RENDERING OF A *MULATA*: THE DISCOVERY AND RETHINKING OF IMAGES OF *MULATAS* IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICAN ART

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I am wholeheartedly thankful and grateful to Dr. Henry C. Kinley, Ph.D. who has made all things possible. My heart is filled with happiness always and forever because of your love and support, your kindness and gentleness. Thank you for making this such a glorious journey of the soul.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Rendering of a Mulata: The Discovery and Rethinking of Images of Mulatas in Colonial Latin American Art

by

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As a result of colonial global commerce and the transatlantic slave trade, an increasing mulato/a population emerged creating an expanding social hierarchy in colonial Latin America. A mulata in this time and place is defined as a female born of African and Spanish ancestry or of African and Portuguese ancestry. It is estimated that approximately 250,000 to 500,000 Africans were brought to Mexico as slaves. Cuba also experienced an economic boom due to the insatiable sweet tooth of Western Europe. This strategically located island demanded a sophisticated system of engineering to process the sugar cane, as well as, a plantation system of slavery that increasingly required more slaves from Africa. Yet, the contributions regarding art historical discussions of mulatas in colonial Latin American art have been sparse providing few considerations of gender, race, or sexuality.

Mulatas traversed a tempestuous sea of increasing fear and anxiety by the Spanish elite, as well as, struggled with gendered subjectivity and the inscribed image of the mulata body. These efforts to control are seen in the casta paintings of Mexico and on the cover of cigar boxes called marquillas in Cuba. The mulata is portrayed stereotypically as a mythically oversexed siren and sometimes as a subject of domestic tranquility. While I examine casta paintings servicing as propaganda for the crown to discourage mestizaje or miscegenation as a means of controlling its population, this thesis also examines the possibility of a less myopic approach by examining themes of sexuality, religious morality, and colonial psychosexual tropes of domination. I also examine the mulata body as a sign signifying the proto-nationalist through racial syncretism and religious iconic imagery in Cuba where she is represented and dually worshipped both as Catholicism’s Virgen de la Caridad and as Santería’s Orixa Ochún. While examining themes of apparitions in the Marian tradition I also introduce a case divergent from this tradition in Brazil’s Assumption of the Virgin, with King David and angelic choir.

I am interested in locating modes of relation to the self, which in the case of mulatas also includes discussing different domains of knowledge such as slavery, manumission, domestic employment, and courtesanry. This work examines techniques of power and “governmentality” in the everyday lives of mulatas who used their bodies, mysticism, magics, and other domains of knowledge to liberate themselves. By focusing exclusively on the mulata body, there is an intentional recognition, a resuscitation of a body that has been somewhat trivialized or caricaturized in the hegemony of the social imaginary.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A *mulata* woman in 1700 by the name of Francisca de Padilla who was a former slave in New Spain had amassed 200 pesos to pay for her freedom by the age of twenty-three. She was refunded 100 pesos by her former owner, José de Villalta Enríquez, “to do her a good work.”¹ In another case, Gerónima de Vega y Vique, the illegitimate *mulata* daughter of a Spanish don father and a free black mother possessed an inheritance of her father’s estate which included real estate, furnishings, slaves, cash, and even two other *mulatos.*² Upon her marriage to a *chino* (indigenous/African mixed race) slave in 1678, María de la Concepción, a *mulata*, brought a dowry of over 5,000 pesos (a significantly considerable amount of money) which she stated was “acquired through my skill [*inteligencias*.]”³ During the late seventeenth century in New Spain, two other *mulatas*, Teresa de Losada and Josefa de la Cruz, a washerwoman and business woman respectively had among their possessions noted in their wills: pearl necklaces and earrings, real estate, silk curtains, silk ribbons, saltcellars, sundry furnishings, and various paintings of religious subjects. Although the items are not indicative of extravagant wealth, they indicate a modest lifestyle equipped with measured comforts. In contrast to these privileged positions, during the early seventeenth century in Mexico City, a *mulata* slave by the name of María testified to the Spanish Inquisition that she had called upon the devil when her mistress was branding her on the face. She had intended to later repent [her confession.]⁴ In 1672, a *mulata* was falsely accused of having poisoned her mistress. Her punishment included being dragged through the streets, garroted, her right hand was cut off, and her body was “propped up in front of the city gallows for public

² Ibid., 119.
³ Ibid., 118.
Colonial Latin America from the sixteenth century through the early nineteenth century experienced a great transformation in the make up of its population never before experienced and today Latin America lives on the dividends of what was rendered. Often referred to as the ‘forgotten root’ or la tercera raíz (the third root), the African population in colonial Mexico greatly outnumbered the Spanish population. It is estimated that approximately 250,000 to 500,000 Africans were brought to Mexico as slaves. As Herman Lee Bennett refers to the population boom, "In 1698, the Franciscan traveller John Francis Gemelli Careri estimated that Mexico City’s inhabitants numbered 100,000 of whom “the greatest part of them are Blacks and Mulattoes by reason of the vast number of slaves that have been carried thither.”" Estimates of more than sixty thousand Africans had been brought to Mexico by the end of the sixteenth century alone. African slaves had become status symbols among the elite. Slavery of the indigenous population had been outlawed by the Spanish crown during the 1540s and mortality rates among the indigenous population were intensely grave due to malnutrition, famine and diseases imported by the Spaniards such as smallpox, typhus, measles, influenza, and malaria which decimated entire populations. These conditions were part of the impetus for securing an alternative labor force which was found in the importation of slaves from Africa. As a result of the transatlantic slave trade, significant African communities emerged throughout the Americas including Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, and other locales. Recent scholarship by pioneering scholars reveals remarkable cultural and historical narratives which serve as touchstones and contribute to the studies of the African Diaspora. Indeed this study of images and representations of mulatas in colonial Latin America communicates a richly textured range of experiences and are expressions of social, political, and religious climatologies. Latin American colonial art reflects a richly textured mulata experience. This work specifically examines the images and representations of mulatas in colonial Latin American art.

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5 Cope, The Limits of Racial Domination, 39.
America has greatly benefited and is indebted to the groundbreaking research of these historians and anthropologists. For example, the work of scholars such as Vera Kutzinski, Laura A. Lewis, and Joan Cameron Bristol have centralized the \textit{mulata} body within colonial frameworks and have contributed pioneering feminist, gendered studies of the \textit{mulata} as social actor. The appearance of the \textit{mulata} in Latin America shares similar experiences that transcend geographical borders. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis the scope of countries has been limited to Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil.

A \textit{mulato} in this time and place is defined as one born of African and Spanish ancestry or of African and Portuguese ancestry and a \textit{mulata} is, of course, the female gender of the caste. At various moments the term \textit{mulato} also refers to one born of African and indigenous ancestry and in Spanish Inquisition records, the term \textit{mulata} sometimes refers to a woman of any mixture of African ancestry. In this thesis, the term is more popularly referencing the offspring of a black African and white Spanish or Portuguese union. The use of the term \textit{mulato} appeared in the Spanish colonies after 1549 on a regular basis. The zoologically derived terminology ‘\textit{mulato}’ has its roots in colonialism and comes from the Spanish and Portuguese word ‘\textit{mulo}’ for ‘mule.’ The mule as a “sterile cross between a donkey and a horse, advances the notion that blacks were of a different kind insofar as the offspring they had with the Spaniards or Indians were seen to produce nothing replicable; that is, no lineages.”\footnote{Laura A. Lewis, \textit{Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 30.} The consequence of not having any lineages of African blood could have mollified Spanish fears of an uncontrollable black population. An uncontrolled black population could potentially form alliances with the indigenous population and oust Spanish authority from New Spain.

In Blair Shewchuk’s article, \textit{Mulatto and Malignity}, he states, “To outlaw \textit{mulatto} because of Spanish and Latin roots few are probably aware of has a tinge of breeding enforcement about it, like the old laws against mixing races. It suggests that our language must be kept pure, clean of anything that could be remotely read as offensive by one group with a knowledge of etymology.”\footnote{Blair Shewchuk, “Mulatto and Malignity,” CBS Online, http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/words/mulatto.html (accessed January 15, 2009).} Colonizers chose to reflect the hybridity of the \textit{mulato}
with the hybridity of a beast that is the offspring of a horse and donkey and is therefore considered offensive by some familiar with the etymology. So what does the etymology of the term *mulato* reveal about colonial attitudes regarding race, reproduction, and desirability? In her essay, *The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of “Race” in Colonial Mexico*, author María Elena Martínez elaborates on the term *mulato* by describing what seventeenth century jurist Juan de Solórzano y Pereira had to say. He said that it was used, “to describe the offspring of Spaniards and blacks because they were considered an “uglier” and more unique mixture than mestizos and because the word conveyed the idea that their nature was akin to that of mules.”⁹ The term *mestizo* was used to refer to the offspring of a Spanish and indigenous union. A more detailed explanation of casta or caste terminologies will be elaborated upon in chapter one. The popular implementation and adoption of zoologically derived descriptions of a caste system articulates the bifurcation of the Other. It is the process of conversion or the articulation of the Other or Oriental by the West. That is self/other, Spaniard/African, Christian/heretic, white/black and other bifurcated systems of relation to the self emerge as a lens for interpreting and controlling the colonial experience through a pejorative vocabulary describing Otherness. As Homi K. Bhabha states in *The Location of Culture*, “It is only by understanding the ambivalence and antagonism of the desire of the Other that we can avoid the increasingly facile adoption of the notion of a homogenized Other, for a celebratory, oppositional politics of the margins or minorities.”¹⁰

In this thesis the term *mulata* is italicized because it identifies a specific personage and locates a particular set of circumstances and conditions. The Spanish spelling also differentiates it from the English spelling of mulatta which invokes a US/Protestant historical narrative that refers to the “one drop rule” – that is one drop of African blood categorized a person’s blackness. The italicized Spanish spelling invokes its historical narrative in New Spain, etymology, references in historical documents including Spanish Inquisition records, and hopefully contributes to a re-reading of Africans in the Diaspora. It also de-sanitizes colonial mythologies of the White Legend as a peaceable, altruistic conquest of Latin

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America by revealing political, social, and religious schematizations. In Carla L. Peterson’s essay, “Modernity and Historical Consciousness in the “New Negro” Novel at the Nadir (1892-1903),” she discusses Friedrich Nietzsche’s counsel regarding the history of man quoting him as advising, “‘man’ cannot forget the past and believed historical consciousness to be an essential feature of human life….we can explain the past only from the point of view of our present and what is most ‘powerful’ in it; in this sense, the present redeems the past.”

The etymologies of images are equally powerful, especially when elevated to the status of art and/or religion. The title of this thesis is Rendering of a Mulata: The Discovery and Rethinking of Mulatas in Colonial Latin American Art. The title is inspired by a painting attributed to Manuel de Arellano from 1711 entitled Rendering of a Mulatto. The term rendering is derived from the Anglo-French rendre meaning to give back or surrender, rendering also means to cause to be or become. All of these definitions will be explored in this thesis with regards to the rendering of a mulata through the surrendering of visual explorations of mulatas in the colonial art of Latin America with the hopes of becoming.

After reading an article about the history and trends in Afro-Mexican scholarship by Ben Vinson, III a significant research maladroit appeared. Vinson is a notable male historian who has produced ground-breaking research rich in quantitative data from archival sources regarding the lives of colonial Afro-Mexican militiamen and Afro-Mexican slave societies. Remarking on the scholar’s maleness is imperative to understanding the author’s negation of the contribution of female scholars to the discourse of Afro-Mexican studies. Of all of the twenty-six scholars whom the author mentions by name in the article that have contributed to the discourse of Afro-Mexican studies – all twenty-six are male scholars. He offers a linear, masculinist approach that focuses on the lives of Afro-Mexican men with an emphasis on corporate entities and institutions that often exclude women (i.e. military, confraternities.) Most of the scholars mentioned are anthropologists, historians, and sociologists. Vinson refers to current trends and directions in Afro-Mexican scholarship as he states,


On the other hand, religion and magic are themes of great importance to current and emerging studies, since these arenas offered power to Afro-Mexicans, especially in the colonial period. Historians are also beginning to triangulate studies of blacks with greater precision, studying the interrelationships between Indians, Afro-Mexicans, and Spaniards.\textsuperscript{13}

The author is referring to the work of two female scholars here, but does not mention their names. The emerging work that Vinson is referring to as having great importance regarding Afro-Mexicans and themes of religion and magic corresponds directly with the work of Anthropologist Laura A. Lewis (\textit{Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico}) and Historian Joan Cameron Bristol (\textit{Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century}). It should also be noted that the work of Lewis and Bristol is contemporary with the publishing of Vinson’s article. The power Vinson refers to that was offered to Afro-Mexicans because of religion, magic, and witchcraft was power offered mainly to women and will be discussed in chapter one.

Studying images of \textit{mulatas} within the colonial period is ripe with potentially contributing to a discourse that until recently has had few contributions of gendered, art historical analysis. It is therefore essential to ‘name’ – that is specifically identifying or naming the \textit{mulata} in colonial Latin American art.

\textbf{A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY}

Expanding on a brief historiography of the Afro-Latino informing this work I turn to the work of Herman Lee Bennett. In his book, \textit{Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640,} Bennett investigates the relationships between slave societies and ecclesiastical authorities including courts and the Inquisition, an increasing \textit{mulato} population, and the formation of black personhood within Christian matrimony. Bennett’s argument disrupts the traditionally accepted opinions regarding master-slave relationships being those of masters with absolute, uninterrupted power. Bennett credits this fictionalized relationship to the earlier work of scholars regarding the transatlantic slave trade, but who later discovered through examination of slave laws

(Siete Partidas and the Code Noir) that the master-slave experience proved to be a more ambiguous and less linear experience.

One of the primary interruptions of the master-slave relationship was the intervention of canon law. As the Church intervened within the master-slave relationship by exercising ecclesiastical and secular authority, it created stresses on the master-slave relationship because of its often opposing jurisdictional authority. Bennett argues the Church’s interventions were to ameliorate slavery’s excesses. Sometimes the stresses between the master-slave relationship and the Church resulted favorably for the slaves. He references the work of Frank Tannenbaum who affirmed the Church as endowing slaves with “moral personality.” The Church also identified Africans as extra ecclesiam which is an ecclesiastical term that describes “persons who did not profess Christianity and thus gave them rights that competed with their slave status.” Bennett describes the formation of how the status of Afro-Mexican slaves as Christians impacted their lives as they related to the ecclesiastical courts and the Inquisition. He states, “Crown and clergy believed that cultural interlopers – mulattos, ladinos, negros, criollos, conversos, and moriscos…had to be controlled if orthodoxy was to prevail in the república.” The chosen method of control was the Inquisition. The public nature of the Inquisition with the open display of the auto-de-fé was to serve as deterrents against any heretical contentions. An auto-de-fé was most popularly a public and humiliating spectacle of penitence sponsored by the Inquisition which featured a mass, a reading of the crimes, and then the punishment of the accused. Bennett’s studies reveal the consciousness of black persons regarding Christian morality, ethical laws of behavior, and the sophistication of employing rhetorical strategies that sometimes manipulated inquisitors. These stealthy maneuverings also revealed the marital structure among Afro-Mexicans who enjoyed the rights of marriage.

In similar fashion to Bennett, Ben Vinson, III explores marriage patterns among Afro-Mexicans and finds greater intermarriage among urban militiamen as opposed to rural militiamen. Vinson attributes the exogamy of the urban militiaman to the process of


15 Ibid., 78.
*blanquiamente* or whitening of one’s race. Yet, Vinson complicates this argument asserting, “even if soldiers took white spouses, their prospects for whitening were counterbalanced by the high visibility of being a *pardo* soldier in the local free-colored battalion.”¹⁶ Vinson supports his arguments by examining occupational, economic, military census documents, and marital patterns shared in a series of tables for review. He identifies through examining marriage documents that the free-colored militiamen preferred to marry mestiza or white women more frequently than marrying *mulatas*. Although, Afro-Mexican militiamen married white women in larger numbers, Vinson speculates that women were of low enough socio-economic position and therefore accessible. Marital eligibility depended largely on socio-economic status and was not directly correlated to race and occupation. When examining the social structure of Igualapa (in the present state of Guerrero in south-western Mexico) when white men arrived under atypical circumstances, Vinson discovers that, “White men in that situation married available *castizas*, *mestizas*, or *mulattas* according to their social station and profession.”¹⁷ Both of the works of Bennett and Vinson help to illustrate how the positioning of the *mulata* and the social codes of marriage patterns may have contributed to the cultural meanderings we discover in casta paintings.

The colonial constructs of race and class have also been explored by historian, R. Douglas Cope in his book, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*. The cover illustration features a casta painting by Miguel Cabrera from 1763 entitled *De español y mestiza, castiza* or *From Spanish and Mestiza comes Castiza*. A more detailed investigation into casta paintings is to follow in chapter one. The strength of Cope’s arguments lies in the numerous accounts from Inquisition documents and various other resources which share personal details of legal transactions. The caste system presented barriers to the castas, however, with a proper line of credit many of those barriers could be overcome for a fortunate few. Because of the close and squalid living arrangements in the *casas de vecindad* and working relationships many castas shared resources developing close bonds. Cope argues that many of the castas (plebeians in general) were unaware of

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¹⁷ Ibid., 125.
their ancestry and that they were uninterested in the caste system. He refers to Fredrik Barth’s “structuring of interaction” as the reason for interracial contacts. One of the main strategies for social mobility was to change one’s social network and create more advantageous social relationships. Most plebeian children adopted the occupations of their parents, so in order to break the exploitative cycle of the patron-client system they would have to make more strategic decisions. Cope supports this argument by referring to the statistics on occupations by racial groups employing a similar methodology with that of Vinson. Cope confirms that almost half of the mulata population was employed as servants. Nevertheless, even though some castas became upwardly mobile, they later realized that further progress was prevented because of their race. This is also similar to what Vinson argues of the free-colored militiamen who married white women.

Cope describes how, “Catalina de los Angeles, the mulatta servant of a church prebendary, managed to place both her adopted sons into service with elite Spaniards.”

Cope successfully details the lives of mulatas as they pertain to the master-slave relationship and describes various modes of manumission and agency. Slaves had to have a sophisticated appreciation for the workings of social mobility in order to establish a network of credit and be able to act independently carrying out their own purpose. He confirms saying, “Cash was the language slave owners understood best; so slaves desiring freedom had to find a source of money – friends, relatives, or prospective employers.” It is Cope’s use of narratives of the slave experience that provide some of the most useful information and perspectives on the relationships between race, class, and the formation of mulatas as social actors.

Anthropologist Laura A. Lewis also explores themes of race, class, and the social mobility of mulatas in colonial Mexico by exploring the relationship between blacks and witchcraft. In her book, Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico, Lewis makes several observations of the feminized/Indian as practitioner of witchcraft and how this manifested within the castas. Lewis observes that while some Africans practiced witchcraft or healings learned from their native lands, they began to adopt the witchcraft of the Indians due to the intimacy of social positioning at the bottom of the colonial hierarchy.

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18 Cope, The Limits of Racial Domination, 88.

19 Ibid., 98.
Lewis recognizes that the fame of indigenous witches could be contributed to their knowledge of native flora and fauna. She examines several cases where blacks confessed that they were taught witchcraft and how to be a witch from Indians. The dark arts not only offered mulatas the possibility of experiencing a mode of power in a caste system that denied them power, but could also be financially beneficial. Lewis explores the powers of the Black-Indian witches who claimed to be skilled and knowledgeable in witchcraft. Lewis references Inquisition denunciation documents in her studies and implicates Spaniards, not only as their confessors, but also as procurers of magic. She shares, “one Spanish woman from Guadalajara dispatched her mulatto servant girl to find an Indian who had knowledge of an herb the Spaniard wanted; another…told a black slave girl to grind roots an Indian…had brought to the Spaniard for witchcraft.”

Although the blacks and mulatas were acting under the dictates of their masters, they sometimes reported their masters to the Inquisition. The witchcraft experience for many blacks and mulatas demonstrates the intimacies of the castas and the search for power. This search for unsanctioned alternative power is also explored in more detail in the work of historian Joan Cameron Bristol’s book *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century.*

In the chapter entitled “Creating Alternate Forms of Authority,” Bristol describes Afro-Mexican use of witchcraft as a vehicle for exercising power.

Afro-Mexicans used magic to create alternate definitions of authority that diverged from those of the crown and Spanish elites. One way they did this was by using love magic…to mediate their social relationships and gain power over others. The other way…through magic was less direct and less intentional. The ability to cure could earn Afro-Mexicans honra (honor-virtue) and the respect and deference of their clients of all castes, and this translated into a kind of authority.

Like Lewis, Bristol references Inquisition testimonies of denouncement as the source of many of her findings. Many of the Afro-Mexican women that Bristol refers to used witchcraft as a measure of power to participate in the capitalist system regarding the exchange value of their body as an act of transgression making them more difficult to govern. Sometimes they practiced witchcraft against their owners who may have mistreated

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them. Bristol records the fear that many owners had that their slaves may injure them as the result of witchcraft. However, Bristol also shares examples of masters who wholeheartedly welcomed the healing practices of Afro-Mexican women. In one particular case, the author describes an ill Spanish official gratefully crediting a *mulata* for restoring his health. She used a poultice, prepared special drinks for him, and had sewn a small bag containing loose hairs inside of his shirt. Bristol uses this exchange to demonstrate how witchcraft could challenge the social hierarchy by altering power relations. Referencing the *mulata* healer she states, “a person who would have been considered far inferior to him in terms of calidad, gender, wealth, and power, seems to contradict what we know about New Spain’s social hierarchy.” These contradictions in what we may have previously thought concerning New Spain’s social hierarchy challenges us to review and reconsider the potencies of visual and textual resources – especially the regarding the roles of *mulatas* as social actors.

Bristol centralizes the *mulata* body as practitioner of witchcraft, healer, locus of secret knowledge, and latent potentiality of power and agency. While Afro-Mexican women gained a temporary measure of power through witchcraft, Bristol argues that they were not successful in transforming the official sphere of the colonial hierarchy nor could they have been expected to perform this accomplishment. She states, “Yet there are messages about successful resistance and agency to be taken from the stories of blacks and mulattoes in New Spain.” Bristol’s observations offer a powerful and intriguing perspective on the colonial history of Afro-Mexican women, intra-casta relationships, a gendered perspective, and alternative methods of power and resistance exercised by Afro-Mexican women.

In the chapter, “Divas, Atrevidas, y Entendidas: An Introduction to Identities,” taken from her book *Queer Latinidad*, author Juana María Rodríguez, discusses identity practices by examining discursive spaces. Rodríguez draws on the theories of Chela Sandoval, Michel Foucault, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Norma Alarcón, and Judith Butler. She incorporates (post)(neo)colonialist, postmodern, poststructuralist, and third-world feminist theory and criticisms in Latin America. Rodríguez examines spatiality as *latinidad* in motion or using Alarcón’s term, “subjects-in-process.”

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22 Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches*, 150.

23 Ibid., 222.
Rodríguez takes the time to define the term *latinidad* and the geopolitical implications of its complexities and contradictions. She continues to introduce a glossary of terms at the outset that she later incorporates throughout the text. By defining terms like *mestizaje*, *mulatismo*, *mi negrita*, *La India*, *El Chino*, and *pies de indio*, Rodríguez enters a discussion regarding the historical, political, and cultural contests that have shaped the definition of *latinidad*. She also uses radical feminist theory to assert that it is an illusion that the practice of using early colonial racial categories is no longer active in Latin America. She asserts that the formation of national identities and cultural identities are rooted in racialized, gendered, hetero-masculinist narratives.

Rodríguez’s discussions regarding naming as an identity practice, *afro-latinidad*, and the complex historical legacies of colonialism are germane to studying images of *mulatas* in colonial Latin American art. In colonial Mexico the Spanish crown instituted a series of casta paintings in an effort to control the expanding pantheon of racial compositions and to emphasize Spanish superiority. When examining the racialized taxonomies applied to the castas in colonial Mexico as illustrated in the casta paintings, one can revisit sites of cultural transformation as the result of racial hierarchies. Rodríguez’s assessment of contemporary self-naming as an identity practice by some Latin Americans identifying as *divas*, *atrevidas*, *entendidas*, *tortillera*, *marimacha*, etc. is situated in a colonial legacy. Rodriguez’s work successfully reviews these colonial legacies and identifies other correlations by positioning them within a radical feminist framework. This is also relevant to examining images of *mulatas* in colonial Latin American art because Rodriguez utilizes a third world feminist approach to examining the black female body as a stereotypical source of sexual, animalistic, primitive desires to be fulfilled by North American and European tourists. The colonial desire for the consumption of the *mulata* body as sustenance is elaborated upon in chapter three.

By recontextualizing *latinidad* within a geopolitical and linguistic context, Rodríguez emphasizes the indelible influence of the colonial period on contemporary situatedness. She suggests that thinking about *latinidad* in terms of history, culture, geography, language, and self-named identities is a way to think about differences. Here, I believe she draws on theory by Michel Foucault to describe how these seemingly contradictory sites of knowledge production can allow for positions of subjectivity and become sources of new meanings.
Rodríguez’s contribution to the discourse of *afrolatinidad* is refreshing because it is a subject that is seldom addressed from a (post)(neo)colonialist, radical feminist perspective that accounts for a colonial historical narrative, especially as it relates to the practice of naming. This practice of naming becomes increasingly important as we examine the nomenclature assigned in casta paintings and the caricatured ‘types’ in Cuba.

A brief historiographical review examining existing opinions, studies, and contributions to the discourse by scholars reveals gaps in research as they relate to the topic of *mulatas* in colonial Latin American art. As a result of examining the existing evidence as it relates to colonial Latin American art, I hope to argue the mostly invisible *mulata* body from popular discourse and discuss the reinscribed stereotypes of the tragic *mulata* as sanctuary of exotica, primitivized knowledge, and esoteric powers. These criticisms are a characteristic treatment of the African female slave narrative maintaining the myopic bifurcations of master/slave, strong/weak, and subject/object. While these criticisms can be useful when applying a simplistic analysis of the *mulata* – the negotiations of power, agency, and sexuality create a complex universe requiring a more robust sophistication in order to fully process the dimensions of power relations.

**SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

This thesis begins by looking at the negotiations of power by first looking at the anatomy and physiology of *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood, which was an Iberian based ideology that glorified the idea of the Old Christian as biologically superior and separate from Jewish, Muslim, or heretical heritage. The cartography of this ideology embraces new borders and bounds in Latin America as it transitions into casting African lineage as impure. How does this inform image production as it relates to representations of *mulatas* in Latin America? Following *limpieza de sangre* is an examination of the appearances of *mulatas* in the casta paintings of New Spain. What do these images reveal about the caste system or casta system in New Spain and the integration of social networks? By drawing on the previous research of Ilona Katzew, Susan Deans-Smith, and Magali M. Carrera I examine assertions of power through identity formation, how they relate to the Enlightenment’s ‘culture of curiosity’, and the differentiating force of the Other. This is followed by an examination of the *mulata* and magic. As previously mentioned, many
mulatas in New Spain became practitioners of witchcraft, as learned from indigenous masters of the dark arts. What do the intersections of the mulata witch, the Inquisition, and social hierarchy reveal about contestations of power and authority?

In chapter two I look at images of the mulata in Cuba and Brazil. Beginning with Cuba’s Virgen de la Caridad, Cuba’s patron saint as a mulata Virgin and coupling with the Orixa Ochún, Santería’s iconic goddess represented also as a mulata, I look at the syncretism of their depiction and the dual worshipping by religious devotees. How do the symbolics of these images and representations of the iconic mulata inform nationhood and religious identity? Moving on to Brazil, I examine a detail of a church ceiling painted by Manuel da Costa Ataíde from 1801-1802 in Minas Gerais entitled Assumption of the Virgin with King David and angelic choir. How does the positioning of the mulata as the Virgin in this painting inform identity formation within a social system where mulatas had few legal rights? What are the similarities and differences between Cuba’s mulata Virgen de la Caridad and Brazil’s mulata Virgin of the Assumption? Then in chapter three, I look at images of the mulata and her constant juxtaposition with food in Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil. Following Roland Barthes’s semiological pioneering interpretations of food constituting a sign system, I look at how the use of food as a sign system establishes a relationship between the consumer (male gaze) and the consumed (mulata body.) Finally, I briefly examine the earliest known dated and signed portrait from South America and how it informs the politics of representation of the mulata body.

Given the multicultural nature of the intersections of imperialism and the transatlantic slave trade we are presented with a colonial experience that produced various racial mixtures. Why then focus on images and representations of mulatas? Focusing singularly on the mulata body in colonial Latin American art is a subject that is seldom addressed in art history from a gendered perspective that includes the countries of Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil. Recent thesis research and dissertation research have produced discussions of the mulata body within Cuban visual and literary texts. For example, a recent thesis by Amalia Z. Pritchard entitled “Postcolonial Cuban-American Expression: Latinas and Goths” (2009) looks at the caricature of the mulata in Cuban and Cuban-American culture by mainly focusing on literature including colonial, pre-revolutionary, and modern texts. Pritchard also looks at the appearance of the gothic mulata in the works of contemporary artists Coco Fusco and Ana
Mendieta. Alison Fraunhar’s dissertation, “Re-Visioning the Mulata in Cuban Visual Culture” (2005) looks at images of mulatas throughout the late colonial (1860s – 1890s), Republican (1900 – 1960), Revolution (1960 – 1990), and Special Period (1992 – 1997) and then through the present time in Cuba. She examines images of the mulata, in subsequent articles as well, as representations of the national identity and as a signifier of Cuban cultural production by analyzing race and gender in Cuban visual culture, arts, film, and social and political agendas.

These recent studies are timely contributions to the discourse of the African Diaspora in Cuba. However, an art historical analysis of the mulata in Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil during the colonial period could also potentially contribute to studies of the African Diaspora, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Art History, etc. By focusing exclusively on the mulata, there is an intentional recognition, a resuscitation of a body that has been somewhat trivialized or caricaturized in the hegemony of the social imaginary. Discussing the black heritage of Latin Americans can sometimes be a soliloquy in the dark. Many Latin Americans, including some scholars, are reluctant to address a black heritage favoring rather a sanitized history with a mestizaje genealogy. Mestizaje is a term popularized during the late colonial, early independence period that describes the mixing of the races and was promoted as part of a nationalist agenda. Previous discussions of the mulata in colonial art have absorbed the mulata body into a mestizaje soup of diversity. Colonialism conjures memories of the bitterness of slavery and perhaps addressing these traumatic gesticulations may summon feelings of guilt or fear or nervous agitation. However, it is through the discomfiting of ourselves that we encounter the articulation of self-narration. As Homi K. Bhabha states, “In another’s country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement…once as stranger, and then as friend.”

24 Bhabha, The Locations of Culture, xxv.
CHAPTER 2

BLOOD STAINS: THE SYMBOLICS OF BLOOD
AND LIMPIEZA DE SANGRE

In 1772, the vacancy of a chaplaincy located in the Valley of Etlá, near Oaxaca, became contested by various rivals after the death of the last direct descendent of the founders of the chaplaincy. The founding caciques were an indigenous couple, don Diego González de Chavez and his wife doña Josefa María de Zarate who founded the chaplaincy in 1722. “Cacique” is a title that refers to a legitimized pre-colonial, native dynastic ruler. The cacique couple petitioned their alcalde mayor or corregidor (a chief magistrate or district judge) to establish a probanza, or certificate of authority, that the chaplaincy be inherited as a mayorazgo (or cacicazgo) such that candidates must prove legitimate birth, being of pure Indian blood or otherwise being untainted by any mala raza or bad race. The preferred chaplaincy candidate would possess the qualities of nobility, virtue, and studiousness. There were three contending candidates. One of the candidates, Joseph C. Carrasco, had been accused by a rival’s father, don Lazaro López Pacheco, who insisted that the chaplaincy be granted to his son instead of Carrasco. Pacheco’s accusation against Carrasco accused him of having a grandmother who was a mulata, which would instantly disqualify him as an eligible candidate because, “such a quality is inherited (communicable), and is passed down to all of the descendants of the trunk.”

Limpieza de sangre or Purity of Blood began as an Iberian based ideology obsessed with genealogies and a blood line free of any Jewish or Muslim lineage. The practice of limpieza de sangre functioned to prove the religious sanctification of the Old Christian. Sometimes the petitioned information was referred to as información de limpieza de sangre, información de genealogía y limpieza de sangre, or just as información. In her article, Casta Painting: Identity and Social Stratification in Colonial Mexico, author Ilona Katzew

25 Martínez, Genealogical Fictions, 119.
describes, "The subordination of state to church and the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) - where the absence of Jewish or Muslim blood defined an honorable "Old Christian" - were factors in Spain's hierarchically organized society."  

The Old Christian’s *limpieza de sangre* provided a purity of bloodline free of Jews, Muslims, and heretics, as well as, provided legal documentation of legitimate birth. The corroboration of this social currency had specific socio-economic and political advantages privileging such status with access to coveted positions of power. In his book, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*, author R. Douglas Cope remarks that plebeians in general knew little of their ancestry and were uninterested in the classificatory components of the *sistema de castas*. Therefore, while *limpieza de sangre* provided a form of legitimized social currency – functionally, the castas experienced various continuums of social and professional mobility. In 1795, under the Bourbon regime, reformation of some social policies in New Spain allowed for the purchase of *cédulas de gracias al sacar* which could be purchased by non-whites to eliminate the “defect” of their birth. As a revenue generating line of income for the crown, a price list was issued for purchasing the *gracias al sacar*. María Elena Martínez elaborates that the price list focused on dispensing of the status of mixed African ancestry which amounted to a tacit recognition that black ancestry was deemed legally and socially impure and that native descent was not.

**LIMPIEZA DE SANGRE IN NEW SPAIN**

In New Spain the translation of *limpieza de sangre* was transmuted to convey a purity of blood free of any African ancestry. While this new translation in the New World might signify that *limpieza de sangre* is a singularly racially motivated system of beliefs that refers to race and not just religious affiliation, some scholars would argue that this approach is too myopic and anachronistic and that race should not be analytically discussed synonymously with *limpieza de sangre*. The idea of race contains various meanings during different spaces

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27 Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*, 78.

28 Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, 259.
and times without a singular linear trajectory of definition. It began to be more closely associated with the biological in the nineteenth century when “race as biology” began to appear, not haphazardly, during the end of colonialism’s reign. However, the “stickiness” of racial terminologies and identifications began to gain prominence during the sixteenth century as a result of colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and the commerce of a global economy. While *limpieza de sangre*, race, and racism are not mutually exclusive, the discussion of *limpieza de sangre*, race, and religion bear significant intersectionalities and will be addressed according to their saliency in the lives of *mulatas* in colonial Mexico.

In her book, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, author, María Elena Martínez discusses the importance of using *limpieza de sangre* as a methodological lens for examining colonial Mexico, although she declares that some historians have tried to convince her of the irrelevance of the concept of *limpieza de sangre* outside of Spain. Even though *limpieza de sangre* is referred to in colonial documents of New Spain, some Latin American academics would argue that the discussion of *limpieza de sangre* was strictly an Iberian-based ideology and had no bearing in New Spain and that a preferred methodology for understanding New Spain would be rather to examine estate-based systems of class. The same scholars distorted the argument by affirming that because Spanish males intermixed with Amerindians, which at times included marriage, that they could not have been concerned with blood purity. Martínez explains that, “This current of thought, which had among its many flaws the propensity to see early colonial sexual relations not as acts of power but as signs of a more gentle or open approach to colonization (sometimes attributed to the history of Spanish and Portuguese “commingling” with Jews and Muslims) is part of the White Legend of Spanish history, an apologetic view of Spain’s actions in the Americas.”

Therefore, conducting a closer examination of understanding how *limpieza de sangre* began and operated in Spain is important to understanding how the same system was employed in colonial Mexico.

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THE CONVIVENCIA IN SPAIN AND JEWISH CONVERSION

The convivencia or coexistence in Spain was a multicultural society of Jews, Muslims, and Christians that flourished from the eighth through the middle of the twelfth century in what some scholars refer to as the Jewish “Golden Age.” It ended around the end of the fifteenth century with the expelling of the Jews and Muslims. The new consensus was that Spain should be a country of a singular Christian religion. As in many societies which have just experienced devastating factors that have enervated the stability of a monetary economy, persecutions of a particular group often ensue. After the plague of the Black Death ravaged Europe in the fourteenth century a wave of anti-Semitism emerged in Spain. Anti-Semitic violent attacks began to appear as Jews were also subjected to a series of political, sumptuary, economic, and professional restrictions. As a result of the widespread violence and fear, the first wave of Jewish conversion to Christianity began. Jews who converted to Christianity were called conversos. Muslims who converted to Christianity were referred to as moriscos, a term that would have a different casta meaning in New Spain.

The Jews faced the consequences of violence, death, or excommunication from Spain if they did not convert. Jews in Spain were forced to pay a disproportionately high amount of taxes which is also evident later in the taxation records during the time of King Ferdinand’s and Queen Isabella’s Granada campaigns. Some of the motivations for conversos to convert to Christianity were to secure economic, political, and social opportunities including permitting them to live outside of the juderías or Jewish quarters and also they would no longer have to wear distinctive clothing identifying them as Jews. They were eventually banned from holding public office. While these efforts in conversion assisted in ameliorating some of the brutality they faced they were not entirely relieved of persecution. If these anti-Semitic tropes sound familiar to modern times it is because it is the first systematized and sanctioned culture of anti-Semitism which would build similar anti-Semitic tactics used later by Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime. In his book, Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians, author David Biale goes on to describe the situation saying:

The link between the Spanish limpieza de sangre and Nazi laws of blood remains a highly contested one. Although modern anti-Semitism may well have been aware of the early modern precedents to their own racism, the actual intellectual filiation was probably indirect. The wave of Jewish conversions to Christianity that started in Spain and ultimately produced the doctrine of pure blood swept over northern Europe as well, if in lesser numbers, and had similar effects. It was
in this way that the seed of Spanish racism entered into German culture, where it germinated and eventually flowered in the late nineteenth century.\(^{30}\)

In the article, *Religious Belief and Social Conformity: The ‘Converso’ Problem in Late-Medieval Córdoba*, J.H. Edwards examines the “problem” of the *conversos* by looking at the origins and nature of the Spanish Inquisition in more detail. Edwards refers to the material circumstances and the theological debate regarding the nature of conversion. The Inquisition was very suspicious of *conversos* and staged false confessions of religious dissents by accusing them of ‘judaizing’ or continuing to practice Judaism. The idea of secret Jews or “crypto-Judaism” was the impetus fueling a wave of anti-Semitic attacks and inquisitorial fervor. The Jews, who were associated with money-lending, finance, and credit, provided a strong, stable economic base for Spanish society. Nevertheless, the authorities launched a violent rioting campaign against the *conversos* looting and confiscating their property and wreaking havoc. The perpetrators of looting and confiscating properties justified these acts by citing an account of a young *converso* child who poured water (or urine) on the statue of Our Lady in a Lenten procession. The official attitude toward *conversos* was one of suspicion which was the result of Spain’s unresolved identity as a nation. It did not really understand the place of Jews in a predominately Christian society and therefore resulted in demanding forced assimilation and ultimately conversion. In 1500, the Inquisition was introduced in Córdoba with Diego Rodríguez Lucero, a canon of Seville as inquisitor. Edwards describes the accusations made against Lucero saying, “that he convicted innocent people of ‘judaizing’, using false confessions, frequently extracted under torture…in Lucero’s mind, Córdoba was a kind of national centre for Jews who masqueraded as Christians, while at the same time continuing to practice Judaism secretly, in synagogues and led by rabbis.”\(^{31}\) The introduction of the Inquisition under Isabella and Ferdinand’s rule has implied, according to some scholars, that it was a thin veneer to legitimize their rule, and satisfy religious, social, political, anticonverso, and anti-Semitic campaigns. Martínez offers other insight into the multivalence of the Inquisition in Spain saying, “because the Holy


Office confiscated the estates of the persons it prosecuted and disinherited the descendants of those it burned, some historians stress that economic factors also played a role in its founding and perpetuation.  

**THE INQUISITION AND CONVERSION STRATEGEM IN NEW SPAIN**

The same tactics would be duplicated in New Spain. For example, in her book *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570*, author Inga Clendinnen discusses the role of Fray Diego de Landa, a Bishop of the Order of San Francisco who was also the Provincial in the Yucatan. Diego de Landa is characterized by his lust for power, cruelties, vengefulness, and talent for manipulating and persuading the higher authorities for his causes. He launched a campaign of brutal tortures against the Maya under the authority of the Inquisition accusing them of worshipping devilish idols and practicing human sacrifices. He inflicted various methods of punishments to illicit “confessions” by using water torture and torture by cords. These charges were not officially recorded except for sentencing purposes. He crafted false testimonies of evidence stating that the Maya were practicing child sacrifice and disposing of the bodies in the cenotes; which were supposed to be investigated, but no evidence to these crimes surfaced. *Cenotes* were naturally occurring holes in the ground that led to an underwater spring of fresh water. They provided a fresh water supply and places of worship for the Maya. Landa describes in his *Relación*, written in the monastery of San Juan de los Reyes:

> And they returned to the worship of their idols and to offer them sacrifices not only of incense but also of human blood. The friars made an Inquisition about this and asked the aid of the alcalde mayor, and they arrested a great number and put them on trial, after which an auto de fe was celebrated, at which they placed many upon the scaffold wearing the coroza [the headdress of shame] and scourged and shorn, while others were clothed in the sanbenito [the garment of shame] for a time. And some, deceived by the Devil, hanged themselves for grief, and in general they all showed deep repentance and a willingness to become good Christians.

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32 Martinez, *Genealogical Fictions*, 34.

The sacrifice of blood here could be interpreted as a palimpsest of religious techniques and disciplines. One inscription reads the Old Christian using the human blood of heretical offenders offered as sacrificial appeasement to achieve the episteme of the Good Christian.

After the expulsion of the Moors and the assimilation of the conversos, the conquistadors were well practiced in how to repeal another’s beliefs by exacting violence, using methods from the Inquisition, as well as using political, economic, and social motivations. These methods had been meted with much success in Spain and strengthened the campaign of conquest to use the same methods of conversion against the indigenous population. These attitudes were inspired by the acquisition of material riches and impassioned religious fervor that also led to repartimiento, which was a colonial system of corvée labor. Because limpieza de sangre was used as a precursor for establishing gente decente (respectable personage) and excluding gente baja (low class people / plebeians), it propelled competitive practices for holding public office, military positions, dignities, civil service, and high ranking religious positions as described earlier with the perfidious practices of the chaplaincy in the Valley of Etla. When competitions arose, limpieza de sangre could invoke the suspicion of the Inquisition. Such was the case of the Flemish painter, Simon Pereyns.

Pereyns, sometimes spelled Simon Perínez, was born in Antwerp and spent time in Toledo and Lisbon. He made the acquaintance of the Spanish nobleman, Don Gastón de Peralta who became the viceroy of New Spain. Arriving in 1566, Pereyns became one of New Spain’s most famous and well accomplished European painters. Many early Mexican paintings, frescoes, and sculptures were influenced by the work of Flemish artists and book illustrations. Pereyns’s altarpiece at the Franciscan mission church of San Miguel, Huejotzingo, Mexico, 1584-8, is an example of his professional accomplishments.

His several talents and commissions attracted the attention of embittered artistic rivals, one in particular, was a former partner named Francisco Morales. Pereyns was arrested on September 10, 1568 because of accusations made against him by Morales and his wife accusing Pereyns of saying that “it was not such a big sin for a bachelor to sleep with an unmarried woman as if they were truly married.” Although the Inquisition was not officially established in Mexico until 1571 it functioned unofficially since 1522 and Pereyns was tried before ecclesiastical authorities. Other aspersions cast against Pereyns accused him of
preferring secular themes over non-secular, religious ones. Pereyns was praised in a letter written to him by his father encouraging his dedication to painting portraits instead of saints because he could earn more money. Despite Pereyns’s livid response to the letter as he tore it up – he was still accused of hailing from a Lutheran family. The negative, untrustworthy traits associated with the New Christian were considered to be atavistic and could therefore be biologically passed on to “infect” subsequent generations. During his trial a host of distinguished witnesses testified on Pereyns’s behalf including four Augustinian friars, art patrons, a sculptor and three witnesses who had accompanied the viceroy from Spain and could testify to Pereyns’s life in Spain and his professional adroitness. The Augustinian friars testified to Pereyns’s dedication as a practicing, devout Catholic. Although Pereyns had a capable defense, and regardless of the lengthy investigation and absence of proof against him, Pereyns was found guilty and condemned to torture on the rack in conjunction with water torture in order to elicit a confession. Pereyns remained faithful to his original story throughout his torture. He was ordered by the Holy Office as punishment to paint a retable to Our Lady of Mercy in the old Cathedral of Mexico.

Commissioners from the Inquisition were equipped with an approved set of questions when interrogating a witness in a purity investigation. Prior to the deposition, the witness would have sworn a vow of secrecy and truth, never to divulge the contents of the investigation, information, or method of questioning as the cost of exposing these secrets could be excomunication. The Inquisition perpetuated a culture of secrecy and mystery in order to control the population using fear tactics. A typical purity interrogation would have begun with a series of questions asking the witness to identify the said person of interest of whom the investigation is being conducted, including identifying the suspect’s residence, ancestry, and if they were known to be kin to Old Christians, New Christians, Jews, Muslims, *conversos*, clean blood, etc. The commissioner conducting the investigation used the approved questionnaire, but also sought concrete evidence to try to identify any stained lineage. Martínez describes an example of the “hard evidence” as discovering the existence of a *sanbenito*, or penitential garment worn by heretics (as referenced earlier by Diego de Landa in his report.) The person convicted of heresy would have to wear the garment “and which after they died were left hanging, indefinitely, in local churches with an inscription bearing the name of the heretic and usually describing the nature of his or her crime… - the
sanbenitos served as visual proof of impurity.” This manner of commemoration also functioned to protect future “pure” families from being “infected” or contaminated from the stain. Therefore, the obsession with blood, lineage, and family trees fueled the ideology of limpieza de sangre. In her essay Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America, author Ann Twinam describes, “The three most important documents in a colonist’s life – the birth certificate, the marriage certificate, and the will – recorded the personal histories of preceding generations by noting whether a person was or was not legitimate.”

**LIMPIEZA DE SANGRE AND PURE BLOOD/PURE SOUL**

Limpieza de sangre or purity of blood makes a careful definition of “pure” through a genealogical construction which automatically connotes that that which is “impure” is the opposite, thereby naturalizing a biologically and morally superior consciousness. In his treatise, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Friedrich Nietzsche remarks that the concept of superiority in politics always refers to the concept of superiority of soul, “Here, for example, ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ stand opposite each other for the first time as marks of distinction among the estates; and here, too, one later finds the development of a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ in a sense no longer related to the estates.”

The “pure” Old Christian was a concept of superiority of soul that fashioned its own ontological animous nobiles or noble soul which later developed a construction of the “impure” as bad, mala raza, bad blood, bad soul. Biale also discusses an association between blood and soul saying, Greek philosophers like Empedocles and Critias regarded blood as the soul and the principle of life, quite reminiscent of the biblical “the blood is the life” and “the blood is in the soul” (nefesh, “life force” in the biblical lexicon). Blood contained or was equivalent to the life/soul and therefore had to be disposed of properly, but whether it was in any sense a “divine” substance remains unclear.

The dichotomy is also illustrated as clean blood versus stained blood. The targeted Peninsular “bad” were the Jews and Moors. The targeted “bad” in New Spain were those of

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34 Martínez, Genealogical Fictions, 69.
35 Ann Twinam, Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 123.
37 Biale, Blood and Belief, 27.
African descent or African blood. Author R. Douglas Cope illustrates how the dichotomy of *limpieza de sangre* was associated with a cache of other characteristics and attributes in New Spain using the following chart (see Table 1) in his book *The Limits of Racial Domination*:\(^\text{38}\)

### Table 1. Hispanic Society in Two Groups

<table>
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<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Casta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Christians</td>
<td>New Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legitimate</td>
<td>illegitimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pure blood</td>
<td>impure blood</td>
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<tr>
<td>honorable</td>
<td>infamous</td>
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<tr>
<td>law-abiding</td>
<td>criminal</td>
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<tr>
<td>rich</td>
<td>poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>noble</td>
<td>plebeian</td>
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<tr>
<td>nonmanual workers</td>
<td>manual workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In New Spain, *limpieza de sangre* precluded that indigenous blood could be redeemed through successive generations of intermarriage with Spanish suitors and fully redeemed, as illustrated in casta paintings, by the third generation. In contrast, the African bloodline was unredeemable and any progeny resulting from multiple generations of mixing with Spanish ancestry would only be a bloodline haunted by tainted black blood. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, author Frantz Fanon states, “The mulatto woman wants not only to become white but also to avoid slipping back. What in fact is more illogical than a mulatto woman marrying a black man?”\(^\text{39}\) The identification with *limpieza de sangre* in New Spain was also

\(^{38}\) Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*, 19.

\(^{39}\) Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 37.
an identification with whiteness among the castas. In the Foreword of *Black Skin, White Masks* Kwame Anthony Appiah elaborates on the desire of the black/mulatta colonial woman saying, “Colonial women exhibit their identification with whiteness, for example, by attempting neurotically to avoid black men and to get close to (and ultimately cohabit with) white men; a process Fanon dubbed ‘lactification.’” Lactification refers to milk or breast milk and recalls whiteness. The concept of “lactification” also corresponds to *limpieza de sangre* because it was believed that the woman’s blood turned into breast milk and therefore “clean” blood produced “clean” breast milk. María Elena Martínez discusses how the European children born in the colonies were believed to experience a physiological and moral decline that was attributed to creole families using native or black wet nurses. She refers to the belief that, “women’s breast milk was ‘cooked blood.’” She explains how milk was defined, “as the ‘juice of the cooked blood that, among animals, nature sends to the udders of the female, so that she can raise her offspring.’” Hence, the tainted, “unclean” blood turned into tainted, “unclean” milk which would have been passed on to the creole offspring and therefore would explain any physical, mental, or moral degradation found in the child. This colonial haemotology which coded black blood as sanguine pollution was a reminder of the tangled Spanish legacy with the African descended Moors. The Moors who were of Black African, Berber, Muslim and non-Muslim descent inhabited Iberia for over eight hundred years. The Moorish occupation of Iberia which including most of Spain and Portugal except for the northwest region and the Basque region lasted until 1492 when the Jews and Muslims were finally rejected from Spain under the rule of Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella. However, the enmeshed Moorish-Spanish history is apparent in the remaining cultural heritage of Spain and Portugal as visited in their architecture, language, sciences, mathematics and other facets of daily life that demonstrate an indelible Moorish footprint.

According to *limpieza de sangre* and the *sistema de castas* (or casta system) black blood therefore implied moral degeneracy, ignorance, untrustworthiness, and a permanent stain of thorough reprehensibility. Martínez’s arguments regarding the feminization of

40 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, ix.
41 Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, 304.
42 Ibid., 304.
impure blood are especially revealing as she describes the various institutionalized manacles safeguarding a sexual economy obsessed with policing female sexual passivity, chastity, and social cloistering. Reiterative of the previously noted bifurcations, the shedding of blood also has honorable/dishonorable, clean/unclean connotations. Biale also contextualizes the feminization of impure female blood according to Galenic medicine saying, “female blood that does not turn into milk becomes menstrual blood. And whereas the blood of circumcision and clarified blood in the form of semen possessed certain divine qualities in the Kabbalah, the same could not be said for the blood of menstruation.”

In her essay *The Better Blood: On Sacrifice and the Churcning of New Mothers in the Roman Catholic Tradition*, author Grietje Dresen discusses how honorable or holy blood is masculinized because men have the power of intentional bloodshed as a soldier, priest, executioner, physician, first lover, “blood brother” while women’s bloodshed is treated as a dishonorable, unholy, polluted byproduct exhibited through menstruation, delivery, miscarriage, or first sexual intercourse experience. Dresen speculates on the gender-based double standard saying that, “the specific revulsion provoked by female blood appears to be, not a direct residue of infancy, but rather a later combination of defensive reactions against experiences recalling the maternal body; it also involves the urge to control that dangerous capacity women have – their power over reproduction – to which their ‘bleeding without dying’ testifies.”

The feminization of impure blood combined with the unredeemable essentializing of black blood positions the *mulata* in a bind of double negativity. According to the haemotology of *limpieza de sangre*, the *mulata* is dually cast as the feminine impure and the perpetually corruptible. It is through this lens of *mulata* subjectivity that casta paintings then become cogent witnesses of the visual clues describing a particular culture of instruction in the social imaginary.

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43 Biale, *Blood and Belief*, 91.

CASTA-WAYS: IMAGES OF THE MULATA IN CASTA PAINTINGS

Casta paintings were a series of paintings executed during colonial Mexico varying in number and sometimes existing in a series of sixteen paintings describing the various racial mixtures of the inhabitants. These paintings were commissioned by the Spanish and Criollo elite classes. Criollo or Creole is used here to describe someone of Spanish descent born in New Spain. Casta paintings often included similar tropes to identify the inhabitants of Mexico with taxonomical terminology for the new racial mixtures. These tropes included a family portrait of sorts illustrating the father, mother, and offspring, along with indications of profession and class. The series of portraits typically began with Spanish males leading the series as the initial progenitor while subsequent portraits illustrated a moral degeneration the closer they related to black people or blackness. The Spanish and Criollo elite clearly established a pyramid of power and prestige with the casta paintings, where the Spanish are at the top, native population in the middle, and the African population relegated to the bottom. This pyramid of power also extends to the social color continuum of desirable partners among women in colonial Mexico. “The mulata was held to be inferior to the mestiza because of her legal status as a slave woman. This preference, first for Indian women over black and for mestizas over mulatas, was the product of social stratification with reference to caste relations.”45 In Buenaventura José Guiol's From Spaniard and Castiza a Spaniard is Born, 1770-80, [see Figure 1 in Appendix] the Spanish father, castiza mother and Spanish daughter are dressed in fine jewels and European style garments with sumptuous fabrics (castiza is one born of Spanish and Spanish/mestizo ancestry; mestizo is one born of Spanish and Indian ancestry.) They are in a relaxed indoor setting with the standard red curtain in the background often seen in portraits of this period while they play a tranquil game of cards. The castiza mother is wearing a chiqueador which is a round-cut piece of velvet adhered to the face to simulate a beauty mark which was considered high fashion at the time. In contrast, Francisco Clapera's, From Mulato and Spaniard, Morisco, 1785 [see Figure 2 in Appendix] illustrates the pugnacious union of a mulato male and Spanish bride

whose household is plagued with violence and discord. The *mulato* father is in contestation with his Spanish wife to the point of physical violence as she grabs his coat and he pushes her away. A bowl has been tipped over on the table and its contents spill onto the floor. The father’s tri-corn hat is also on the floor alongside an unidentifiable muddle of food as the child is pulling on his mother’s skirt. Casta paintings were charged with showing the 'real' depictions of everyday life and as such served as propaganda for the Crown to discourage mestizaje or miscegenation as a means of controlling its population. However, when the Spanish arrived at the point of conquest and during colonialism, they did not bring very many Spanish women with them. The dearth of Spanish women in New Spain led to the involvement of Spanish men engaging in interracial relationships with the native and African populations. These interracial relationships upset the hierarchy and ideologies that the Spanish brought with them to New Spain. Ilona Katzew describes, "The subordination of state to church and the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) - where the absence of Jewish or Muslim blood defined an honorable "Old Christian" - were factors in Spain's hierarchically organized society."  

Ilona Katzew’s scholarship on casta paintings as seen in her book *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* and her article *Casta Painting: Identity and Social Stratification in Colonial Mexico* have been seminal and revelatory to the investigation of casta paintings. Katzew asserts that the production of casta paintings during eighteenth century Mexico served the Spanish elite’s desire to systematize society because of its perceived threat by the emerging castas. Katzew’s methodology involves viewing the series of casta paintings within the larger context of identity-formation. She accomplishes this by underscoring her analysis with historical accounts and conventions including riots, rebellions, and Mexico’s economic expansion. By framing casta paintings within the Enlightenment period, Katzew demonstrates how they functioned to satisfy European curiosity by classifying the “other” in an attempt to “enlighten” Spaniards. The pathology of these portraits as pseudo-scientific specimens offered for examination by the biologically obsessed and distressed was supposed to depict the realities of casta life.

CASTA NAMING CONVENTIONS

The casta painting naming conventions were about power and control. By inserting the new terminologies into the language where the newly named are identifying with the imposed nomenclatures and digesting them so that they become their reality is really “food for thought” in that the newly named are digesting the *mulatto, morisco, lobo, no te entiendo, coyote, chino,* etc.” absorbing the (carbs, proteins, and fats), as it were, for their sustenance and for their survival. The newly named adopted the naming conventions and identified themselves as such as witnessed in the records of the Spanish Inquisition, marriage documents, and other court records. The power of naming is the power to create identities for the perceived ‘Other.’ The free-colored militia in colonial Mexico enjoyed an increased agency when they adopted the nomenclature imposed on them and used it to their advantage. In Ben Vinson, III’s, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty, the Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico,* he describes, “By referring to themselves in caste-laden nomenclature, the militiamen secured added privileges, or fought to preserve existing benefits.”

Some of these benefits included: tribute immunities, *fuero* rights, permission to mediate land claims and influence local politics. However, to what extent the massive populace used the zoologically derived casta nomenclatures such as lobo, coyote, or *no te entiendo* (I don’t understand you) has been debated by scholars. These were often non-functioning taxonomies of castas. The most popularly used variations were *mestizo, mulato, morisco, negro or pardo,* and *indio,* and, they appeared more frequently in legal documents. Here is a brief introduction to the varied mixtures identified as castas:

1. Español and india beget mestizo
2. Mestizo and española beget castizo
3. Castizo and española beget español
4. Española and negro beget mulato
5. Española and mulato beget morisco
6. Morisca and español beget albino
7. Español and albina beget torna-atas
8. Indio and torna-atas woman beget lobo

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9. Lobo and india beget zambaigo
10. Zambaigo and india beget cambujo
11. Cambujo and mulata beget albarasado
12. Albarasado and mulata beget barcino
13. Barcino and mulata beget coyote
14. Coyote woman and indio beget chamiso
15. Chamisa and mestizo beget coyote mestizo
16. Coyote mestizo and mulata beget ahí te estás

I believe Katzew’s examination of the origins of casta terminologies is influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure’s theories on the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Saussure’s theory involves the political impact of words deriving their power from their difference to other words as much as from the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Katzew identifies the construction of language as a political act to emphasize the difference between the Spanish/Creole elite and persons of color or the ‘Other.’ To elaborate further using Jacques Derrida’s critique of structuralism and Saussurean theory, Derrida states that the experience that gives rise to language is derived from lack or the inadequacy of origin. His theory on arche-writing then proposes that this recognition of lack is a political act that gives rise to language, thus there being politics before politics and language before language. This is what Katzew explains as the reason for the casta namings rising from a pre-existing political condition of a lack or inadequacy of pure Spanish origin/pure blood (limpieza de sangre).

New Spain may have been more preoccupied with calidad than with the inventiveness of casta nomenclatures. Calidad was an encapsulation of a social identity that consisted of several variables including skin color, race, personal relationships, social practice, occupation, clothing, limpieza de sangre, slave status, and other social conditions. In her book Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century, author Joan Cameron Bristol further describes calidad as being more of a performance saying, “In many ways, then, calidad was a performance…the fact that some social mobility was possible indicates that calidad was based on more than mere skin

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Calidad and class were more frequently employed to describe people than caste or casta namings. Author Magali M. Carrera describes the use of calidad versus casta in her book *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*. Carrera refers to the work of María Concepción García Sáiz who catalogued over three hundred casta painting panels describing how the word “casta” is rarely found on any of the paintings, but rather figures are referred to by their *calidad*. For example, one inscription reads, “‘Calidades que de la mezcla de Español, Negros, Yndios...’” (Calidades derived from the mixing of Spaniards, Black Africans, and Indians...)  

**CASTA PAINTINGS EXAMINED**

The work attributed to Manuel de Arellano, *Rendering of a Mulatto*, 1711 [see Figure 3 in Appendix] is part of a series of four identified casta paintings. These works are the earliest identified set of casta paintings and are considered to be the progenitor of all other casta paintings. The unidentified mulata is wearing a combination of styles including a European style blue bodice with ruffles, a billowy overblouse called a manga often worn by Afro-Mexicans, and a red Mexican shawl referred to as a rebozo. Her wrists are cuffed in ruffles and her curly brown tresses are wrapped in a delicate lace scarf. She’s also bejeweled with a pearl bracelet, a six-tier pearl choker, pendant pearl earrings, and four (possibly coral) rings on her right hand. Pearls and coral were known to exist in abundance along the Mexican coast. The background is a dusty cocoa with sateen effervescence, unlike future casta paintings which tended to be less vibrant. This painting has a reflective luminosity which is better appreciated when viewed in person. The pose is classic and thoughtful as she gazes, head lifted absorbing and reflecting light. She’s carefully illustrated with features that are more individualized and specific in contrast with future casta paintings where figures are less personalized and become more of an anonymous ‘type.’ It is also interesting to mention that during the seventeenth century the Spanish crown decreed “restrictive measures that

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forbade …mulatas …from wearing silk or jewels, but also indigenous clothing.”

Arellano’s portrait completed in the early eighteenth century is scarcely removed from the previous prohibition dictated by such sumptuary laws. The artist may have also wanted to convey the wealth and sophistication of the new colonies.

John Hazelhurst comments on the portraits of Rendering of a Mulatto and the anonymous, Portrait of an Indian Noblewoman from 1757, “Both young women are richly dressed and wearing expensive jewels. There’s no trace of condescension in these portraits; like Paris Hilton or Nicole Ritchie, they’re simply privileged young women whose images define their time.” Rendering of a Mulatto indeed lacks condescension, however, she is an unlikely comparison to Paris Hilton and would be a better comparison for Nicole Ritchie who is also a mulatta. Nevertheless, the young women in these portraits are not so much privileged young women whose images define their time as they are privileged young women whose time defined their image.

Although the ornamented young mulata is treated tenderly, there are still indications of class and ‘otherness’ in this portrait especially when compared with a portrait attributed to the Peruvian artist, Cristóbal Lozano’s, Doña Rosa María Salazar y Gabiño, Countess of Monteblanco and Montemar, 1765-70 [see Figure 4 in Appendix]. As the Countess of Monteblanco and Montemar and the daughter of the first Count of Monteblanco, the sitter is a dripping display of wealth, French fashion and Bourbon court style popular in Madrid at the time. Like the mulata, she is also bejeweled, but in a manner consistent with her social status as she is adorned in, “a corseted gown of rose-colored silk, embroidered throughout with flowering-vine patterns…an elaborate tiara adorned with pearls and precious stones….and a pocket-watch ornamented with gold charms of a griffin and a fish.”

There is a consistent display of class or calidad in both portraits which by comparison in one is a


demonstration of privilege without excess and the other of abundant wealth. One of the most important differences beyond corporeal representation is the treatment of Doña Rosa María Salazar y Gabiño being named in her portrait while the mulata remains nameless. As a result of the exploration and development of Mexico’s wealth coupled with the rise of social status of some mulatos, the Spanish elite grew more timorous and hypercritical of this encroachment of their social hierarchy. Katzew quotes a Spanish observer of the 1780s saying, “many mulattos, blacks, and zambos…had ‘in almost no time, through their freedom and ostentatious life, become vice-ridden and greedy, and greatly damaged the State.”

Later casta paintings of mulatas were portraits that included the typical family dynamic of the mother, father, and child or children. The pathology of these portraits was as pseudo-scientific specimens. In the painting attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez, Spaniard and Mulata Produce a Morisca, 1715, [see Figure 5 in Appendix] the mulata is dressed similarly to Arellano’s, Rendering of a Mulatto, but less decorated. She retains the intentional features of a more individualized persona, but without much agency and with a quiet humility. Her Spanish husband or protector leads the way with his back to his charges as the young daughter’s left hand is extended towards the father, highlighting her trust and his sovereignty as if to say, “Father knows best.”

Miguel Cabrera’s From Spaniard and Mulatto, Morisca, 1763 arrives fifty-two years after Arellano’s Rendering of a Mulatto. There is an addition to the family as Cabrera features two children including a son and daughter. Yet, the sterilization of the character’s features has eroded into a definite ‘type’ of mulata, Spaniard, and morisco. The family members are bloodless, romanticized wax figures exploited for the popularity of their images. They have essentially become quixotic wax figures in a colonial wax museum. The young morisca daughter is featured as part of a still life with fruit displaying the halved avocado at her feet. Cabrera has included the word “Aguacate” in small print beneath the avocado. The mulata as still life with fruit becomes a recurring theme in her representation and association with nature and the exotic.

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Mulatos often sought to improve the conditions of social restrictions by leveraging marriage opportunities, language, educational and ecclesiastical posts, and manipulation of their racial identity. Again limpieza de sangre plays a role in the desirability and suitability of marriage partners. Archbishop Lorenzana and Alzate y Ramírez had strongly advised the native people against marrying blacks citing the negative social implications of marrying individuals with stained black blood. Bennett also describes the leveraging of spousal selection as a means to improve one’s social condition, “a number of free mulattos were attracted to free persons as a result of their concerns about forced separations and the legal status of future offspring.”

As previously mentioned earlier regarding limpieza de sangre, what Frantz Fanon described as the process of “lactification” which was the black/mulata woman’s neurosis for securing a white male partner reveals the complexities of casta images. Katzew explains, “those of black ancestry, could attempt to buy their way into the elite by purchasing official certificates of legitimation or legal “whiteness” called gracias al sacar….and would often choose to emphasize their mestizo origin to avoid paying tribute, using everything from clothing, hairstyle, language and popular opinion to back their claims.”

This consciously active pursuit in Latin America has also been referred to as blanquiamente or whitening. Appiah states, “This self-contempt manifests itself in other ways: as anxiety, in the presence of whites, about revealing one’s ‘natural’ Negro inferiority; in a pathological hypersensitivity that Fanon dubbed ‘affective erethism.’” Fanon refers to conditions in colonial Martinique in Black Skin White Masks saying,

All these frenzied women of color, frantic for a white man, are waiting. And one of these days they will catch themselves not wanting to look back, while dreaming of ‘a wonderful night, a wonderful lover, a white man.’ Perhaps they too will one day realize that ‘white men don’t marry black women.’ But that’s the risk they have accepted; what they need is whiteness at any cost.

How then does one interpret possible dynamics of lactification or blanquiamente in a painting such as, De Español, Mulata, Morisco (Spanish and Mulata beget Morisco), artist

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56 Katzew, Casta Painting, 56.
57 Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, ix.
58 Ibid., 31.
unknown, circa 1750 [see Figure 6 in Appendix]? This painting which has been attributed to the school of Miguel Cabrera features a Spanish father rolling cigarettes, his *mulata* wife tamping a bundle of cigarettes, while their young son looks on. The family is pictured within a decorated oval frame with bows and flourishes that indicate that it may have been part of a series of panels found on a biombo, which is a Mexican folding screen. The figures are also arranged in a descending order of height often used in casta painting. The Spanish male is the tallest figure, then the *mulata* wife, and finally the son completes the descending triad. The father is modestly dressed in a brown overcoat with blue lapels and white undershirt. The *mulata* wife is at the center of this portrait as the central figure. She is wearing a white bodice with lace sleeves. Her lapis-blue necklace of beads is complemented by a matching hair ornament. Her earrings are multi-jeweled with a dark blue stone at the center and gold rimming. The son is well dressed in a black overcoat with gold buttons and a white vest underneath with possibly coral buttons. He is holding a long-handled spindle or top-shaped toy. He gazes up at his mother and may be playfully trying to steal his mother’s attention away from her tasks. When viewing this painting in person, two of the striking notes of interest that do not translate well in photocopied reproductions are the warm flesh tones and the lip color of the husband and wife in particular. The father has a pink mouth, but there is a smudge of pink at the top of the father’s lips that doesn’t follow the contour of his mouth. In fact, the smudge on his top lip is a different shade of pink from that of his painterly fleshly pink mouth. Moreover, when one looks at the pink mouth of the wife, one notices that the smudge of pink on the father’s top lip matches the shade of pink lipstick on the mother’s mouth. Could the artist be implying a secondary narrative aside from that of cigarette rollers - considering one of a loving family portrait? Or is the father’s pink smudge on his lips the result of a wayward brushstroke? The tranquility of the family’s expressions along with the subtlety of a possible kiss indicate a peaceful domesticity.

However, another reading of this painting may also indicate the debasement of the Spanish male for marrying a *mulata or mala raza* (bad race) as revealed by their tradesman class. Cigars (*puros*) and Cigarettes (*cigarros*) were a thriving business at the time this painting was painted. The private tobacco shop where the cigarettes/cigars were sold was called a *cigarrería* and they were common establishments in Mexico City. Antonio Charro, who is credited as the originator of cigarette manufacturing in Mexico at the beginning of the
eighteenth century was known to sell his cigarettes at the entrance of the Teatro de Comedias in Mexico City. *Cigarrerias* were considered a female gendered industry as census data reveals that the majority of establishment owners and labor force were women. In Susan Deans-Smith’s book, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico*, she states,

> The reorganization of the tobacco trade by the Bourbon bureaucracy permitted it to capitalize upon the large numbers of women employed in the private trade and to argue that eventually only women were to be employed in the manufactories, carrying out what was deemed to be “appropriate work” for women. Rolling cigars and cigarettes was not, in comparison, appropriate labor for men, who “ought to be in the fields and the mines.”

Hence, cigarette rolling was considered a female occupation. Deans-Smith elaborates, “Women, in particular, made cigarettes on a putting-out basis…for anyone who paid them a pittance for their trouble.”

> Another layer of reading this painting then could sublimate that the *mulata’s* force of centrality, being in the center of the work, is related to the gendering of the profession of the *cigarrería* as acutely female. It would also indicate the feminizing of the Spanish male (read cautionary tale - Spanish male marries *mulata* and loses masculinity.)

The dominating Spanish male was essential to maintaining a hierarchy of power. This is seen in casta paintings with the Spanish male dominating the hierarchy as the leading progenitor governing the other castes. As Laura A. Lewis observes in her book, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, “…the Spaniard’s maleness depended on the mulatto woman carrying out her proper female role…”

However, the proper role for the *mulata* is a complicated one because of the masculinization of the *mulata/black* female body. What is her role then – as an active masculine entity or as a passive feminine entity? The *mulata* in this painting is fulfilling a female gendered role at a *cigarrería*, but it also positions the Spanish male within an effeminate space as cigarette roller, and yet she is masculinized because as Lewis goes on to argue,

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60 Ibid., 13.

blackness implied a kind of agency that masculinized black men and women. Black and mulatto women were therefore in an especially liminal position, for as women they were expected to maintain their domestic place, yet as mulatto or black they were also considered to have something of the assertiveness of their caste. Therefore the mulata’s sexualized role playing in public and private spaces is a complicated tangle of contradicting social mores informing the hegemony of the casta system.

**UNREDEEMABLE BLACK BLOOD**

Some casta paintings feature mulata women in the midst of a furious rage implying a ‘natural’ animalistic tendency among black/mulata women towards brutality. For example, in the painting *De Español y Negra, Mulata* (Spanish and Black beget Mulata), artist unknown, circa 1785-90, [see Figure 7 in Appendix] a scene of domestic violence is presented with the black female as the pugilist aggressor. The Spanish male is trying to free himself from the grip of his attacker/wife while their mulata daughter stands between her two parents trying to mediate peace with outstretched arms. The black female has grabbed the Spanish male’s hair in her fist and is beating him with a large cooking spoon. In colonial New Spain, grabbing a man’s hair was considered a very disrespectful act and a great insult. As Carrera states, “Within the system of honor in colonial Mexico, hair grabbing was used during arrests of criminals and was considered to be a desecration of one’s personal honor.”

A similar scene is duplicated in the work of Andrés de Islas, *De Espanol y Negra nace Mulata*, 1774. The young mulata daughter peers up at her mother begging her to cease the attack as she presses against her mother’s leg. Both paintings feature a display of fruits and vegetables. Andrés de Islas chooses to display the “Fruits from the Country” in a numerical pose at the top center of the painting and the picture of the corresponding fruit is featured in the bottom right corner. The “Fruits of the Country” may also indicate the fruits of a Spanish/black union are the negative characteristics of violence and a decivilized state. The premier layer of meaning is exposed by Carrera stating, “In depicting the Black African woman in this situation, Islas may be attempting to show not only the violent character of

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62 Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 73.

this kind of person but also both the concrete and the abstract ability of Black African blood to dishonor respectable Spaniards."

In contrast, as seen in *From Spaniard and Indian, Mestizo*, circa 1725, artist unknown, the Spanish male is leading his Indian wife and their two mestizo children. By the third generation, we find Buenaventura José Guiol's *From Spaniard and Castiza a Spaniard is Born*, 1770-80, [see Figure 1 in Appendix] the Spanish father, castiza mother and Spanish daughter are dressed in fine jewels and European style garments with sumptuous fabrics. This painting illustrates that the Indian blood has been redeemed by the third generation as a result of producing an offspring whose physiognomy most closely resembles that of a Spaniard. The dark features of the Indian great-grandmother have dissipated entirely in her descendant.

Referencing the previously mentioned ideology of *limpeza de sangre* which stated that impure blood could “infect” subsequent generations and that black blood was unredeemable, the next painting in the series of the castas would then have to support that argument. For example, in *De albarazado y mulata, barcino*, artist unknown, 1780, the mulata wife is viciously clawing at the face of her albarazado husband. The infant being carried on her back is becoming unraveled from the rebozo that he is wrapped in and on a precipice of serious injury. A familiar scene is repeated as Lewis discusses a similar painting in the Mexico I series saying, “a mulatto woman bashes her “coyote-mestizo” husband over the head with a bowl while her young child (called an “ahi te estas,” or “there you have it”) nearly falls out of his mother’s shawl, which has come unsecured.”

Although not all images of Spanish and black unions are illustrated depicting violence (even though several do) others signal domestic tranquility, but with a sublimated genetic violence. For example, by the third generation of mixing with an African bloodline, as seen in José de Páez’s, *From Spaniard and Morisca, Albino*, 1770-80, [see Figure 8 in Appendix] we find a congenital disorder where the offspring lacks pigmentation in the skin and is

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64 Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain*, 87.
65 Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 74.
susceptible to vision defects and skin conditions due to photosensitivity. The Enlightenment’s obsession with congenital disorders created a ‘culture of curiosity’ that showcased albinos, dwarfs, persons with vitiligo, and other genetic mutations by featuring them collectively for entertainment purposes. It is therefore implied that coupling with someone of African ancestry leads to a genetic mutation such as albinism by the third generation. This genetic slippage into a lineage of ‘stained blood’ is illustrated by the blackness depicted in the fourth generation. In *Spaniard and Albina, beget Black Return Backwards*, 1770-80, [see Figure 9 in Appendix] artist unknown, the Spanish father uses a telescope to peer over the sprawl of the city. The albino wife is kneeling next to their black son. The figures are depicted in a descending order according to height referring to their level of importance. The father is the tallest figure signifying that he is most important, then the wife, and finally their black son is at the bottom of the height/social hierarchy. The Spanish father has disentangled himself from the blackness of his family as he is more concerned with the city planning of his dominion. The nomenclature of the offspring also indicates the idea of a “Return Backwards to Blackness” or a return to corruptibility. Therefore, the series implies that black blood is unredeemable through successive generations and only haunts the bloodline like an unrelenting genetic specter.

**Casta Paintings and Sado-Masochism**

However, a secondary reading of these paintings depicting violence can incorporate the interior morality associated with *limpieza de sangre* and the Old Christian which is the virtue of moderation. For the virtue of moderation is a masculinized virtue. In Michel Foucault’s discussion of enkrateia, or moderation, as it relates to the ethics of pleasure, he addresses moderation as one of the five virtues mentioned by Xenophon: piety, wisdom, courage, justice, and moderation. Enkrateia involves the individual to exercise dominion over his pleasures in order to assert himself as virtuous. Foucault describes the dynamics of this exchange sometimes involving adopting a combative attitude stating:

> Ethical conduct in matters of pleasure was contingent on a battle for power…if there was not the danger that, winning out over all else, they would extend their rule over the whole individual, eventually reducing him to slavery…or on the contrary, letting oneself be overcome by them, defeating them or being defeated
by them, being armed or equipped against them. The adversaries the individual had to combat were not just within him or close by; they were part of him.66

Here the man is battling for ascendancy over his desires and pleasures. A household would be considered in good order so long as the man was able to dominate his desires and thus his virtuousness and ultimately his masculinity would be in tact or his ethical and social virility. The opposite would be true if a man was incapable of ruling his desires as his servants, he was rendered an effeminate male or as immoderate. Foucault goes on to describe, “In other words, to form oneself as a virtuous and moderate subject in the use he makes of pleasures, the individual has to construct a relationship with the self that is of the “domination-submission,” “command-obedience,” “master-docility” type.”67 So then, re-viewing the paintings depicting the violent *mulata* female, they are then situated in a space of dominant-submissive negotiations of the master’s exercise and pursuit of enkrateia. The dominant master/Spanish male exchanges the dynamics of power with the submissive slave/mulata female as a kind of Dominant-Submissive (DS) sex play invoking the eroticization of “humiliation” as he is dominated by degrading scenarios of masochistic violence. As Charles Moser and J.J. Madeson explain in *Bound to Be Free: The SM Experience*:

Dominance and submission” (DS) describes the deliberate transfer of psychological and sexual control from one partner to the other, implying scenarios of sexual submission and servitude which may be erotic in themselves (with or without elements of bondage, physical pain, or humiliation.) Any attempts at manipulation by the submissive can be, and most often are, simply ignored by the dominant, lending credence to the familiar cliché where the masochist begs ‘beat me, beat me’68

As authors of their own self-representation casta painting artists have chosen to represent themselves in such a submissive manner.69 However, as many components of sado-


67 Ibid., 70.


69 Casta painting artists were usually Spanish males, as such a requirement of *limpieza de sangre* was often necessary to be admitted to the academies and be recognized as a legitimate artist. However, there was a secondary market for the production of casta paintings that were painted by artists unable to prove *limpieza de sangre* because of being mixed race. The quality of the casta paintings in the secondary market varied in artistic merit.
masochism agree – Dominance is just the appearance of dominance or rule over the submissive, or the appearance of rule over the master who subjects himself to the appearance of obedience. Even though the development of the clinical study of sado-masochistic behaviors did not formally begin until the nineteenth-century along with the associated terminology, the principles of sado-masochistic behaviors are evident prior to those studies. It is the performance of inversion of roles – master/slave, dominant/submissive that arouses sexual tensions with the hopes of the Spanish male to dominate sexual desires and pleasures resulting in a morality of moderation. The mulata body then becomes the objectified palette on which the Spanish male’s libidinousness is acted upon. I believe this exchange of performance and sexual role playing is a metaphor for colonialism. Again, this is how exploring images of mulatas and their liminality within hegemonic discourse as an investigate lens offers a succinct discovery of the complexities of colonialism. Contemplating the dialogical aspects of what they reveal about political, religious, and social networks is germane to understanding how they inform colonialism. As Lewis confirms saying, “Nicholas Dirks observes, colonialism is a ‘trope for domination and violation.’”70 Even as Homi K. Bhabha describes the process of identification, he speaks of its first stage that involves the transference or exchange of roles between native and settler. As it relates to this discussion, the process of identification is an exchange of roles between master and slave. He refers to the defensive settler’s fear of the slave or native wanting to take the place of the settler, saying:

It is true for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s place. It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles.71

These paintings depicting violent mulatas can then be read as phantasmic, sado-masochistic spaces of inversion of roles representing the process of identification and the articulation of the masculinist colonial desire of the Old Christian. Reading the mulata as a dominatrix then implicates an eroticization of the mulata body within private and sometimes public domains

70 Lewis, Hall of Mirrors, 48.
71 Bhabha, The Locations of Culture, 63.
humiliating mostly Spanish males. While officially branded to discourage miscegenation, these images are also unconscious advertisements for sado-masochistic sex play and the subsequent objectifying of the mulata body. As Ilona Katzew goes on to describe in her book *Casta Paintings: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*,

> Nevertheless, while those combinations that return to the white pole are praised, racial mixtures of white men and black or mulatto women are especially decried. Basarás asserts that Spanish men prefer black or mulatto women for being better lovers, but is prompt to declare that such relationships only “confound” their blood and hurt their lineage.\(^{72}\)

**CASTA PAINTING AUDIENCES**

*Mulatas* traversed a tempestuous sea of increasing fear and anxiety by the Spanish elite, as well as, struggled with gendered subjectivity and the inscribed image of the mulata body. It is a body hotly contested, martyred, mythicized, romanticized, villainised, and rarely belonging to its own soul incarnate. In Cedric J. Robinson’s and Luz Maria Cabral’s essay, “The Mulatta on film: from Hollywood to the Mexican Revolution,” they describe how “in the cultural wars that swirled around slavery, the mulatta became a contested icon.”\(^{73}\) She becomes an abstraction of herself – a type of recondite, sublime landscape for the adventuresome traveler to discover, conquer, and own. The control over the mulata body has its roots in colonialism when she first appeared en masse as the fruit of the forbidden. These efforts to control may be the result of moral and sexual guilty consciences played out in popular culture through propaganda appropriate during its time. If casta paintings were Crown supported propaganda – who were the intended audiences and how were they received?

In her article, *Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain*, Susan Deans-Smith argues that the ‘culture of curiosity,’ obsession with natural history collecting, and the need for self-representation spurred many patrons to commission casta paintings. Following Ilona Katzew’s work on casta paintings, historian Susan Deans-Smith continues a dialogue around casta painting by

\(^{72}\) Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 186.

focusing on identifying patrons and audiences. Deans-Smith’s methodology involves focusing on the archives of the Spanish crown’s academies (in Spain and Mexico.) These academies were established to provide scientific and technological training as part of the Bourbon reforms. Some of the institutions she identifies are: the Real Academia Española (1713), the Academia de Guardias Marinas de Cádiz (1717), the Academia de Historia (1735-38); and in Mexico City: the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (1783.) However, the main institution that Dean-Smith’s research draws most heavily on is the Gabinete de Historia Natural in Madrid (1776.)

Deans-Smith identifies a network of collectors and posits that this network was crucial to facilitating locations to display the casta paintings. Displaying casta paintings in public and quasi-public spaces was necessary due to the lack of established public art spaces. Although, she discusses viewership reaction to the casta paintings, the author eschews focusing on identity politics, gender, or casta subjectivity in favor of reflecting on the cultural milieu of the intellectual collector and identifying their positional accessibility.

One could argue that Deans-Smith incorporates Frantz Fanon’s theory on “chiasmic” change of signification taken from his 1951 work, *Black Skin, White Masks*. The chiasmic change of signification makes meaning turn in on itself destabilizing meaning because one views the skin as black, but the face or mask is one of white power. The black skin is present in bodily or material form and yet absent or concealed by a white mask that prohibits it from being as in – “black skin, no mask.” Deans-Smith explains how the pseudo-scientific obsession for artifacts during the Enlightenment period created images of the castas that were comfortable for Spanish elites. These so-called acceptable images would be like the white masks on black skin. Fanon also describes how white colonizing culture looks at the black soul as a “white man’s artifact.” Casta paintings served as the artifacts of the Spanish elite alongside a menagerie of “exotic” birds, fruits, vegetables, flora, and fauna all properly enumerated as part of classificatory projects. The authenticity of the black self is concealed and recast in order to socially impose an acceptable “white mask.” Deans-Smith’s article expands on Katzew’s work regarding the relationship between casta painting and Enlightenment ideologies and offers an alternative perspective by exploring patronage and audiences. Her scrutiny of cultural criticisms of the casta paintings by their intended audiences provides a powerful and useful reference when contextualizing the *mulata* body.
The genesis of manipulating the *mulata* body began with power and control – the nuclear driving force of any cycle of abuse. “The sexual oppression that produces [the mulatta’s] Europeanized “beauty” also makes her the victim of the next cycle of abuse.”74 However, victimization is a choice, not a denouement and as such a reinterpretation of the metamorphosis of the *mulata* body is necessary to achieve an accurate interpretation liberated from any hint of misanthropic propensities. “Victim ideology, a caricature of social history, blocks women from recognition of their dominance in the deepest, most important realm.”75

When examining the image of the *mulata* body as tragic and exotic, a Dionysian apotheosis is birthed from Zeus’s inner thigh, fed ambrosia, and endowed with the power of transformation. This transformation, like the incarnations of Greek gods, who “as you know, can change their shapes at will and were always anxious to see how things were going on, on earth” is in response to creating new lives for themselves.76 This Dionysian rebirth or relief from incarnations of the previous self is the functioning of the ‘the Liberator,’ Dionysius, who relieves “one of linear time and memory; forgetting, living unhistorically, (which) is necessary for humans to ‘live at all’.”77

**THE ENSORCELLED MORSEL: *MULATAS AND MAGIC***

In 1611, a *mulata* woman from Puebla by the name of Maria was a practitioner of love magic. She had consulted with a black slave who had advised her to keep a certain herb close to her chest in order to attract men. She had successfully used the same magic by using an indigenous root known as *puyomate* on her own lover including placing it under his bed. In another case, a *mulata* woman was denounced as a witch by a Spanish woman and her husband for, “having at different times, and with the help of Indians, fed her mistress ‘bat powders’ and ‘ass brains’ in an effort to tame her…and half of the head of a turkey buzzard to make her ‘crazy.’”78 Author Laura A. Lewis claims that the *mulata* woman was

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74 Robinson and Cabral, “The Mulatta on Film,” 2.
78 Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 159.
presumably trying to control and moderate her mistress’s temperament. These efforts to control and affect the will of others appear frequently among mulata practitioners of hechicería (witchcraft) or brujería (sorcery) in New Spain. Mulatas were not the only practitioners of magic. The social hierarchy created close associations between Indians and Blacks. Many Afro-Mexicans learned to practice witchcraft from indigenous sources creating a syncretism of indigenous, European, and African ritual practice. The relationship between witchcraft, sexuality, slaves, the lower castes, and blackness inform one another creating an unsanctioned territory where subalterns negotiated power and control with sanctioned spaces. These negotiations of power often involved the creation of feminine spaces where women used their bodies as domains of knowledge challenging and sometimes inverting oppressive power structures.

Limpieza de sangre implied that black blood was unredeemable or tainted. This association of blackness with darkness or devilishness appeared in colonial ideology by associating blackness with the devil. Many of the Inquisition documents recorded the denunciations that accused ‘weak’ women of practicing witchcraft and succumbing to the devil who was depicted either as a black man or as a dark-skinned man. As a Spanish woman describes her visit to a place where “half-black” men and women danced and “sinned” together, she mentions seeing, “another demon, his horned servant, who was beardless ‘like a young black.’”79 The demonizing of a mala raza (bad race) or bad blood literally created social tensions that consolidated into a mythology of the black devil. The social hierarchy in the public, secular space therefore was mirrored in the non-secular as an identical hierarchy. Within this hierarchy the black person was at the bottom as a nefarious entity and the indigenous was marked as a feminized, gullible (childlike) entity. “The devil, often depicted as a ‘dark-skinned’ man, is a figure that in many ways consolidates the colonial politics and symbolism of caste.”80

The relationship between Indian curanderos (healers) and Afro-Mexican practitioners of witchcraft was an exchange of commerce and a profitable unsanctioned economy. Some Spaniards denounced witches to the Inquisition. Sometimes the same people denouncing

79 Lewis, Hall of Mirrors, 128.
80 Ibid., 102.
witches to the Inquisition were the same people procuring magic and sorceries. For example, a Spanish couple, Doña Sebastiana Martínez de Castrejona and her husband both accused their former mulatta slave, Dorothea, of witchcraft. Doña Sebastiana admitted to having beat Dorothea with a firebrand and that her husband had also beaten Dorothea. Both recount that immediately after they had beaten Dorothea that they were afflicted with maladies. Doña Sebastiana claimed to be afflicted by a burning sensation on her hand, a drowning sensation from her stomach to her throat, and with swollen burning genitals. Her husband claimed to be afflicted immediately with eye pain and suffered almost total blindness. Although both Doña Sebastiana and her husband accused Dorothea of witchcraft, they eagerly sought relief for their ailments from other mulatos practicing a brand of healing similar to the practices of witchcraft. These instances create muddled categories of witchcraft, homoepathic healing, and medicine which correspond to spaces of sanctioned and unsanctioned power, as well as, female and male spaces of authority.

The mulata’s power to conjure or alter identities is common among Inquisition documents. In a document from 1695, “a Spanish man claimed that his mulata lover had given him a drink that had given him wet dreams. Six months after he left her he became impotent, and he claimed that this was because his former lover had given his cook ‘potions’ to put in his food.” Witchcraft often had to be “eaten” or somehow ingested in chocolate, milk, or food in order for it to be effective. This correlation between mulatas and food will be expanded upon in detail in chapter three. Mulatas were often accused of exercising a virtual sexual authority over male lovers, exacting revenge against naughty mistresses, and being able to control the wills and desires of an intended. As a result, she was afforded a measure of agency and freedom to operate as a complete citizen endowed with certain privileges. She had become like a Spanish man with the ability to live as with “free will” and thereby challenging the casta hierarchy with a double-whammy. The mulata was challenging ideas of blackness and gender. As Lewis goes on to say in Hall of Mirrors:

Women witches deprived men of their free will by coming to know “about the secrets of [their hearts]” and by “taming” (amansar) them. A man who found himself in such a state would surmise that the only woman with whom he could have intercourse was the witch who deprived him of his freedom. Witches thus

81 Lewis, Hall of Mirrors, 167.
neutralized men’s potency, their control over the sexual act, and their access to women’s bodies, thereby making men “weak.”

The terminology used to describe the effectual working of witchcraft was “tying” or “binding.” So a man would be considered to be “tied” or “bound” by the witch. This notion of tying, binding, or restraining is reminiscent of the sado-masochistic discourse previously mentioned regarding casta paintings. However, instead of with cords or ropes, these men were tied and bound emotionally, psychologically, and sexually to perform acts as a submissive thereby revealing the inversion of roles from male/strong, woman/weak to male/weak, woman/strong. However, since Domination is just the appearance of domination, then these women only had measured rights and privileges associated with Spanish maleness.

The experience of enjoying certain rights and privileges as a result of a conjuring has its correlations with limpieza de sangre as well. As previously mentioned, under the Bourbon regime, Afro-Mexicans were able to purchase gracias al sacar which were legal certificates that would grant them the privileges of white Spanish persons. The gracias al sacar essentially removed the stain of a black lineage. Instantly! A black man could change into a white man. This too is a kind of conjuring or magic. The politics of witchcraft bear similar resemblances to the politics of castas.

*Mulatas* used their bodies as domains of knowledge when practicing witchcraft. Having learned the most sophisticated elements of witchcraft from the Indians, *mulatas* practiced *nagualismo*. A *nagual* is a spirit animal that a witch could transform their body into. Lewis records an account of a *mulata* witch who could transform herself into the fiercest of *nagual* entities – the tiger (jaguar). The politics of witchcraft bear similar resemblances to the politics of castas.

Lewis states:

…a mulatto from Merida, claimed to have a nagual in the form of a bird and to “know the things that go on in the corners and in secret.” Another, from a village to the northeast of Ometepec, told the inquisitors that she was not a witch, but a nagual. This is an interesting distinction because it implies that the mulatto woman not only knew that Spaniards confused naguales with witches; she also knew a lot about nagualismo itself.

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83 The tiger may be interpreted as jaguar here.

84 Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 152.
The fact that some *mulata* women claimed to adopt the identity of animals as spirit creatures to divine secreted information is interesting. As previously mentioned, much of the casta nomenclature is zoologically derived from mules, coyotes, wolfs, and sometimes blacks and Indians were referred to as “dogs.” The *sistema de castas* had already transformed these women into “mules,” yet these women have chosen to transform themselves into birds (signifying freedom) and tigers or jaguars (signifying power.)

The conduit for these transformations was their body. Jean Franco comments further on the woman’s use of her own body as a tool of transformation. In *The Power of the Spider Woman: The Deluded Woman and the Inquisition*, Jean Franco states that the Inquisition trial of Ana de Aramburu is a case study of an *ilusa’s*, or deluded woman’s, bid for power against a religious institution. Franco believes that margins and boundaries are dangerous spaces because they are active locations of discursive disruption. In the case of Ana de Aramburu, Franco asserts that she used the only resource available to her, which was her body, to transform her powerlessness into a formidable entity that challenged the “solidity of boundaries” and overcome her devalued status. Franco’s methodology involves the examination of Inquisition trial records as she maps the story of Ana de Aramburu as a woman uncomfortable in the master narrative who seeks to establish her own space. By piecing together the testimonies of Ana de Aramburu’s confessors and witnesses, Franco goes beyond identifying a woman defined as delusional affected by hysteria. She discovers that Ana de Aramburu belonged to a class of women who spoke the same symbolic language, were pursued by institutions of power, and used their bodies to transcode signs of female inferiority in order to gain discursive space in a society that denied them any power at all.

Franco states that *ilusas* were considered dangerous to society because they were neither virgin/not virgin nor mother/not mother - that is they existed outside discursive systems of power. This also translates with *mulatas* in that they were neither black/not black nor feminine/not feminine nor masculine/not masculine. They defied and challenged the role of their confessors, created their own religious myths, and lived neither in convents nor exclusively with their fathers or husbands. Such was the case of Ana de Aramburu who was said to have vomited blood, prophesied, levitated, forecasted earthquakes, intervened on behalf of the sick and abused, and condemned her enemies to long periods in purgatory. Her greater offences came when she directly challenged the authority of the Catholic Church by
claiming a direct, intimate relationship with God and Jesus Christ and that she only went to confessional to please God and avoid people’s gossip.

I believe Franco is drawing on Michel Foucault’s theories of power taken from *The History of Sexuality* (1978-1986.) Foucault focuses on the body as opposed to the role of institutions when analyzing operations of power. Instead of looking at power as a top-down pyramidal structure of power, Foucault develops a bottom-up model that looks at the body as the site where power is enacted and opposed. In fact, this bottom-up modicum of power is exactly how Indians transferred their knowledge of *hechicería* and *brujería*. Foucault argued that the body should be viewed as ‘the inscribed surface of events’ and as ‘the illusion of a substantial unity.’ Franco explains this mediation of the body’s social construction as different social, political, and cultural events become the inscribed surface of Ana de Aramburu’s body. As Ana de Aramburu interacts with the church, she continuously mediates the balance of power by using various techniques enacted through her body.

**CONCLUSION**

*Mulatas* used their bodies in order to mediate their existence with some form of autonomy. The Domination of others, although yielding temporary fruits, was just the appearance of domination. Those that did confess to crimes of witchcraft confessed ritualistically with coded language used by *mulatos* in order to receive mercy. As Lewis states, “witchcraft did not empower women as women or slaves as slaves; instead it allowed women, slaves, and others to function as free men would function in the world controlled by Spaniards.”

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85 Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 170.
CHAPTER 3

LA VIRGEN DE LA CARIDAD DEL COBRE

Around 1613 in Cuba, two young native Taíno brothers named Rodrigo and Juan de Hoyos and a ten year old African slave boy named Juan Moreno sailed in a canoe on their way to the salt mines in Nipe Bay on the northwestern coast. It was at the salt mines that they intended to secure salt for the preserving of meats that were provided to the laborers of the new copper mine in the southern region of the island. Seventy-four years later on April 1, 1687, Juan Moreno, who was now eighty-five years old and a free person, witnessed his account in a deposition given in the presence of church authorities as to the miraculous apparition of La Virgen de la Caridad. He testified that he and two Taíno brothers were in a canoe on Nipe Bay at around 5:30 in the morning when they saw an image of “what looked like a bird – or a girl – amidst the sea’s foam.” As they approached the mysterious apparition, they saw that it was a statue of a Virgin floating on a wooden box or a piece of wood and the Virgin bore a sign saying, “I am the Virgin of Charity.” The men plucked the icon of the Blessed Mother from her watery realm and realized that her clothes were completely dry. Astonished that the Virgin’s clothing was dry, the three young men concluded the miraculous nature of the effigy. The young men had taken the Virgin to Francisco Sánchez de Moya, an administrator of a cattle ranch in Barajagua. There in the small settlement of about eighty converted Taínos and free Africans, the Virgin of Charity was placed on an altar in one of the Taíno huts. It was discovered that the Virgin’s clothing was now wet. The trope of the miraculous in Marian narratives is a popular theme when establishing the presence of the divine incarnated in Marian effigies. That the Virgin’s clothing was dry while in the water and yet wet while on dry land contributes to the origins

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of her devotion. However, perhaps the most miraculous feature of the Virgin as it pertains to this discussion is that she was a *mulata*.

**THE ORIGINS OF THE VIRGIN OF CHARITY**

As the seventeenth century emblem of the phenomenal, Cuba’s patron saint, the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (the Virgin of Charity of the Copper Hill) represents the tragedies and triumphs of Cuba’s people. The Virgin of Charity is also depicted as a *mulata* whose complexion is referred to as “morenicita” (a little dark.) The origins of the Virgin of Charity lie in the folk traditions of her miraculous powers which are reported to have first appeared to two indigenous men and an Afro-Cuban boy when saving them from the tempestuous waters of a fierce storm. That she first appeared unto two Amerindian men and an Afro-Cuban boy is significant because she came to symbolize one of the people and then the nation. In later accounts and artistic renderings of the miraculous apparition there appears a substitution of one of the Taíno brothers with a Spanish male. The politics of worship and historical flexibility of the original account establish a democratic representation of the colonial triad of indigenous, African, and Spanish. As author Miguel A. De La Torre states in his article, “Ochun: (N)Either the (M)Other of All Cubans (n)or the Bleached Virgin,” that “one of the Amerindians has been replaced with a balding, bearded, and white-haired Spaniard. One of the Amerindian brothers, Rodrigo, was transfigured into a white Spaniard named Juan.”

De La Torre so wryly and observantly explains the absurdity of the insertion of Juan the Spaniard saying that a Spaniard “would have been too busy increasing his wealth through managing the mines. The bearded patriarchal figure rewrites itself into tradition, inserting and incorporating the oppressor into the drama and presenting him as equal, thus masking the power relation existing at the time.”

De La Torre also makes the salient observation that performing a menial task such as retrieving salt would have been too trivial for a Spaniard and a task better suited for natives and an African slave boy. These three would conveniently be known as *los tres Juanes* (the three Johns) meaning Juan de Hoyos (native), Juan Moreno (African), and Juan the Spaniard. The three Johns may also be

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88 Ibid., 850.
an allusion to the Law of Moses which commanded that in the mouth of two or three witnesses should a matter be established. The three Johns would then serve as cogent witnesses as to the miraculous apparition of the Virgin of Charity. It is also no small correlation that Mexico’s Virgin of Guadalupe appeared unto an indigenous man named Juan Diego. Further discussion of these shared cosmogonies will be expanded upon later.

As previously mentioned these men were on a journey in search of salt for the meat provided at the mines at El Cobre. El Cobre was a copper mining town where entire populations of Amerindians perished while mining for copper and this was the catalyst for securing a supplemental labor force of slaves from Africa. The exploitation of the copper deposits was a royal venture by the King of Spain in order to provide artillery for the crown in fighting the English and pirates. The presence of the Virgin of Charity in a mining town where she performed other supernatural acts contributed to her growing devotion among heterogeneous groups and across racial communities. When a dispute arose between the three races as to where the resting place of the Virgin of Charity would be located, Juan Moreno was called upon to testify as to the miraculous nature of the Virgin’s signs. In the article, “The Contribution of Catholic Orthodoxy to Caribbean Syncretism: The Case of la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre in Cuba,” author Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo describes the desires of the various racial factions saying, “the Indians, who wanted it in Barajagua, the Blacks who wanted it in the hospital, and the Spaniards who wanted it in the church.”89 Juan Moreno interprets the appearance of three divinely placed lights atop the hills near the mine entrance at El Cobre. “The onlookers, said Juan Moreno, had interpreted the lights to indicate that the statue should be placed where the new hermitage was built in 1648.”90 Stevens-Arroyo argues that Juan Moreno’s testimony was “sought as part of the effort to secure ecclesiastical approbation of the devotion. This was when Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre emerged as a form of Tridentine devotionalism.”91 The hallowed place of the

90 Ibid., 49.
91 Ibid., 49.
protectress had been identified and confirmed through celestial signs. Her shrine would be at El Cobre where the new hermitage was built.

**CUBA’S VIRGIN OF CHARITY AND MEXICO’S VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE**

The employment of two indigenous men and an African slave boy as the divinely chosen witnesses to the miraculous apparitions of the Virgin of Charity (and the later substitution of Juan the Spaniard) creates a syncretism of three races. The ecclesial syncretism is also evident in the biblical allusions to the divine. Juan Moreno interpreted the appearance of three stars in the heavens in order to discover the resting place of the Virgin. Biblically, the three wise men followed the star that led them to the resting place of the Virgin Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. The three men who witnessed the apparition of the Virgin of Charity can also be likened unto the three wise men. There are three males who saw the Virgin of Charity, three wise men, three lights, three witnesses, three races, and three in heaven – the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

In certain later historical accounts Juan Moreno’s name has been changed to Juan Diego. Juan Diego is also the name of the Indian that the Virgin of Guadalupe appears to on the hill of Tepeyacac in Mexico. Stevens-Arroyo refers to Father Bravo’s baroque account of the apparition of the Virgin of Charity saying, “Juan Moreno is now named ‘Juan Diego,’ the same as the humble Indian in the accounts of the Mexican Guadalupe.”92 Jaime Cuadriello’s essay in *La Reina de las Americas* (The Queen of the Americas) and Jeannette Favrot Peterson’s article, “The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?” both offer counter-perspectives of the cultural significance of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the power of her image as conqueror. Cuadriello’s and Peterson’s articles also share similarities regarding discussing the origins of the Virgin of Charity.

Cuadriello’s thesis is explained while discussing the birthplace of the Virgin of Guadalupe saying, “...here the Guadalupan Villa appears as the spiritual center of an independent nation, the most faithful reflection of its diverse population and a most eloquent social mosaic within which in unique moments ‘the spirits and the classes of all people of the

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land were able to intermingle.” 93 Peterson’s thesis can be summarized, “The Virgin’s apocalyptic iconography embodied all the components of the creole program: to verify the miraculous apparitions of Guadalupe as an American phenomenon, to justify the conquest, and to glorify Mexico.” 94 Here is the diversion of contexts as approached by both authors. Cuadriello’s final statement devises a nationalist benign image of hybridity born of a romanticized state of unity and peacefulness, not unlike the birthing of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. However, Peterson conveys the Virgin of Guadalupe as a silent, unwitting co-conspirator fashioned for conquering, leadership, and earthly gains. The ontology of the Virgin of Charity encapsulates both arguments because she becomes embedded as the mulata patron saint of Cuba symbolizing romanticized racial unity and would later also be employed as a freedom fighter referred to as a mambisa during the period of independence.

The notion of the dark Virgin is not an original concept in religious devotion but appears in medieval Europe. The presence of the Mother Goddess as incarnation of the “Our Lady of Milk,” protectress, goddess of fertility, and nourishing mother has assumed Marian incarnations as well. In her book The Black Madonna in Latin America and Europe: Tradition and Transformation, Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba discusses the appearance of the Black Madonna, particularly in Poland saying, “Mary in numerous renditions is portrayed as black, sitting on a throne with her divine child on her lap.” 95 For example, the Virgin is manifested as the Polish Black Madonna of Częstochowa whom Oleszkiewicz-Peralba refers to as also portraying a manifestation of syncretism. Nevertheless, while the concept of the dark Virgin is not innovative, the idea of a distinctly mulata Virgin encapsulates a particular brand of colonial syncretism.

Both Cuadriello and Peterson agree on the authorship and legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe beginning with Juan Diego on December 8, 1531. The Virgin of Guadalupe

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appears to the recently converted native three times instructing him to build a church in her honor on the hill of Tepeyac (now known as Tepeyac.) Tepeyac was a revered, spiritual location of pilgrimage by natives who worshipped many pre-conquest deities including Tonantzin, which means “our revered mother.” It was customary for Catholic authorities to erect churches on sacred sites of the natives and the church of the Virgin of Guadalupe follows in this tradition. Cuadriello treats the coincidence of similarities between Tonantzin and the Virgin of Guadalupe with a passing glance and focuses more on the iconography, renderings, and stations of the Virgin of Guadalupe in paintings, sculptures, and ex-votos. However, Peterson almost immediately cashes in on the unmistakable correlations between Tonantzin and the Virgin of Guadalupe including: the use of the same sacred site (the hill of Tepeyac), Tonantzin is a lunar mother goddess, and the Virgin of Guadalupe is standing on a moon and is the mother of Christ. Both Tonantzin and the Virgin of Guadalupe are believed to have the power to protect against diseases, plagues, violent mishaps, earthquakes, and devastating storms, as well as govern the power of fertility. The Virgin of Charity was also pictured as the mother of Christ and she is also a protectress against hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and other catastrophes. Both the Virgin of Charity and the Virgin of Guadalupe are standing on a crescent moon [see Figures 10 and 11 in Appendix]. The original name for Mexico is Metztli, which means moon. This crescent moon shape was interpreted by the native Taínos of Cuba as a rainbow. The Taínos “saw the shape as a rainbow, associated with their own feminine spirit, Guabonito, manifested by the union of sun and rain.”

The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe further incorporates nationalism into her iconography by appearing standing on the moon, a prickly cactus, and an eagle, as well as appearing with an ashen, olive complexion and long black hair. She appears as a darker Virgin to relate to the indigenous population and incorporates imagery from Aztec mythology. Huitzilopochtli was one of the primary cult gods of the Mexica (Aztecs) and advised them to look for a sign that would identify their homeland from which they originated and would return. The Mexica were to look for an eagle perched on a cactus with

96Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, The Black Madonna in Latin, 52.
a snake in its mouth in the middle of a lake. The eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its mouth is also the symbol on the present day Mexican national flag. The Virgin of Charity is also of a darker complexion, being a *mulata*, and has long black hair. Cuadriello recognizes the political significance of the iconography of the Virgin of Guadalupe standing upon these symbols saying, “the Virgin standing upon it was a new symbol of territorial dominion and above all, of spiritual triumph over its pagan nations.” However, Peterson does not view this as a spiritual triumph, so much so as a politically/religiously motivated subversive tactic aimed to conquer native worshippers who, “consistently referred to Guadalupe as Tonantzin.”

The crafting of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe was an effective solution to the challenges facing the church in New Spain as Peterson declares, “…the failure to eradicate paganism had become patently clear. The hierarchy acknowledged Indian resistance to domination…Aggressive methods of indoctrination were intensified, including the substitution of new Christian saints for old gods and the incorporation of parallel beliefs and ritual.”

However, Cuadriello argues the propagation and veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe is at least indirectly associated with the miraculous powers demonstrated by the Virgin and seen in the inscriptions of ex-votos and “provides even more emphasis of its testimonial and memorial spirit and contributes indirectly to the devotion’s popularity.”

Bourgeoning Cuba experienced almost identical challenges including how to unify a nation under racially syncretic iconography that did not represent the racial harmony of their actual social system. Also, how could religious transculturation in Cuba be manipulated to elevate the devotion of the Marian image while incorporating the religiosity of the oppressed?

While the Virgin of Guadalupe is associated with fertility (just like Ochún), it is the fecundity of the reproduction of her images that spreads the fertile seeds of the cult of the Virgin. Cuadriello addresses the ubiquity of the Virgin’s image beginning with the reproduction of iconic images around 1680, then sculptures, and finally the ex-voto images on zinc and copper plates of the nineteenth century. The Virgin of Guadalupe was painted on

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97 Peterson, “The Virgin of Guadalupe,” 40.
98 Ibid., 40.
copper plates and the Virgin of Charity of Copper Hill was placed over a copper mine. “True Images” of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as well as, historical and geographical associations were paramount to the didacticism necessary to fuel the machine of indoctrination and included: four or five medallions portraying the apparitions as they appeared to Juan Diego, traced outlines taken from the original image, and miraculous narratives of the Virgin’s intercessions. In a nineteenth-century print of the Virgin of Charity she is also portrayed surrounded by six medallions detailing the miraculous events of her apparitions. Peterson also follows the journey of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe by focusing on the historical/political/revolutionary contexts instead of the artistic outputs. The potency and devotion to the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe has gained and not waned throughout the centuries. Likewise the cult of the Virgin of Charity has grown tremendously as she is worshipped just as fervently in the contemporary United States as in Cuba as a testimony to the authority and powers latent in a quincentenary image.

**NATIONALISM AND THE COPPER COLORED VIRGIN**

The Virgen de la Caridad has secured her place as Cuba’s patron saint and as patria chica. In her book *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre: Negotiating Freedom in Colonial Cuba, 1670-1780*, author María Elena Díaz describes,

> The ideology of patria referred to an inclusive bond of community that implied an enduring solidarity constructed through a common history or tradition, and perhaps some common rights and institutions that were linked to territoriality as well. The term patria in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries still referred for the most part to a local community, in effect to a patria chica.  

The Virgin of Charity is often referred to as patria chica and therefore imbued early on in her discovery with a national spirit, sense of community, territory, and cult of devotion. Her situatedness within the construction of the national imaginary is evident by the proliferation of her racially triangulate devotionalism. Díaz argues that the Virgin of Charity as a symbol of the nation is a modern story saying,

That is not to say that there is, or has been, just one formulation of the Cuban nation. Nor for that matter has the virgin been a univocal symbol of cubania.

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throughout modern years. Rather, it is only to stress that the legend of Our Lady of Charity as a mother of the Cuban nation is a cultural text that belongs to this century – that, historically speaking, the various associations of the Virgin of Charity with the Cuban nation are part of a relatively recent story, in fact, of a very modern story.¹⁰¹

However, I earnestly challenge Díaz’s argument that the Virgin of Charity is a modern cultural text of nationalism belonging to modern times. I would posit that the Virgin is situated not only as a colonial symbol of nationalism, but also as a trope for colonialism, domination, and the liminality of mulataness which makes this a classical story without an expiration date.

Based on the historical reconstruction of the Marian narrative the oppressor re-dramatizes himself as part of the tripartite protagonist communicating the desire for the appearance of a racially democratic history. The need for racial syncretism as part of a national identity is also mirrored in the racial syncretism of the Virgin’s mulataness. More material than the racial diversity of the Three Johns is the Virgin’s mulataness that establishes nationhood. She was neither black nor Spanish nor native, nothing exclusively, yet she was all things to everyone. She is syncretism. By fashioning religiosity in a mulata body, the Church was able to capture the devotion of all races unto itself spellbound by a dusky Virgin in Catholic clothes. The immediate benefit of this kind of cult of devotion establishes cohesion of early nationhood, cultural identity, and patria chica. De La Torre describes how the Virgin of Charity as a bronze-colored woman was the color of the oppressed and that she symbolized Cuba’s new race. De La Torre goes on to assert that, “A biracial virgen severs the bond between inferiority and nonwhiteness, for the Divine is represented as colored. Her presence allowed the two Juans and Rodrigo and, with them, all Cubans to become compañeros (companions) with the Divine.”¹⁰² The Virgin of Charity sympathized with the oppressed as De La Torre says to whom she gave dignity in that, “She identified with the economic and racial outcasts, appearing in the color of oppressed Cubans.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Díaz, The Virgin, the King, 43.
¹⁰² De La Torre, “Ochun,” 850.
¹⁰³ Ibid., 850.
While even though some may argue that the insertion of Juan the Spaniard came about in later recantations and therefore the Virgin of Charity did not symbolize racial syncretism or the nation – this would be a myopic, linear compartmentalizing of events. The Virgin of Charity initially appeared unto two indigenous men and an African slave boy, but she was a Catholic iconic figure introduced by the Spanish and thusly introducing racial/religious syncretism. The native Taíno population was decimated and Juan and Rodrigo de Hoyos represent this tragic component of colonialism. Juan Moreno was an African slave boy which is mnemonic of transatlantic slavery – another cataclysmic product of colonialism. Finally, and most exceptionally, the Virgin’s *mulataness* also symbolizes the racial syncretism experienced in the nation building of a young Cuba. However, María Elena Díaz scarcely considers the relevance of the Virgin’s *mulataness* as it is hardly mentioned in her book, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre*, or in her chapter, “Rethinking Tradition and Identity: The Virgin of Charity of El Cobre,” from the book *Cuba, the Elusive Nation*. Diaz successfully manages to explore extensive and thorough quantitative data on copper mining, Marian tradition, and the vicissitudes of slavery life, but does not contemplate the Virgin’s *mulataness* even momentarily. One subchapter in Díaz’s “Rethinking Tradition and Identity: The Virgin of Charity of El Cobre,” is entitled, “A Forgotten Historical Transition.” However, what seems to have been forgotten is the Virgin’s *mulataness* as a historical transition symbolizing racial and religious syncretism.

**The Virgin of Charity and the *Orisha Ochún***

Just as Mexico’s Virgin of Guadalupe was associated with the pre-conquest deity Tonantzin, the Virgin of Charity has a multivalence of associations with the African imported *Orisha* Ochún. As a result of the transatlantic slave trade, the Yoruba were brought from Africa to Cuba. The Yoruba in Cuba are referred to as Lucumí and the term Lucumí refers to a culture of people, language, and religion. An *orisha* can be described as a devotional spirit of Santería, a mystery, a power, or compilation of specific traits. One of the most significant traits of the *orisha* Ochún is as that she is a *mulata*.

The palette of characteristics associated with Ochún reflects her changeability in crafting herself as an enigma. As Joseph M. Murphy describes her varied traits in his
chapter, “Yéyé Cachita: Ochún in a Cuban Mirror,” from the book Osun Across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas. Murphy states,

She is an *oricha*, a constellation of traits... Ochún is water, river, mirror, gold, honey, peacock, vulture, gestation. Ochún manifests several personalities depending on the way that she is invoked in divination and ceremony. Here again, Ochún is not one thing or even one person, but an array of qualities. These are her *caminos* or ‘roads’ by which she travels to her followers and is recognized by them.\(^{104}\)

Murphy’s reflection of Ochún as being not one thing and not one person is an implication of Ochún’s *mulataness*. The *mulata* is not just one thing, not just black, nor white, nor feminine, nor masculine, yet she is a kind of palimpsest of inscribed characteristics. Murphy elaborates describing that she is, “at once both and neither. Her liminal status gives her great power and great sorrow for she is at once beyond some of the restrictions of social categories while at the same time without their identity and security.”\(^{105}\)

Some practitioners of Santería read the Virgin of Charity as just a lens for worshipping Ochún inscribing many of the same traits of Ochún onto the Virgin of Charity. This mode of worship de-centralizes the western deity and assembles the devotion of the Virgin as a thin membrane for reading Ochún. Both female figures are *mulatas*, both are represented as fierce mothers protecting their offspring, both are represented as supporters of suffrage and manumission, both are represented as having dominion over the water. Both Ochún and the Virgin of Charity crossed the Atlantic Ocean and therefore both have strong associations with water, rivers, and pacifying tempestuous storms. These indelible associations introduce a more profound religious syncretism that complicates a static notion of conquest and yet reflects the complexities of a true colonial experience. The centralizing of the Lucumí Ochun almost then de-Orientalizes the Virgin of Charity who is rendered a diaphanous veneer for reading Ochún. Murphy’s thesis statement asserts, “I am arguing that the image of La Caridad del Cobre, while surely a mask that disguised Òsun’s worship from the police power of a brutal, slaveholding oligarchy, was also an innovative way to

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\(^{105}\) Ibid., 95.
understand Òsun.” 106 It would then follow to inquire if the worship of the Virgin of Charity by worshippers of Ochún is indeed a false kind of worship akin to subaltern private humor? Murphy answers this question by stating that,

   The Lucumí were not so much ‘pretending’ to venerate La Caridad as venerating her and something else again. That this something else – Ochún – had to be concealed, does not militate against the Lucumí’s appreciation of Caridad del Cobre’s power – to heal, to soother, or to fight – within her proper social context. 107

The Virgin of Charity would have been more popularly worshipped in the public sphere while Ochún would have been confined to the sacred space in the home not to be revealed to the Catholic priests or nuns. This is also a reflection of mulataness as the white self is appropriate in the public sphere where certain rights and privileges are afforded white Spaniards and the black self is secreted at home in private where power exists in an unsanctioned domain. The mulata then represents this duality or ambidextrous worship between the two deities.

**OCHÚN AND THE MARQUILLAS**

In a departure from the previously named attributes assigned to Ochún, she is also imbued with the attributes of coquettishness, always laughing, a seductress, and mistress preoccupied with her own beauty and lavish living. In this manner she is associated with many of the damaging stereotypes of the mulata as a superficial, hyper-sexed siren.

Following in this manner of the stereotypical treatment of the tragic mulata as temptress seeking material gain, she appears as the subject of several marquillas or cigarette boxes in colonial Cuba. Marquillas are nineteenth-century, Cuban lithographs (12 x 8.5 centimeters) used as decorative cigar and cigarette covers. In the chapter Caramel Candy for Sale taken from her book Sugar’s Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism, Vera M. Kutzinski focuses on lithographic images of mulatas as they appear on marquillas. Kutzinski argues that these images are the result of prominently masculinist and misogynistic

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106 Murphy, “Yéyé Cachita,” 87.
107 Ibid., 93.
national discourses. She incorporates a methodology that is concerned with how stereotypical representations came into being and how they functioned in historical settings.

Kutzinski’s primary visual sources come from two collections edited by Antonio Núñez Jiménez: Cuba en las marquillas cigaras del siglo XIX (Cuba as portrayed in nineteenth-century cigarette lithographs) (1985) and Marquillas cigarreras cubanas (Cuban cigarette lithographs) (1989.) The author focuses on the work of lithographers Víctor Patricio Landaluze and Eduardo Guilló. These mulata “types” of Landaluze and Guilló create specimens for “an ethnographic museum” as Kutzinski refers to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century preoccupation with collecting scientific specimens.

Kutzinski may be drawing on Roland Barthes’ theory of semiotic “mythology,” which establishes a new framework from which to examine the symbolism of the marquillas as they relate to the legitimating of economic, political, and cultural power structures. Barthes’s semiotic “mythology” intended to create new concepts by emptying out the old ideologies that were deprived of materialized or historicized forms. He intended to demonstrate how meaning is intertwined, erotic, and naturalized. Kutzinski incorporates this theory to demonstrate the naturalization of the mulata as a sexualized entity by creating a new historicized meaning. Kutzinski argues that the narrative of the mulata on the marquillas as a hyper-sexualized, transgressor of social propriety is dealt with by experiencing a wretched demise and the triumph of Reason. This process of reinvestiture is what Kutzinski describes as “an essentially colonialist discourse.” The author argues that the lithographs from the Guilló series are not just about the unfavorable consequences of racial mixing used to appeal to the intended audience’s moral sensibility, but that they are allegories for social crisis and transformation.

Kutzinski mentions class when describing the mulata as a social by-product of the sugar-and-slave economy. Yet, these arguments do not elaborate on the importance of economic power and class structures as they relate to the mulata’s social position. A further elaboration on the stratifications of race, color, and class within the Afro-Cuban community would also create a richer analysis of these images. For example, if we examine images of mulatas on the marquillas as situated within the religiosity of the Afro-Cuban community we discover great similarities of the Life of the Mulata with the Lucumi’s Ochún.
When reading these images iconographically we find several associations between the *Life of the Mulata* and *Ochún*. In the *Para Usted* brand’s rendering of the *mulata* and her suitor she is holding a fan and seated in front of a mirror which are both symbols (the fan and mirror) of *Ochún* [see Figure 12 in Appendix]. As Murphy describes how *Ochún* is not what she seems to be he says, “Behind the fan, beneath the surface of the waters, there is always another *Ochún*. Her famous gaze in the mirror puns on this two-facedness.”

Author Madeline Cámara Betancourt in her chapter “Between Myth and Stereotype: The Image of the Mulatta in Cuban Culture in the Nineteenth Century, a Truncated Symbol of Nationality” also discusses the *mulata* seated before a mirror in a scene from another *marquillas* brand saying,

> The female character looks at herself in the mirror of her bedroom and says to herself: ‘My loved one says that I should have hope.’ The promises of happiness inscribed in the caption are proportional to the pleasure the mulatta’s beauty offers. She knows and uses this rule of exchange, confronting in the mirror how many years of advantage she still has left.

Ysamur Flores-Peña describes the notion of *Ochun* in her chapter, “Overflowing with Beauty: The Ochún Altar in Lucumí Aesthetic Tradition,” saying she is “the divine queen, the eternally young and beautiful spirit of love.” It should be noted that the unrequited lover of the *mulata* on all of the *marquillas* is always a white Spanish male. These *marquillas* reproduce a docile *mulata* body, yet the *Ochún mulata* body is not docile, but empowered with agency endowing her with a distinct alterity. Following Michel Foucault’s theory of power where the *mulata* body would be characterized as a “docile body” the *mulata* on the *marquillas* is like *Ochún*, but not. This “docile body” is subjected to compulsory systems of power including slavery and is constituted “invisible” by the colonizer’s patronymic power. By using Foucauldian theory, it could be argued that the *mulata* body is

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108 Murphy, “*Yéyé Cachita*,” 96.


reproduced as a submissive, docile body through exercises of power. Through these exercises of power the *mulata* body appears not as a fact, but as a performance.

**MAPPING THE *MULATA* BODY IN BRAZIL**

Divergent from Cuba’s Virgin of Charity and Mexico’s Virgin of Guadalupe, the Virgin painted on the ceiling of the nave of the church of the Franciscan Third Order in Minas Gerais, Brazil is not equipped with spectacular tales of apparitions featuring natives or Africans. She is however a *mulata*, but she is painted more along the lines of a European tradition. She is known as the *Assumption of the Virgin*, with *King David and angelic choir*, 1801-1802 [see Figure 13 in Appendix] and was painted by the white painter Manuel da Costa Ataíde (1762?-1830.) Commenting on Ataíde being a white painter is essential to understanding the narrative of the Virgin. It is speculated that the woman painted as the Virgin in the *Assumption* is Ataíde’s unofficial wife, Maria Raimunda da Silva.

Ataíde was a member of the Franciscan Third Order which was an exclusive institution that “was governed by strict rules barring men of Jewish, Moorish, or ‘Negro’ descent and those married to a woman of such blood from holding official or public positions.” Therefore the implication of the beauteous *mulata* of tawny, smooth complexion and long sandy brown hair as Ataíde’s “wife” would have been sensationally scandalous. Maria Raimunda da Silva had borne four children by Ataíde and was the primary beneficiary of his estate after his death as he had officially remained single. The long arm of *limpieza de sangre* had well reached the mining province of Minas Gerais where gold and diamonds were mined from its rivers and mountains. Tania Costa Tribe describes these interracial “unofficial” marriages as typical stating, “Such arrangements were common in colonial Brazil, where the shortage of white women was one reason why mixed unions were often formed outside wedlock.”

Perhaps what is probably most riveting about the *Assumption* Virgin is that *limpieza de sangre* did not restrict her from being represented as a *mulata*, the mother of Christ, but it did restrict her from marrying a mortal white man. Dogma makes no reasonable

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112 Ibid., 75.
reconciliation of this contradiction, but rather reinforces the petrification of the notion of black blood as unredeemable through the restrictions of marriage laws. Yet, the contradiction creates an apotheosis of the *mulata* body such that she becomes deified and worshipped. As Tribe confirms when discussing the complexity of the representation of the *mulata* Virgin saying, “It was emblematic of a painfully paradoxical social context that could deify mulatto women while denying them any effective legal rights.”\footnote{Tribe, “The Mulatto as Artist,” 76.} Furthermore, Tribe also mentions that the figures surrounding the Virgin are also *mulatos* and represented as Jerome, David, and angels making this *Assumption* a reflection of a complex colonial experience.

As previously mentioned, the *Assumption of the Virgin, with King David and angelic choir* is a departure from the Virgin of Charity and even the Virgin of Guadalupe because she is not endowed with any tales of racially syncretic apparitions. The *mulata* body when inscribed with certain attributes can be manipulated for personal gain. She becomes likened unto a spokesperson for racial unity in Cuba selling Catholicism to unite a nation. She is then spokesperson for the *marquillas* series which was very popular and very profitable for the cigarette makers. Her image is appropriated without her permission for capitalist gain and moreover she does not receive royalties for her likeness when selling products that inculcate racism or a racially syncretic harmony that did not actually exist. Stevens-Arroyo states that, “syncretism is the great weapon of missionaries both to expropriate all that is worthwhile in another religion, and also to denigrate as evil what is inassimilable.”\footnote{Stevens-Arroyo, “The Contribution of Catholic Orthodoxy,” 39.}

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\footnote{Tribe, “The Mulatto as Artist,” 76.}
\footnote{Stevens-Arroyo, “The Contribution of Catholic Orthodoxy,” 39.}
CHAPTER 4

APPETITE FOR DECONSTRUCTION: READING IMAGES OF MULATAS AND FOOD AS A SIGN SYSTEM

The mulata is the deadly apple
that infernal discord dropped on the ground;
the new Helen, war accompanies her;
each man is Paris, each house is Troy.

--Francisco Muñoz del Monte

This chapter will examine the use of food as a sign system representing the mulata body in colonial Latin American art. Beyond the nutritional values traditionally associated with foodstuffs, food can also serve as a systematic communication of images and behaviors encoded with discursive significations. Following after Roland Barthes’s semiological pioneering interpretations of food constituting a sign system signifying its society of consumers, a relationship between the consumed and the consumer is established. It is this function and protocol of food in colonial Latin American art between the consumer and the consumed that corresponds to the value assigned to the mulata body. The multi-sensory experience with which food delights the consumer is translated in colonial art as the mulata body performs the sensibility of taste as she is signified by copious displays of exotic fruits, vegetables, sugars, and chocolates. The colonial consumer’s appetite for the mulata body as an exoticized serving can be deconstructed to reveal a diet of patriarchal power and control over “otherness.” By examining images of the mulata body juxtapositioned with culinary presentations – a series of assigned psychosociological traits and behaviors emerge.

Beginning with an examination of the appearances of mulatas and food in the casta paintings of colonial Mexico, a pattern of images, values, and function is established. By viewing colonial casta images through a historical framework that acknowledges a politically motivated racial hierarchy and its need to systematize the “other” the function of food and the mulata body becomes intertwined. Various references and treatments of the mulata in casta paintings provide a compass for referencing the mulata body within a political and
social narrative. Then, this chapter will focus on the formation of the mulata body as a proto-nationalist representation of colonial Cuba where a similar belief system reiterates the same significations. It is this redundancy of images and meanings that reinforces a hegemonic discourse harmful to the eroticized mulata body as a devourable entity.

A leading scholar in the area of casta paintings is art historian, Ilona Katzew, whose article, “Casta Painting: Identity and Social Stratification in Colonial Mexico” provides an exploratory view into the reasons that may have led to the development of the casta paintings. Katzew’s book Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico, elaborates on these views in more detail. Katzew strengthens the argument of the imperialist classification of the “other” by framing it within the context of the Enlightenment period.

The Enlightenment is generally credited with fostering the acute observation and categorization of all manifestations of life, giving impetus to the exploration of other cultures and prompting the ‘logical’ arrangement of these ‘discoveries.’ Casta paintings were displayed with a host of archaeological objects, rocks, minerals, fossils, and other ‘ethnographic’ items.115

By contextualizing casta paintings within the Enlightenment period Katzew demonstrates how they functioned to satisfy European curiosity by classifying the “other” in an attempt to “enlighten” Spaniards. The pathology of these portraits as pseudo-scientific specimens offered for examination by the biologically obsessed and distressed was intended to depict the realities of casta life.

In Miguel Cabrera’s From Español and Mulatto, Morisca, 1763, [see Figure 14 in Appendix] the Enlightenment’s obsession with exotica is displayed by the appearance of the mulata mother and morisca daughter, next to a halved avocado. The avocado is a fruit indigenous to the New World and would have appeared as a curiosity to the Spanish because of its nutty taste and smooth meat. The avocado (Persea Gratissima or Persea Americana) derives its name from the indigenous Nahutal word ahuacatl which means “testicle.” This reference to the male sexual seed is supported by the Aztec’s use of the avocado as a sexual stimulant. The halved avocado is also one of many New World fruits such as the papaya which would have appeared open-faced to display the curious internal seeds and meat. The mulata mother is essentialized into “halfness” (read: not whole / not complete) emphasizing

what historian, Susan Dean-Smith argues was the Enlightenment’s ‘culture of curiosity.’ The scooped out, seeded avocado can also be read as a feminized/sexualized image. The *mulata*/avocado’s seed is now displayed atop the table as the seed of offspring, *moriscos*. In Roland Barthes’s essay, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” he argues the gendering of food saying, “…there are supposed to be masculine and feminine kinds of food. Furthermore, visual advertising makes it possible to associate certain kinds of foods with images connoting a sublimated sexuality.”\(^{116}\) Hence, *casta* paintings can then be read as a kind of advertisement for identity politics targeted for sexualized consumption by the intellectual colonial collector.

In a similar painting entitled, *From Español and Mulatta, a Morisca is Born*, 1790, [see Figure 15 in Appendix] artist unknown, the *mulata* mother is offered a bowl of food. It is unclear of the exact nature of the food in the bowl, but the interesting difference with this painting is the setting. Unlike Cabrera’s work and other *casta* paintings that will be explored in this chapter this event takes place outdoors in an open-air marketplace where the *mulata* mother is surrounded by vendors displaying their food items for sale. The *mulata* is therefore associated with food in the private and public sphere reconfirming a construction of shared identity with food. The importance of her appearance in the public sphere connotes a social contract of the *mulata* body and food function at large. The consistency of these images assists in reaffirming a social consciousness that positions the *mulata* as the consumed and the Spanish male as the consumer. Barthes confirms, “One could say that an entire ‘world’ (social environment) is present in and signified by food.”\(^{117}\)

In another painting entitled *From Spaniard and Black, Mulatto*, 1760-70, [see Figure 16 in Appendix] artist unknown, a family appears in a more tranquil setting. The black mother is pictured lovingly stirring a pot of hot chocolate. Like Cabrera’s avocado, the chocolate signifies the black mother whose complexion is chocolate-like reinforcing the signification of chocolate as a sign for feminized blackness. The mother is depicted next to flames of fire further reinforcing the black/*mulata* female body as a ‘hot’ commodity. In like

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\(^{117}\) Ibid., 23.
fashion, José de Paez’s From Spaniard and Black, Mulatto: detail Black Woman Stirring Chocolate, 1770-80, [see Figure 17 in Appendix] also shares the same domestic scene of a black woman stirring chocolate in the same pose looking over her shoulder. In his book The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720, author R. Douglas Cope supports this assertion saying, “…nearly half of all mulattoes were servants, an employment pattern even more accentuated among blacks.”

In her book Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century, historian Joan Cameron Bristol explores the mulata experience and her search for unsanctioned alternative power. Bristol centralizes the mulata body as practitioner of witchcraft, healer, locus of secret knowledge, and latent potentiality of power and agency. It is Bristol’s exploration of the mulata experience and chocolate that offers a secondary reading of these casta paintings.

Many of the Afro-Mexican women that Bristol refers to used witchcraft as a measure of power to participate in the capitalist system regarding the exchange value of their body as a transgressive act making them more difficult to govern. Sometimes they practiced witchcraft against their owners who may have mistreated them. Bristol records the fear that many owners had that their slaves may injure them as the result of witchcraft. In her chapter “To Have Health There Was Nothing That He Wouldn’t Take: Magic and the Mediation of Authority,” Bristol describes, “Slaves not only used magic on their own bodies; as in love magic cases, they also put substances in their owner’s food. In 1626…a slave named Dominga, frustrated by bad treatment, bought powders from Native American sellers and put them in her owner’s chocolate.” Bristol also describes another case of a priest, Tomás de Cárdenas who denounced a black slave named Juana for stealing from her owner Licenciado Antonio Calderón,

Father Tomás also claimed that a slave named Rufina had told him that she saw Juana put Mariana’s [a mulatto woman] powders, along with hairs from some mulatto women, and the nails of an unknown animal into Antonio’s chocolate and that he had seemed dazed after drinking it. Rufina suspected that Juana’s

118 Cope, The Limits of Racial Domination, 87.
119 Bristol, Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches, 169.
adulteration of the chocolate had clouded Antonio’s judgment...since she had not
been punished immediately when her thefts were discovered.120

Bristol goes on to describe another occasion where a free mulata, Leonor de Isla, in
1622 who practiced magical rituals, “to get her client’s husbands to stop straying.”121  Leonor
de Isla was also reportedly unlucky in her own love life and, “had mixed water and menstrual
blood into her Spanish lover’s chocolate in order to maintain his love for her.”122  After
Bristol’s examination of the ritualistic use of chocolate as a depository for magic, the black
female looking over her shoulder stirring chocolate is layered with multiple meanings. These
are no longer scenes of domesticated bliss, but can be read as stations of agency. While
Afro-Mexican women gained a temporary measure of power through witchcraft, Bristol
argues that they were not successful in transforming the official sphere of the colonial
hierarchy nor could they have been expected to perform this accomplishment. She states,
“Yet there are messages about successful resistance and agency to be taken form the stories
of blacks and mulattoes in New Spain.”123  Bristol’s observations offer a powerful and
intriguing perspective on the colonial history of Afro-Mexican women, intra-casta
relationships, a gendered perspective, and alternative methods of power and resistance
exercised by Afro-Mexican women. Just as chocolate became the feminized sign for Afro-
Mexican women in colonial Mexico, sugar became the feminized sign for Afro-Cuban
women in colonial Cuba.

Cuba experienced an economic boom due to the insatiable sweet tooth of Western
Europe. This strategically located island demanded a sophisticated system of engineering to
process the sugar cane, as well as, a plantation system of slavery that increasingly required
more slaves from Africa. In his book Sugar is Made With Blood: The Conspiracy of La
Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba,” author Robert L. Paquette
describes Cuba’s global economy, “In 1840, Cuba was the world’s leading producer of sugar

120 Bristol, Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches, 175.
121 Ibid., 166.
122 Ibid., 166.
123 Ibid., 222.
and the gilded remnant of Spain’s once-mighty American empire.” Likewise, this same period also experienced a boom in the literary arts that focused on the mulata body within anti-slavery narratives such as Cirilo Villaverde’s Cecilia Valdes and Moria Delgado’s Sofia. Villaverde describes the mulata as sugar blossoms in Cecilia Valdes:

and if the curious inquire
whom exactly I desire,
I will say that I call you,
for being sweet and honest,

the sugarcane blossom.125

Poetry also participated in the cult of the mulata in nineteenth-century Cuba casting her as a vampiric siren dressed in proto-nationalist fashionableness. Francisco Muñoz del Monte’s poem “La Mulata” was published in 1845 and Bartolomé José Crespo y Borbón’s poem “La Mulata” was published in 1847. She becomes a commoditized poesía mulata and a site of sociosexual negotiations signified by the nation’s leading economy – sugar, the “powerhouse of foods.” In his essay, “Aura and Angora: On Negotiating Rapture and Speaking Between,” Homi K. Bhabha explains, “Aligning negotiation with these systems of social exchange – language, action, signification, representation – places it at the center of modern life, at the cusp of the creation of commodities and the initiation of communication.” Sugar is then the sign system of signification in colonial Cuba signifying the commoditized mulata body as part of the negotiation of social exchange. For example, in her book Sugar’s Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism author Vera M. Kutzinski describes the lyrics of a popular song:

There is no mulata more beautiful,
more cunning and more graceful,
nor one who has more sugar
in her hips than my Rosa.127

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127 Kutzinski, Sugar’s Secrets, 91.
Crespo’s poem “La Mulata,” like the casta paintings of colonial Mexico also references the mulata as signified by chocolate:

- a dove with a raised tail,
- strutting merrily like a peacock;
- a chocolate beater
- in the experienced hand.\(^{128}\)

It is interesting that Crespo uses the peacock as an analogy for the mulata because the peacock was one of the symbols of Ochún who is rendered as a mulata. In the poem, “Majestad negra” (Black majesty) the mulata again appears sugar coated:

- Swaying her hips the Queen advances,
- and from her immense buttocks flow
- salacious movements of the drums curdle
- into rivers of sugar and molasses.
- Dark sugarmill of a sensuous harvest\(^{129}\)

The mulata in these poems is an unconscious entity portrayed stereotypically as a cigar-smoking, cunning hydra of mythically oversexed proportions. Nevertheless, in colonial Cuba, sugar as a sign system dominates the formation of the sociosexual image of the mulata where non-white women are classified according to various grades of refined sugar. In a marquilla (cigar box) series of the Para Usted brand entitled, “Muestras de azúcar de mi ingenio” (Sugar samples from my plantation,) author Kutzinski describes this continuum of refinement where the best sugar is assigned to the lighter skinned blacks and the lesser quality sugars assigned to the darker skinned, more phenotypically African blacks.

- We are told, for instance, that sugar “was mulatto from the start.” … “Quebrado de primera” (First-rate – from the centrifuge) and “Blanco de segunda (trén comun)” (Second-rate white – common train), both of which refer to light mulatas, while “Quebrado de segunda” (Second-rate) features a brown-skinned woman with “negroid” features.\(^{130}\)

The atrocities of slavery in Cuba and the development of the mulata as a proto-nationalist iconic figure encoded with sugar signs situates the mulata within a colonial guilt economy. Barthes describes sugar functioning as an institution which implies, “a set of

\(^{128}\) Kutzinski, Sugar’s Secrets, 38.

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 190.

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 48.
images, dreams, tastes, choices, and values.” He also applies a meta-sugar analysis saying, “Sugar is not just a foodstuff… it is, if you will, an ‘attitude,’ bound to certain usages, certain ‘protocols.'” Cuba’s addictive sugar attitude is therefore applied to the mulata body as one of silent consumption within a guilt economy. Just as the over-consumption of sugar may connote a guilt ridden sentimentality that at once desires to satisfy the sweet tooth and yet denies its aftertaste – the process of ‘eating’ the mulata sugar-body satisfies the male sexual appetite and yet sublimes the hostilities of the plantation slavery system and sexual assault of its black women. Barthes goes on to describe the psychoanalytical potential of food hindered by guilt saying, “it is obvious that if the subject of food had not been so trivialized and invested with guilt, it could easily be subjected to the kind of ‘poetic’ analysis that G. Bachelard applied to language.” If the sign and the signified can perform an even exchange of meanings and identity, then would it be fair to assume that if the subject of the mulata had not been so trivialized and invested with guilt, she could easily be subjected to the kind of ‘poetic’ analysis…applied to language?

As part of a series of marquillas entitled, “Vida y Muerte de La Mulata” (The life and Death of a Mulata) the La Charanga de Villergas company featured an installation entitled, “Promete Opimos Frutos” (Very Promising) [see Figure 18 in Appendix]. A young mulata daughter peers longingly over her shoulder at a young Spanish boy while her black mother stands nearby bare-breasted with toddler in tote. The young mulata girl is again associated with frutos (fruit.) The use of fruit as a sign system signifying the mulata body invokes a temporal existence with an extremely brief shelf life. Because the shelf life of fruit is relatively short, it would follow that the ripeness of the mulata body exists within a pithily constrained timeframe. In the play La Mulata de Rango by playwright José Maria Quintana, the mulata character, Julia declares, “There you have marked the time of my grandeur. It will last only as long as my beauty. Once that is gone, I’ll be nothing other than the mulata Julia, daughter of the black Juana.” The fruit metaphor is also visited in the book, White

132 Ibid., 24.
133 Ibid., 23.
Negritude: Race, Writing, and Brazilian Cultural Identity, by author Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond who describes the *mulata* body as she appears in the poem, “Mulata-Antilla” by poet Luis Palés. She describes Palés as saying, “both the colonial proprietor who lays heterosexual claim to the *mulata*’s body – and with it, the bounty of the colonized Caribbean (muslin, star apples, rum, pineapples, tobacco, sugar)”\(^{135}\)

The flavoring or cooking of the *mulata* body within Cuban cuisine is exemplified in its national dish – *ajiaco*. This dish with Amerinidan origins combines the daily accessible vegetables, fish, or meat and seasons them with the chile ají. Each flavor retains its distinct taste avoiding a melting pot scenario. The leftover *ajiaco* provides the base of the following day’s *ajiaco*. This terminology as it is applied to Cuba’s culture of *mestizaje* was first employed by white Cuban ethnologist, Fernando Ortiz, who uses the *ajiaco* metaphor as an illustration of *cubanidad* (Cuban Identity),

> What is characteristic of Cuba is that, being an ajiaco, its people are not a prepared meal but rather a constant preparation...In the cooking pot of Cuba there has always been a continual addition of exogenous roots, fruits, and meats, an incessant simmering of heterogeneous substances.\(^{136}\)

Ortiz, as Cuba’s eminent (outside) authority on Afro-Cuban culture further explains the combinations of African and Spanish linguistics that populate Cuban culinary practices. In her essay entitled, “Fine Dining: Race in Prerevolution Cuban Cookbooks,” author Christine Folch states, “He [Ortiz] uses a curious word for such blends: *mulata*. He writes, ‘Cañandonga is a blended term [literally *voz mulata*]’ by which various kinds of sugar were distinguished, and which the root ‘Indonga’ means ‘from Angola’.”\(^{137}\) In his poem, “Las Habaneras” Crespo describes the *mulata* body in a similar fashion as an *ajiaco* recipe. The stanzas are abbreviated to reveal the culinary metaphors:

> She is a compound of everything; she is the same as the trout, that fluctuates between two waters; as the pepper that looks appealing

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136 Ibid., 39.

and when eaten lights a fire;
as liquor whose smell comforts,
but that intoxicates when consumed.\textsuperscript{138}

The \textit{mulata} as a sexually intoxicating alcoholic beverage also serves as an informant and is elaborated on in the essay by Alicia Arrizón entitled, “Relocating the Mulata: Beyond Exoticism and Sensuality.” Arrizón locates a cocktail recipe on how to make a \textit{Mulata} / Mulata,

\begin{center}
\textbf{Mulata (Classic Cuban Cocktail)}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textit{1 ½} ounces of light rum
    \item \textit{¾} ounce dark crème de cacao
    \item \textit{1} tablespoon fresh lime juice, or to taste
    \item \textit{1} cup ice cubes
\end{itemize}
\end{center}

Combine all of the ingredients in a bar shaker, cover, and shake well. Strain the \textit{mulata} into a martini glass. This combination serves one.

- Steven Raichlen, \textit{Miami Spice}.\textsuperscript{139}

Arrizón goes on to examine the three primary \textit{ingredients} of the Mulata: rum, lime, and chocolate as they signify the transculturation, commodification, and eroticization of the \textit{mulata} body. The syncretism of these three signifiers (rum, lime, and chocolate) illustrates the cultural hybridization of the \textit{mulata} body within the Cuban imaginary. The characterization of the \textit{mulata} as a nationalist identity signified by food is explained by Barthes saying, “food permits a person…to partake each day of the national past.”\textsuperscript{140} The hybridity of the \textit{mulata} identity belonging to both cultures, yet neither one exclusively, creates a mapping for public and private domains which is characteristic of a youthful country’s search for a national identity. She becomes the site of cartographic discourse revealing the limits and bounds of her habitation. These reinforced strategies of patriarchal power exercised in tautological fashion are also designed to serve as colonial constructions of oppression.

The performativity of \textit{mulata} subjectivity is also addressed by Brazilian cultural critics who examine the cult of the \textit{mulata} as the mythological and theatrical residue from colonial sociohistorical narratives. In their essay, “Odyssey: Negotiating the Subjectivity of Mulata Identity in Brazil,” by the mother/daughter authors Angela Gilliam and Onik’a

\textsuperscript{138} Kutzinski, \textit{Sugar’s Secrets}, 35.
\textsuperscript{139} Arrizón, \textit{Queering Mestizaje}, 83.
\textsuperscript{140} Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” 24.
Gilliam, the *mulata* as a “cooked” body reappears. The Gilliams describe the deconstruction of Brazilian modernism in the work of Sant’ Anna’s saying:

> The sexual objectification of black women creates individuals who are to be “cooked” and then consumed rather than engaged as citizens. The mythical mulata …as a creature outside the realm of the *marriageable*, but nonetheless to be *consumed/eaten*…is the recurrent site of the pro-slavery, imaginary desire.\(^{141}\)

Angela Gilliam describes her own encounter with patriarchal sexism as she describes how she was referred to by two men disenchanted with her intellectual opinions as a “double-boiler mulata” indicating that she would have to be “slow-cooked” and as not providing an expedient satisfaction for the male sexual appetite. In other words, she is not fast food. The slow-cooking of the *mulata* body has been on a simmer for five-hundred years. And like the *ajiaco*, what is not consumed today serves as the base for the following day’s meal indicating a cyclical process of cooking and consumption. The cultural transformations of neo-colonial experiences are perpetually adding various ingredients to the pot and cooking up tomorrow’s new flavors. It is the redundancy of this process that fortifies hegemonic discourse exploitative of the *mulata* body.

Colonial discourse informs the following day’s menu of food functioning as a sign system signifying the *mulata* body. This is the traditional colonial perspective on the treatment of the *mulata* body as a fantastical locus of playful exchange. She is impermanent like the fruit that signifies – a temporary satisfaction of desire. Therefore, food as a system of communication that constitutes a set of behaviors, images, social contracts, and motivations is evident when foodstuffs are read as signifiers of the *mulata* body. Once the language of the sign system has been deconstructed, new elements of agency may be interjected into the signification of images creating new recipes contributing to a new gastronomic consciousness.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The colonial period pierced the matrix of tremendous cultural and racial diversity such as had not been witnessed before in the history of Latin America. However, given the pseudo-scientific menagerie of Otherness that appears at its zenith during the Enlightenment period – how did these commitments to a strict classificatory caste system survive during the transition into Independence? Throughout Latin America the formation of a creole national identity superseded colonial casta determinacy. The creole class was in hot pursuit of establishing independence from Spain and Portugal and one of the most successful devices used to create this national cohesion was *mestizaje*.

*Mestizaje* is another terminology for miscegenation that would have a nationalistic connotation during the Independence period. As discussed in her book *Queer Latinidad*, author Juana María Rodríguez argues that through nation building and cultural nationalism, *mestizaje* and *mulatismo* have been marginally reinscribed, flattened, and had their differences subsumed. She uses a (post)(neo)colonialist and postmodern methodology to examine the practices of erasure through the formation of cultural identities and national identities. This erasure is sustained through imaginative historiographies that particularly diminish the African ancestry of its progenitors. For example, in his book *Mexico Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996* author Enrique Krauze very briefly discusses the history and impact of Transatlantic slavery in Mexico affirming that, “Africans were brought in and they were certainly slaves. They were used primarily along the coasts though also in mining work in the Bajío, but the numbers were always comparatively small and intermarriage with Indian women legally freed the children from slavery. When the institution of slavery was abolished – at Independence – there were only about ten thousand black slaves throughout Mexico.”

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thesis the African presence throughout colonial Latin America had a tremendous influence, not only by the introduction of the vast numbers of African slaves but also through the visual arts, formation of religious identity, architecture, diet, music, dance, civil laws, and many other remnants of popular culture. Contrary to Krauze’s argument, current studies rediscovering Afro-Latino histories have uncovered a rather significant population living throughout Mexico that have been substantiated by census data, statistics, and remarkable empirical evidence. Krauze’s argument also does not compensate for the prodigious offspring of African ancestry during the prior three hundred years. His arguments in fact represent a very popular notion of Mexican mestizaje that completely obliterates its tercera raiz or third root – that of African ancestry. As Krauze goes on to refer to the “admirable spiritual foundations” of mestizaje he states,

So the Indians turning towards the future and the creoles looking towards the past would both move down the road to that racial and cultural fusion called mestizaje. In a famous passage, Justo Sierra summarized the spirit of reconciliation of 1910, within which the idea of the historical convergence of Spaniard and Indian now had a place: “As Mexicans we are the children of two nations, of two races; we were born from the Conquest; our roots are in the land that the indigenous peoples inhabited and also in the soil of Spain. This fact dominates our whole history; to it we owe our soul.”143

This particular formation of a national history sanitizes itself through an ontology that glorifies a noble pre-Conquest past and a heroic creole class through the deployment and painterly effects of a noble mestizaje. There is no glory in the shame of slavery. As discussed in chapter two limpieza de sangre implied that black blood was unredeemable and a genetic stain that haunted a blood line designed for repudiation. Krauze resolves that mestizaje has solved Mexico’s racial problem by comparing how Peruvians experienced discrimination as the result of skin color and how they were assigned a derogatory term for mestizos called cholos. Krauze states, “No such strongly charged term existed in Mexico. Nearly everyone, after all, was a mestizo.”144 Nevertheless, it is through the diminishing and complete erasure of African ancestry where we find the most derogatory and sublimated violence. There is a popular saying in Latin America that says, “Show me your grandmother

143 Krauze, Mexico Biography of Power, 50.
144 Ibid., 55.
and I’ll tell you who you are.” As illustrated through the brief compilation of figures assembled here – one of the grandmothers is the *mulata*.

She is represented throughout Mexico in casta paintings and portraits during the colonial period and appears in the first set of casta paintings as a progenitor of later renderings. She appears in Cuba as a syncretic symbol of nationalism uniting the three races of indigenous, African, and Spanish. She appears in the Marian tradition as a religious iconic mother figure in Cuba as The Virgin of Charity and in Brazil as the *Assumption of the Virgin* with a nod to unsanctioned marriages between Portuguese men with black and *mulata* women. She also appears as the mother of the Lucumi in Cuba as the *orisha* Ochún who is reverenced as the divine female matron for her miraculous powers over water and childbirth, but also endowed with incredible agency and the power of transformation. The *mulata* is also graphically illustrated juxtaposed with fruits, chocolates, tobacco, and other foodstuffs or items that enter the mouth as a psychosexualized entity fitted for devouring. Her image is the colonial Latin American and Caribbean oral fixation.

In her chapter, “Between Myth and Stereotype: The Image of the Mulatta in Cuban Culture in the Nineteenth Century, a Truncated Symbol of Nationality,” author Madeline Cámara Betancourt discusses many of the topics discussed here including the nuances of the *mulata* image on Cuban marquillas, in literature, and as she relates to Ochún. Betancourt asserts that the *mulata* remains “unrepresentable” by first quoting Kutzinski saying,

“The mulata may be the signifier of Cuba’s unity-in-racial-diversity, but she has no part in it. For the mestizo nation is a male homosocial construct premised precisely upon the disappearance of the feminine.” The negation of the feminine/maternal does not allow the emergence of a harmonious and stable symbol in the national imaginary, which should have started by legitimizing the foundational elements of its culture.145

The re-reading of colonial images and representations of *mulatas* are therefore increasingly momentous, not only to the establishment of a physical presence, but also to the legitimization of a gendered subjectivity and an authentication of a true colonial experience. The rediscovery and critical rethinking of these images of *mulatas* allows for extraordinary opportunities to refashion a representation that is “representable.” Rather than a requiem of

representation or a grieving of the sins of the fathers we are in a space of marvelous intelligible renderings and invoking “representable” strategies.

As youthful countries exploring the bounds of their habitation, drawing and redrawing borders to emphasize the masculinist sprawl of domination, the *mulata* body becomes a mapped body. She too is drawn or rendered, both literally and figuratively in colonial Latin American and Caribbean art as visual clues for the borders of her habitation and as a symbol of Western male sexual dominance. She is the reminder of a collection of complex colonial experiences. The *mulata* body is a universe of transformation. She is the remainder and she is the reminder.
REFERENCES


De La Torre, Miguel A. “Ochun: (N)Either the (M)Other of All Cubans (n)or the Bleached Virgin.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (2001): 837-861.


APPENDIX

FIGURES
Figure 3. Attributed to Manuel de Arellano, *Rendering of a Mulatto*, 1711. Courtesy of the Denver Museum of Art.
Figure 5. Attributed to Juan Rodriguez Juarez, Español y Mulata, Morisca, 1715. Source: Ilona Katzew, Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 74.
Figure 6. Attributed to the School of Miguel Cabrera, *De Espanol y Mulata nace Morisca, (The Cigarette Rollers)* c. 1750. Courtesy of the Denver Museum of Art.
Figure 8. José de Páez, *From Spaniard and Morisca, Albino*, c. 1770-80.
Figure 15. Artist unknown, *Caste: From Mulatta and Spaniard, a Morisca is born (De Mulata y Español nace Morisca)*, 1790. 