing themselves, including *afrodescendiente* (Afro-descended or Afro-Peruvian) and *negro* (Black). Those that use the former prefer its claiming of national belonging in Peru and find the latter to replicate the language and emphasis of slavery on phenotype, while the those that

employ the latter embrace its assertion of negritude and Black consciousness. Nonetheless, *afrodescendiente* also serves to describe cultural forms and practices whose performances are no longer limited exclusively to Black Peruvian populations, but also mixed-race and others. I will, therefore, use both terms in this chapter, with greater emphasis on “Black Peruvian” as a term that conveys the multiplicity and interrelation of hemispheric diaspora populations in borderlands of the Americas. See Néstor Valdivia Vargas, *Las organizaciones de la población afrodescendiente en el Perú: Discursos de identidad y demandas de reconocimiento* (Lima: GRADE, 2013), 146–149, 36.

2. Heidi Carolyn Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 69.

3. Charles Henry Rowell, “Notes toward an Introduction,” *Callaloo* 34, no. 2 (2011): 235.

Just a brief note on Afro-Peruvians: Susana Baca may be the best-known Afro-Peruvian, but awareness of this sector of the population has been growing for two decades. “Lleva las Cuentas, Trenza la Historia” (Own the Numbers / Take Count, Braid History) a campaign led by LUNDU, the Center for AfroPeruvian Advocacy and Studies, calls for explicit recognition of diversity of racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation in Peruvian legislation and policy and acknowledgment of / research on the significance of ethnicity and race in society. While the Minority Rights Group, based in London, estimates that Afro-Peruvians number three million, mostly residing in the coastal regions of Peru (London, web, accessed January 21, 2019), the 2017 census in Peru, which allowed ethnic-self-identification for the first time since the 1940s—largely due to popular pressure for this—notes that 3.6 percent of the population or 828,841 people self-identified as Afro-descendant in the 2017 census. Mestizo is 60.2 percent and Quechua 22.3 percent.

4. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 13.

5. Rivera-Rideau, Jones, and Paschel, “Introduction,” 2.

6. Rivera-Rideau, Jones, and Paschel suggest that “Blackness is largely omitted from academic constructions of Latinidad in the U.S.” They suggest that Latinx subjectivity and identity have been primarily constructed in ways that have “precluded, by definition, the possibility of a Latinidad that is compatible with blackness.” See “Introduction,” 11. Note that varied authors take different approaches to the term *latinidad*, with some rendering it in italics because it is a Spanish word, while others do not, indicating its adoption into English. Rivera-Rideau et al. do not italicize but do capitalize the term.

See also Silvio Torres-Saillant, “Epilogue,” on anti-Black and anti-Indian phobias of Spanish-language media and the ways that these discourses circulate among Latinx and impact social relations.

7. Kirsten Silva Gruesz writes that a transamerican approach requires attention to “global patterns of migration, diaspora, and exile” that can help to parse the significance of a text in “its own geometry of distribution, reception, and influence.” See *Ambassadors of Culture*, 9.

8. Amrita Das also observes that Alarcón's work on Lima centers on mestizo populations and "offers a unique case of reverse-transnationalism" (32–33). Das notes that earlier racial frameworks of "criollo Limeños" have been upended by large internal migrations of the 1980s and 1990s and brought considerations of mestizo and Andean populations to the fore, though "*criollo* urban established dwellers" retain their power (34, 36). See Amrita Das, "Daniel Alarcón's Lima: Articulation of Transnationalism Through a Discursive and Geographical Space," in *Negotiating Latinidades, Understanding Identities within Space*, ed. Kathryn Quinn-Sánchez (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 31–48.

9. See Eduardo Galeano's trilogy *Memoria del Fuego*, published between 1982 and 1987.

10. The opening poem by Villacorta and the appearance of this name again in "City of Clowns" as the name of the editor also makes visible transamerican literary and cultural networks in the interstices of literature. Villacorta is a scholar of Peruvian and Peruvian-American literature and both he and Alarcón belong to a significant group of contemporary writers who inhabit both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking worlds and often produce Spanish-language texts, including Spanish-language literature, from within the United States. A faculty member at the University of Maine, Villacorta has written extensively on Latin American literature and Peruvian literature, including a volume on the work of Peruvians living in the United States. See Luis Hernán Castañeda and Carlos Villacorta, eds., *Cuentos de ida y vuelta: 17 narradores peruanos en Estados Unidos* (Lima: Peisa, 2019). Villacorta is also a poet and fiction writer whose works have been published in Spanish in both Peru and Mexico. See <https://umaine.edu/mlandc/people/carlos-villacorta-gonzales/>, accessed October 11, 2021. Alarcón has written, in English, two novels and two short story collections. A professor of journalism and founder and host of the Spanish-language NPR-distributed podcast *Radio ambulante*, which focuses on Latin America, Alarcón is a contemporary transamerican writer. In 2021, Alarcón received the MacArthur Foundation Award.

11. Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 1.

12. Daniel Alarcón, *War by Candlelight* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 177.

13. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 88.

14. Ulla Berg, *Mobile Selves: Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the U.S.* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 16. Charles Henry Rowell cites the CIA's World Factbook in describing the two main race/ethnic categories of Peru as "Amerindians" and "mestizos." See Rowell, "Notes toward an Introduction," 239. Nonetheless, Heidi Carolyn Feldman uses the terms "criollo" and "Afro-Peruvian" nearly exclusively throughout her 2006 study of Peruvian dance, never employing "mestizo" as a racial category. Feldman thereby suggests that in cultural performance "criollo" remains salient and was even a cultural identity claimed by coastal Black Peruvians. Several other sources discuss "criollo" culture in Peru as one that combines European, African, and Andean elements.

15. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 117.

16. For a tour of this district visit the MUVI, or Museo Virtual de las Artes y Cultura de San Juan de Lurigancho, which provides information on the topography, climate, Indigenous peoples, colonial settlement, urbanization, migration, incorporation and professionalization, and contemporary arts and culture in this district, documenting the evolving character of the district. The creators of the MUVI see their work as also offering a more rounded picture of the district, which has been stereotyped in ways that does not honor the hard work of their migrant parents in creating homes in this district, as director Julio Abanto Llaque stated in a guided virtual tour of the museum. See <https://www.museovirtualsjl.com/>, accessed October 20, 2021.

17. See “terruco,” in Urban Dictionary online, accessed October 11, 2021, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=terruco>. See also “terruqueo,” Wikipedia: La Enciclopedia Libre, accessed October 11, 2021, <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terruqueo>. The Wikipedia entry indicates that the term refers to members of terrorist groups from the extreme left who led an armed conflict in the 1980s but that it can also sometimes refer to the Andean population (since one such group launched its war from the Andes) and/or be used as a kind of red-baiting.

18. The terms *terrucu* and *terruqueo* remain a part of the lexicon of political discourse in Peru, and as one news report indicates, are often used to smear left or progressive candidates with a terrorist association. See Eddie Corp, “What Is ‘Terruqueo’ and Why Does It Influence Electoral Campaigns in Peru,” *Digis Mak: The American News the American Way*, May 31, 2021, accessed October 11, 2021, <https://digismak.com/what-is-terruqueo-and-why-does-it-influence-electoral-campaigns-in-peru/>

19. Carlos Aguirre, “Terruco de m . . . Insulto y stigma en la guerra sucia peruana,” *Historica* 35, no. 1 (2011): 103–139, <https://doi.org/10.18800/historica.201101.003>

20. Berg, *Mobile Selves*, 8.

21. Ulises Juan Zevallos-Aguilar, “Mapping the Andean Cultural Archipelago in the United States,” in *The Other Latinos: Central and South Americans in the United States*, ed. José Luis Falconi and José Antonio Mazzotti (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2007), 132.

22. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 5.

23. Alexander von Humboldt, “Impressions of Lima,” in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 64.

24. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 12.

25. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 13.

26. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 15.

27. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 15.

28. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 18, 52.

29. Daniel Alarcón, art by Sheila Alvarado, *City of Clowns* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2015). In an afterword to the graphic novel Alarcón notes that it was the “first literary graphic novel published” in Peru emerging from a “strange and circuitous journey . . . first, a lived and imagined experience in Spanish, then a text in English, which was then translated back into Spanish, bolstered and transformed with Sheila’s illustrations, and now, back into English with those same images.” See Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 138. His description of the “multiple lives” of this text is an apt description for a transamerican text, born of a transamerican experience.

30. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 18.

31. Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 17.

32. Scott McCloud asserts that on the spectrum of representation from realist to abstract, graphic novels or comics that pursue the latter are more interested in ideas than representation. See Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: William Morrow / HarperCollins, 1993), 52–53, 91.

33. McCloud states that borderless panels or pages suggest timelessness or irresolution while black and white rather than color in graphic novels conveys greater interest in ideas. See McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 192, 102–3.

34. See Andrew Boryga, “A Mine Erodes an Andean City,” January 13, 2015, *New York Times*, <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/13/a-mine-erodes-an-andean-city/>

35. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 40.

36. Hettie Malcomson cites Mexican scholar Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán on “chino.” Beltrán, *Población negra de México*, 175–179. Ben Vinson III notes that “by the 1700s, in parts of New Spain it had become vogue to use *chino* to categorize individuals of mixed Native American and African ancestry.” Indeed, the eighteenth-century casta painting reproduced in this volume shows “Chino” as the child of “Morisco con Española.” See Vinson, *Before Mestizaje*, 9, Figure 1.

37. For further on castas see Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Magnus Mörner, *La mezcla de razas en la historia de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1969).

38. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 52; Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 112.

39. English-speaking audiences should note that this is not the English “Negro” but the Spanish *Negro*, which translates to “Black” in English, despite the fact that it is not italicized.

40. Molina, *How Race Is Made in America*.

41. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 38; Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 96–97.

42. Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 80–81.

43. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 34; Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 64.

44. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 28; Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 43.

45. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 23.

46. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 31–32, 35; Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 33, 35, 55, 66–67.

47. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 49.

48. Cynthia Vich views Oscar's incorporation into a trio of clown performers as a therapeutic escape from the demands of a neoliberal economy that allows him to sample the informal work sector, though it ultimately captures him again as a commodity. Vich, like Das, notes that Alarcón focuses on mestizx subjects but does not discuss the significance of race. See Cynthia Vich, "De disfraces, reinenciones e inciertos refugios: Una lectura de Lima a partir de Ciudad de Payasos de Daniel Alarcón," *Ciberletras* 27 (May 2012): 193–211.

49. Fred Moten observes the problematic paradox of race in this way: "The mark of invisibility is a visible, racial mark; invisibility has visibility at its heart. To be invisible is to be seen, instantly and fascinatingly recognized as the unrecognizable, as the abject, as the absence of individual self-consciousness, as a transparent vessel of meanings wholly independent of any influence of the vessel itself." Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 68.

50. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 29.

51. Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, "Of the Inhabitants of Lima," in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 39–44.

52. Although his account focuses on the development of knowledge and skills in music, design, history, Octavio Santa Cruz's brief memoir chronicles his work and that of his siblings Nicomedes and Victoria, who grew up in La Victoria, in creating greater opportunity for Afro-Peruvians and greater recognition of Afro-Peruvians. See Marcus D. Jones and Mónica Carrillo, "An Interview with Octavio Santa Cruz," *Callaloo* 34, no. 2 (2011): 309–320.

53. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 56.

54. Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 130–133.

55. De la Fuente observes that "On the one hand, there are compelling reasons to pursue the study of Afro-Latinos as part of Afro-Latin American studies. Analyzing the lives and actions of Latin Americans of African descent, including those in the United States, as actors in an interconnected, albeit discontinuous, historical and cultural space, raises interesting questions and research possibilities. On the other hand, local constructions of race and nation matter and cannot be obliterated for the sake of ideological or analytical expediency." See Alejandro de la Fuente, "Afterword: Afro-Latinos and Afro-Latin American Studies," in *Afro-Latin@s in Movement: Critical Approaches to Blackness and Transnationalism in the Americas*, ed. Petra R. Rivera-Rideau, Jennifer A. Jones, and Tianna S. Paschel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 297.

56. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 45.

57. Alarcón, *War by Candlelight*, 21–22.
58. Alarcón, “P.S.: Insights, Interviews & More,” in *War by Candlelight*, 12.
59. Alarcón and Alvarado, *City of Clowns*, 27.
60. For further on this idea see Jennifer A. Jones, *The Browning of the New South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).
61. Heidi Carolyn Feldman calls the contemporary versions of the Afro-Peruvian project “a new Black Pacific consciousness.” See *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 259.
62. Daniel Alarcón, “A Slum, a Boy Named Lennon, Some Dancing in the Street—Peru Revisited,” in “P.S.: Insights, Interviews & More,” appendix to *War by Candlelight*, 12.
63. For more on modes of documentary see Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 210–211.
64. Jeffrey Geiger, *American Documentary Film: Projecting the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 195.
65. Geiger, *American Documentary Film*, 200, 208.
66. Berg mentions that the *combis* she takes between these two sites are Peruvian-owned and reflective of a significant Peruvian community in Paterson, NJ. See Ulla Berg, *Mobile Selves: Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the U.S.* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 29, 177.
67. Esparza notes that “el documental no es sólo una celebración de la globalización. Ambas protagonistas sienten el choque cultural al tratar de adaptarse a las costumbres y la cultura peruana.” Esparza, “Peruanos,” 180.
68. Julio E. Noriega Bernuy suggests that the film is a significant contribution because the medium allows for the documenting of bodily communication in traditional dances—“comunicación corporal en los bailes”—that have not been sufficiently documented in oral or written texts. “*Soy Andina: Melodía y ritmo de la migración en los Andes*,” in *Nuevas aproximaciones al cine hispánico*, ed. Santiago Juan-Navarro and Joan Torres-Pou (Miami: Florida International University Department of Modern Languages; Barcelona: PPU, S.A., 2011), 229. Although Noriega Bernuy offers some stereotyped discussions of Black dance, his discussion of cultural migration in the film and of the unseen working Peruvians in New York adds to our understanding of the film’s import.
69. “Rap Music’s Path from Pariah to Pulitzer,” *Global English (Middle East and North Africa Financial Network)*, April 24, 2018, <https://advance-lexis-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5S6B-HF81-F04Y-T035-00000-00&context=1516831>
70. She states: “Rappers benefit from the disproportionate exposure of U.S. artists around the world facilitated by music industry marketing muscle. However, rap also draws international audiences because it is a powerful conglomeration of voices from the margins of American society speaking about the terms of

that position. . . . [It has] a sense of black energy and creativity in the face of omnipresent oppressive forces. . . . Rap's global industry-orchestrated (but not industry created) presence illustrates the power of the language of rap and the salience of the stories of oppression and creative resistance its music and lyrics tell. The drawing power of rap is precisely its musical and narrative commitment to black youth and cultural resistance, and nothing in rap's commercial position and cross-cultural appeal contradicts this fact." Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 19.

71. Raúl R. Romero, "Black Music and Identity in Peru: Reconstruction and Revival of Afro-Peruvian Musical Traditions," in *Music and Black Ethnicity: The Caribbean and South America*, ed. Gerard H. Béhague (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami North-South Center and Transaction Publishers, 1994), 314, 315.

72. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 54, 78.

73. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 49, 51–55.

74. Kirstie A. Dorr, "Afroperuvian Feminisms and Performance Geographies of Diasporicity, 1953–2013," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 29 (2017): 4, accessed September 16, 2021, <https://doi-org.10.1111/jpms.12253>

75. Nadine George-Graves, "Diasporic Spidering: Constructing Contemporary Black Identities," in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 33–44.

76. Romero, "Black Music and Identity in Peru," 312. See also the seventeenth-century description of the demographics of Lima's population in Bernabé Cobo, "The Form and Greatness of Lima," in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 16–17.

77. Raúl R. Romero suggests that the lack of large concentrations of Blacks on plantations, as was the case in the United States and in Cuba, as well as the high racial mixture of Blacks and Spanish, resulted in strong cultural intermixtures and often situated Blacks in opposition to Indigenous and mestizos in colonial history, though none of this eliminated the racism and discrimination that Blacks continue to face in Peru. However, plantations were not completely absent in Peru. See a description of a large sugar plantation in Flora Tristán, "A Slave Plantation," in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 81–83.

78. Romero, "Black Music and Identity in Peru," 314–319. While some view this is "inauthentic," many enslaved Blacks in the northern regions of Peru came not from Africa but from the Caribbean. See Luis Rocca Torres, *Herencia de esclavos en el norte del Perú* (Lima: Centro de Desarrollo Étnico, 2010), 39.

79. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 83–124.

80. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 101–102.

81. See Rocío Ferreira, “Una entrevista con Bertha Ponce Vda. De Campos, Marina Lavalle, Rony Campos y Mónica Dueñas de Perú Negro,” *Callaloo* 34, no. 2 (2011): 565.

82. Vargas, *Organizaciones de la población*, 65–69.

83. Romero, “Black Music and Identity in Peru,” 315.

84. Paniagua’s experience differs from Romero’s assertion and Nicomedes Santa Cruz’s earlier statements that forms like the *festejo* “were not adopted” by ordinary Black Peruvians as part of their culture because she does in the 1990s, indeed, encounter it in the intimate space of the home, from a relative, at a family party rather than at a formal and commercial performance—perhaps after earlier scholars made it more widely known. Romero, “Black Music and Identity,” 323.

85. See Giancarla Di Laura, “An Interview with Filomeno Ballumbrosio Guadalupe,” *Callaloo* 34, no. 2 (2011): 446.

86. Hugo Marquina Ríos, “Malambo, a Black Neighborhood,” in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 165–169.

87. Romero, “Black Music and Identity in Peru,” 316–317.

88. Romero, “Black Music and Identity in Peru,” 317. Brenda Gottschild discusses the prevalence of a lower center of gravity in African-influenced gesture and movement. See Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

89. Romero cites Cruz referring to “Landó,” while *lundu* appears to be the name for this music and dance in Brazil.

90. In the film this is announced as “*lundu*,” and the screen shows “*lundu*” in translated subtitles, but the handwritten order of dances written on white paper in the dancers’ green room reads “*lando*.” Whether the Brazilian *lundu* and Peruvian *landó* are linked here, or whether these are misspellings is not known.

91. Julio E. Noriega Bernuy indicates that Cynthia visits Trujillo in the north as well as Chiclayo before meeting Nélidain Llamellín. Noriega Bernuy, “*Soy andina*,” 232.

92. Vargas, *Organizaciones de la población*, 39–40.

93. Dorr, “Afroperuvian Feminisms,” 5.

94. Dorr, “Afroperuvian Feminisms,” 9.

95. Dorr, “Afroperuvian Feminisms,” 14.

96. I am indebted to the moderator for the Facebook page on “Danza de los caporales” for identifying the dance for me. Accessed October 27, 2021.

97. For example, students in my course African Diaspora and Latinidad objected to the racism of the representation. Readers will note that, according to some sources (see notes 100 and 101), versions of the Danza de la Morenada have been performed for over a century.

98. Dorr, “Afroperuvian Feminisms,” 4.
99. Gonzalez, *Afro-Mexico*, 10.
100. For further on performance see D. Soyini Madison, “Foreword,” in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), vii–ix.
101. Raúl R. Romero explains: “Blacks spoke Spanish, served the conquerors in very specialized and qualified activities, and many times acted as intermediaries between them and the defeated Indians. Blacks even fought in the regular armies of the conquerors and participated in the civil wars between them. . . . The Indians themselves perceived blacks as members of the victorious army. . . . Blacks had a special status, higher than Indians and mestizos, because most of them lived in the homes of Spaniards” as servants. Romero, “Black Music and Identity in Peru,” 312. For further on Black participation in militias in Mexico see Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
102. Fabrizio Cazorla Murillo, “Orígenes, historia y leyenda: Lenguaje simbólico de la danza de la Morenada,” accessed October 29, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=JdoStEdtH68>
103. Béjar advances the silver mine thesis. Cazorla advances the wine hacienda thesis. Wikipedia includes both. See Augusto Vera Béjar, “La Morenada: Danza popular que une lo Altiplánico y lo Afro,” *San Pablo informa*, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://ucsp.edu.pe/la-morenada-danza-popular-que-une-lo-altiplanico-y-lo-afro/>; Cazorla Murillo, “Orígenes, historia y leyenda”; “Morenada,” Wikipedia, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morenada>
104. Cazorla Murillo, “Orígenes, historia y leyenda”; “Morenada,” Wikipedia.
105. Cazorla Murillo, “Orígenes, historia y leyenda”; “Morenada,” Wikipedia.
106. See references to critical reviews of Black dance in Heidi Carolyn Feldman, “Staging Public Blackness in Mid-Twentieth Century Peru: The Repertoires of Pancho Fierro and Cumanana,” *Theatre Survey* 61 (2020): 222. Feldman’s concern over whether Afro-Peruvian dances and plays employ “documented” or authentic traditions in Afro-Peruvian life overlooks the salience and power of diaspora consciousness.
107. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 29–30, 145–147.
108. Marcus D. Jones and Mónica Carrillo, “An Interview with Victoria Santa Cruz,” *Callaloo* 34, no. 2 (2011): 306.
109. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 97, 117.
110. Anita Gonzalez, “Navigations: Diasporic Transports and Landings,” in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 28.
111. Boris Miranda, “Morenada, la centenaria danza folklórica que genera controversia entre Bolivia y Perú,” BBC News, 13 Mayo 2021, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-57016583>; “Morenada: Bolivia, Peru Row over Andean Folk Dance,” *AfricaNews*, May 19, 2021,

accessed October 29, 2021, <https://www.africanews.com/2021/05/19/morenada-bolivia-peru-row-over-andean-folk-dance/>

112. Heidi Carolyn Feldman, “Strategies of the Black Pacific: Music and Diasporic Identity in Peru,” *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America*, ed. John Burdick and Kwame Dixon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 42–71: 56.

113. Gonzalez, *Afro-Mexico*, 93.

114. Gonzalez, *Afro-Mexico*, 92–93.

115. Rocca Torres, *Herencia de esclavos*, 102.

116. Rocca Torres, *Herencia de esclavos*, 100–101.

117. For further on white supremacy as a global phenomenon see Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

118. Personal interview with Cynthia Paniagua, August 31, 2023.

119. Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 171–178.

120. Di Laura, “Interview with Amador Ballumbrosio Mosquera,” 448–451, 449.

121. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWGt1k9mJMg>, accessed October 1, 2021.

122. Dorr’s feminist performance geography approach reveals women constesting “divisions between public and private . . . local and global, or shirking dominant codes of gendered emplacement by engaging in regional or international travel, performing in male-dominated spaces” in ways that effectively disrupt “gendered structures of oppression and containment.” See Dorr, “Afroperuvian Feminisms,” 4.

123. Personal interview with Cynthia Paniagua, August 31, 2023.

Chapter 5

1. Similarly, Frank A. Guridy notes the ways that Harlem in the early twentieth century “was a site of multiple migrations” from varied parts of the African diaspora, including the Caribbean. See Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). For further on representations of Afro-Cuban and African American community in Ybor City see Delgadillo, “Another Cubanidad, Another Latinidad.”

2. Nancy Raquel Mirabal’s work has emphasized the lack of attention to Afro-Cuban experience in historical studies in both her early essay on this and later book. See Mirabal, “Afro-Cuban Community.” Guridy also notes the lack of attention to Afro-Cuban history versus the “fixation on the activities of José Martí.” See Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 211.

For an analysis that focuses on the emergence of Afrolatinidad within the United States see Antonio López’s *Unbecoming Blackness*. López explores Afro-Cuban and African American literary and artistic connections in early twentieth-century New York as well as white Cuban American, Afro-Cuban, and African American relationships in 1980s Miami.

3. Tampa cigar workers responded enthusiastically to Martí's call to "serve as the cutting edge of the independence movement." See Louis Pérez Jr., "Cubans in Tampa: From Exiles to Immigrants, 1892–1901," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (October 1978): 133.

4. See Mills, *The Racial Contract*; Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad del poder, globalización y democracia," *Trayectorias* 4, nos. 7–8 (September–April 2001–2002): 58–90.

5. A significant body of literary studies scholarship has illuminated Cuban American community in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States. See Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*; Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); K. C. Dworkin y Méndez, "Cuban Theater, American Stage: Before Exile," in *The State of Latino Theater in the United States: Hybridity, Transculturation, and Identity*, ed. L. A. Ramos-García (New York: Routledge, 2002), 103–130. In the field of history, Gerald E. Poyo and Nancy Raquel Mirabal have documented and examined nineteenth- and twentieth-century experiences of Black Cuban Americans in New York, Key West, and the Ybor City / Tampa area. See Gerald E. Poyo, *Exile and Revolution: José D. Poyo, Key West, and Cuban Independence* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014); Mirabal, *Suspect Freedoms*.

6. Poyo, *Exile and Revolution*.

7. Poyo, *Exile and Revolution*, 27–28.

8. Poyo, *Exile and Revolution*, 28.

9. Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 60–61; Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885–1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 66.

10. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 61.

11. Mirabal, "Afro-Cuban Community," 20.

12. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 63.

13. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 11, 98.

14. Winston James notes that this is often referred to as "Ybor City's golden age of racial harmony and amity," a claim about which he expresses some skepticism at the same time as he quotes two Cuban Americans on the lack of racial bigotry in Ybor City (237–38). Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998).

15. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 11, 2.

16. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, "Spanish Anarchism in Tampa, Florida, 1886–1931," in *Hidden out in the Open: Spanish Migration to the United States (1875–1930)*, ed. Phylis Cancilla Martinelli and Ana Varela-Lago (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 98.

17. Mirabal, "Afro-Cuban Community," 20.

18. Tampa Welfare League, Tampa Urban League, and Tampa Young Men's Christian Association, "A Study of Negro Life in Tampa," March 8–April 13, 1927, 2, University of South Florida Special Collections.

19. Mirabal, “Afro-Cuban Community,” 21.
20. For example, see Frank A. Guridy, “Feeling Diaspora in Harlem and Havana,” *Social Text* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 115–140.
21. Gerald E. Poyo, *“With All, and for the Good of All”: The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 81, 83, 86.
22. James observes that “Cubans in Florida were extremely mobile. They moved between Havana and Tampa with ease and astonishing frequency” (236). See *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, 236.
23. Philip S. Foner, *Antonio Maceo: The “Bronze Titan” of Cuba’s Struggle for Independence* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 19, 32, 191, 180–181.
24. Esther Allen, “José Martí: An Introduction,” in José Martí, *Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2002), xii.
25. Poyo, *Exile and Revolution*, 10, 13–16. Cuban migration to the United States, particularly New Orleans and New York, dates as far back as the 1820s, and much of that earlier migration consisted of professionals, according to Poyo. See Poyo, *With All, and for the Good of All*, 8, 1.
26. Foner, *Antonio Maceo*, 124.
27. Allen, “José Martí,” xv.
28. Pérez, “Cubans in Tampa,” 134.
29. Poyo cites pamphlets included in volume 1 of *Obras completas*. See Poyo, *With All and for the Good of All*, 97, 105.
30. For discussion of Martí’s essays and speeches on race as well as those of other revolutionary leaders, especially the questions of a “raceless” nationality, passive Black insurgent, and antiracism, see Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). For discussion of the myth of racial equality generated in Martí’s essays and speeches see Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). For discussion of racism and white supremacy among sectors of Cuban independence movement see Foner, *Antonio Maceo*, 29–34; Poyo, *With All, and for the Good of All*, 14–17, 22–25; Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 83, 90.
31. Hoffnung-Garskof, “World of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg,” 79. David Luis-Brown also critiques Martí’s “race-blind” discourse but doesn’t take up the movement’s waffling on abolition and the consequences of this. Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 94.
32. José Martí, “Political Prison in Cuba,” in *Selected Writings*, trans. Esther Allen (New York: Penguin Classics, 2002), 17; José Martí, “Coney Island,” in *Selected Writings*, 92, 93.
33. Ofelia Schutte, “Undoing ‘Race’: Martí’s Historical Predicament,” in *Forging People: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/a Thought*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia, Jose Antonio Aguilar Rivera, Janet Burke, and Ted Humphrey (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 103. See also Anne Fountain’s discussion of critical appreciations for Martí’s challenge to

colonial racial ideologies in *José Martí, the United States, and Race* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 22–25.

34. José Martí, “My Race,” in *Selected Writings*, 320.

35. Martí, “My Race,” 320. For further on color-blind racism see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017).

36. Schutte, “Undoing ‘Race,’” 103.

37. Pérez attributes the formation of La Liga to Serra and notes that Martí and others are listed as cofounders. Lisandro Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution: The Making of Cuban New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 306–307. Note that the Penguin Classics chronology of Martí’s life lists him as assisting in the founding of this organization but does not mention any of its Black leaders.

38. This is described in the Penguin Classics chronology as “Travels to Florida and delivers two famous speeches that instill revolutionary fervor in the Cuban communities of Tampa and Cayo Hueso (Key West),” a description that presumes there was no revolutionary fervor among these communities prior to his arrival. See “Chronology,” in *Selected Writings*, xxxi.

39. José I. Fusté, “Translating Negroes into Negroes: Rafael Serra’s Transamerican Entanglements Between Black Cuban Racial and Imperial Subalternity, 1895–1909,” in *Afro-Latin@s in Movement: Critical Approaches to Blackness and Transnationalism in the Americas*, ed. Petra R. Rivera-Rideau, Jennifer A. Jones, and Tianna S. Paschel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 222.

40. Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution*, 306–307.

41. Nancy Raquel Mirabal, “‘Más que negro’: José Martí and the Politics of Unity,” in *José Martí in the United States: The Florida Experience*, ed. Louis A. Pérez Jr. (Tempe: ASU Center for Latin American Studies, 1995), 58.

42. Aline Helg, “Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880–1930: Theory, Policies, and Popular Reaction,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940*, ed. Richard Graham, Thomas E. Skidmore, Aline Helg, and Alan Knight (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 39–40.

43. As Fusté suggests, this also influenced Serra in keeping some distance from Pan-African projects despite his sympathy and solidarity for the struggles of Black Americas, because he recognized the possibility of Black Americans’ participation in US designs on Cuba. Fusté, “Translating Negroes into Negroes,” 222–223, 232–233.

44. José Martí, “To Cuba!,” in *Selected Writings*, 322.

45. José Martí and Máximo Gómez, “The Montecristi Manifesto,” in *Selected Writings*, 339–340.

46. Martí and Gómez, “The Montecristi Manifesto,” 340, 343, 344.

47. Martí and Gómez, “The Montecristi Manifesto,” 343.

48. Martí and Gómez, “The Montecristi Manifesto,” 340.

49. Martí and Gómez, “The Montecristi Manifesto,” 341.

50. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 69.

51. Both Greenbaum and Fountain mention this in discussing Martí’s contacts with Paulina and Ruperto Pedrosa in Ybor City. See Fountain, *José Martí*, 42–43; Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 77.

52. Emiliano J. Salcines, “José Martí in Tampa: 20 Documented Visits,” June 24, 2019, Public lecture, University of Tampa.

53. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 72–73.

54. The PRC depended on this support so much so that it “frowned on strikes, perceiving work stoppages as a threat to the independence cause.” See Pérez, “Cubans in Tampa,” 134.

55. See Nancy A. Hewitt, “Engendering Independence: Las Patriotas of Tampa and the Social Vision of José Martí,” in *José Martí in the United States: The Florida Experience*, ed. Louis A. Pérez Jr. (Tempe: ASU Center for Latin American Studies, 1995), 23–32; Nicole Trujillo-Pagán, “Pedroso, Paulina (1860–1925?),” in *Latinas in the United States*, ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 563.

56. See Hewitt, “Engendering Independence,” 23–32; Trujillo-Pagán, “Pedroso, Paulina (1860–1925?),” 563.

57. For the text of a manifesto sent from Kingston and a letter, while in Haiti, to General Joseph Lamothe see Foner, *Antonio Maceo*, 96–98.

58. As Mirabal notes, “Questions of blackness, the problems of whiteness, and the implausibility of the places in between figured in all aspects of Cuban diasporic history, regardless of what has been documented.” Mirabal, *Suspect Freedoms*, 6; Jose Yglesias, “Martí in Ybor City,” in *José Martí in the United States: The Florida Experience*, ed. Louis A. Pérez Jr. (Tempe: ASU Center for Latin American Studies, 1995), 110.

59. Bernardo Ruiz Suarez, “Maceo: The Liberator of Cuba” (Tampa, FL: Tampa Bulletin Publishing Company under the auspices of the Cuban Society, Martí Maceo, 1924), 1–16, University of South Florida Special Collections, Union Martí-Maceo.

60. Part 1 of the “Afro-Cuban Chronology” in the 1984 report by Enrique A. Cordero on the “Afro-Cuban Community in Tampa” indicates that in 1956 then Cuban dictator Batista offered to renovate the home of Paulina and Ruperto Pedroso, but the home was burned down before that could happen. See Enrique A. Cordero, “The Afro-Cuban Community in Tampa, Florida,” University of South Florida, directed by N. Hewitt, University of South Florida Special Collections.

61. “Cuba only achieved independence from Spain in 1898, thanks to the participation in the liberation wars of Afro-Cubans on the side of Creoles. (Blacks and mulattoes took an active part in the island’s economy and society. In addition, Afro-Cuban intellectuals played a fundamental role in forging Cuban identity against Spain through the nineteenth century.)” Helg, “Race in Argentina and Cuba,” 39.

62. James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (New York: Penguin, 1990 [1912]), 13.

63. Morrisette provides an excellent review and summary of scholarship on Johnson’s work in African American letters, noting the important work of Arna Bontemps, John Hope Franklin, Robert Stepto, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Nathan Huggins on the volume but also key critical work by Brent Edwards, Kenneth

Warren, Valerie Smith, and Gene Jarrett on the contexts for understanding African American literature. See Noelle Morrisette, “Biography of an Author, Biography of a Text: James Weldon Johnson’s Ultimate American Work,” in *New Perspectives on James Weldon Johnson’s “Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man”*, ed. Noelle Morrisette (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 1.

64. Robert E. Fleming, *James Weldon Johnson* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 31, 35.

65. Fleming, *James Weldon Johnson*, 41.

66. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 48.

67. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 49.

68. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 49.

69. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 52, 54.

70. Some evidence of African American involvement in cigar industry appears is offered by John Armwood, who states that his father and other Blacks Americans he knew were cigar workers and active in unions. See “Oral History of John Armwood,” April 10, 1978, Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project. University of South Florida Special Collections, 9.

71. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 54; For further on diaspora as practice see Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*.

72. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 52.

73. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 55.

74. Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 54.

75. Ellen Tarry, *Young Jim: The Early Years of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1967), 22.

76. James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: Viking Press, 1933).

77. Morrisette, “Biography of an Author,” 3.

78. See James Weldon Johnson and Grace Nail Johnson Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

79. James Weldon Johnson and Grace Nail Johnson Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

80. Morrisette, “Biography of an Author,” 1.

81. Christina A. Wooley, “Held in Checks: Du Bois, Johnson, and the Figurative Work of Financial Forms,” *PMLA* 134, no. 3 (2019): 524–539; Valerie Smith, “Privilege and Evasion in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*,” in *Critical Essays on James Weldon Johnson*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Lawrence J. Oliver (New York: G.K. Hall, 1997), 88–101.

82. Noelle Morrisette and Amritjit Singh, “The Ex-Colored Man for a New Century,” in *New Perspectives on James Weldon Johnson’s “Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man”*, ed. Noelle Morrisette (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 233.

83. SallyAnn H. Ferguson, “Unmaking Blackness: The Ex-Colored Men of Charles W. Chesnutt and James Weldon Johnson,” in *Critical Essays on James Weldon Johnson*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Lawrence J. Oliver (New York: G.K. Hall, 1997), 242.

84. Smith, “Privilege and Evasion in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*,” 89.
85. *Filibusteros* were armed expeditions to Cuba in the fight for independence organized by Cuban exiles in Florida. See Chapter 3 in Gerald E. Poyo’s *Exile and Revolution*.
86. Jose Yglesias, *A Wake in Ybor City* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 61.
87. Yglesias, *Wake in Ybor City*, 61.
88. Yglesias, *Wake in Ybor City*, 74. This “cruelty” is noted by one contemporaneous reviewer as a problematic aspect of the narrative. See Magdalen M. Pando’s review in *Florida Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1964): 80–81, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/stable/30140084>
89. Yglesias, *Wake in Ybor City*, 79.
90. Yglesias, *Wake in Ybor City*, 100, 196.
91. Yglesias, *Wake in Ybor City*, 67, 257.
92. Yglesias, *Wake in Ybor City*, 274.
93. I read Consuelo’s insistence on the wake as related to the particular configuration of memorial services for Black children in the Americas. See Delgadillo, “Latino/a Literature and African Diaspora,” 376–392.
94. Helg calls this “the refusal of the African component” in Cuba. Helg, “Race in Argentina and Cuba,” 39, 40.
95. Evelio Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American: A Memoir* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2000).
96. Greenbaum, *More Than Black*, 1.
97. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 11.
98. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 11.
99. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 8.
100. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 9.
101. An emphasis placed on Jim Crow policies as origin for these divisions emerges in both Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 184, and Kenya Dworkin y Méndez’s “Introduction” to Grillo’s memoir (ix–x).
102. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 11, 15.
103. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 41.
104. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 88.
105. Grillo, *Black Cuban, Black American*, 52.
106. Ruiz Suarez, “Maceo, the Liberator of Cuba,” 6, 7–8.
107. Ruiz Suarez, “Maceo, the Liberator of Cuba,” 11, 14.
108. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 106.
109. Originally published in Spanish in 1996 by Prolibros publisher in Cuba.
110. María de los Reyes Castillo Bueno as told to her daughter Daisy Rubiera Castillo, *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 26, 34.
111. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 42.

112. This word choice is telling, especially given the ongoing fissures of race that his essay attempts to address. See Martí, “My Race,” 320.

113. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 52.

114. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 118–119.

115. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 137.

116. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 26, 27–28.

117. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 28.

118. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 29.

119. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 56.

120. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 83.

121. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 105. I employ “hybrid spirituality” or “spiritual mestizaje” rather than “syncretic” to connote the ongoing coexistence of Indigenous and diaspora worldviews alongside European beliefs in this hemisphere, making these both important indices of lives resistant and alternative to modernity and modes of making alternative worldviews recuperable in the present.

122. Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23, 48, 50.

123. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 134, 106, 109, 110–112.

124. Dore characterizes Castillo Bueno’s religious practices and Santería for much of the twentieth century, as a proxy for “race politics” and a way of “preserving African pride,” recognizing the challenge to white supremacy inherent in the maintenance of a non-European worldview. See Elizabeth Dore, “Introduction: Afro-Cuban History from Below,” in Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 1–18.

125. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 27.

126. Kamran Javadizadeh, “The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads: Claudia Rankine, Robert Lowell, and the Whiteness of the Lyric Subject,” *PMLA* 134, no. 3 (2019): 484.

127. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 16.

128. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 19.

129. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 75.

130. The phrase comes from Cherríe Moraga’s *Giving Up the Ghost*, discussed alongside the work of Helena María Viramontes by Norma Alarcón, “Making Familia from Scratch: Split Subjectivities in the Work of Helena María Viramontes and Cherríe Moraga,” in *Chicana Creativity and Criticism: New Frontiers in American Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. María Herrera-Sobek and Helena María Viramontes (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 220–232.

131. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 21.

132. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 35–6, 40, 33, 81, 85.

133. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 33.

134. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 166.

135. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 40.

136. Castillo Bueno, *Reyita*, 59.

137. This is also a subject explored in James Baldwin’s *If Beale Street Could Talk* and the contemporary film *Queen and Slim* (2019), written by Lena Waithe and directed by Melina Matsoukis.

Conclusion

1. Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement,” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), 210.

2. Nelly Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2002).

3. Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), 95.

4. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 16.

5. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 13, 16.

6. The novel’s portrayal of US occupation resonates with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work of African American writers, theorists, and activists Frances E. W. Harper and Anna Julia Cooper, who, as Hazel Carby finds, “associated imperialism with unrestrained patriarchal power. . . . they portray white male rule as bestial in its actual and potential power to devour lands and peoples.” Given the period setting of the first half of the novel, it is important to recall these African American women writers who also challenged US empire. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825–1911), a writer, teacher, and activist fought slavery, sexism, and racism throughout her life. Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964), a writer, teacher, and researcher, championed civil rights and equality for Black men and women. See Hazel V. Carby, “On the Threshold of Woman’s Era’: Lynching, Empire, and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory,” in *“Race,” Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 304.

7. García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 84.

8. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 218.

9. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 14, 14–17, 151; Listín Diario, “Gavilleiros,” in *The Dominican Republic Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Eric Paul Roorda, Lauren H. Derby, and Raymundo Gonzalez (New York: Duke University Press, 2014), 243–244.

10. Rosario’s novel, therefore, joins in the efforts of contemporary Dominican women authors to contest caricatures of Black women in earlier Dominican literature. See Daisy Cocco De Filippis, “Indias y Trigueñas No Longer: Contemporary Dominican Women Poets Speak,” *Documents of Dissidence: Selected Writings by Dominican Women*, ed. Daisy Cocco De Filippis (New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, Foundational Documents Series, 2000), 142–161.

11. Omaris Z. Zamora, “(Trance)forming AfroLatina Embodied Knowledges in Nelly Rosario’s *Song of the Water Saints*,” *Label Me Latina/o* 7 (Summer 2017): 6; Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas*, 52–53.

12. Richardson, *Afro-Latin@ Experience*, 100, 110.

13. Richardson, *Afro-Latin@ Experience*, 112.

14. Richardson, *Afro-Latin@ Experience*, 118–119; Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas*, 147, 152.

15. García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*.
16. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 104.
17. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 162.
18. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 105.
19. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 107.
20. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 183.
21. Rosario, *Song of the Water Saints*, 16.

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