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Wayward Mixture: The Problem of Race in the Colonies

From the dawn of Spain's venture into the New World until the end of its colonial regime, Spanish America was gripped by an almost innate need to process, categorize, and label human differences in an effort to manage its vast empire.[1] Whether it was conquistadors seeking to establish grades of difference between themselves and native rulers, or simple artisans striving to distinguish themselves from their peers, people paid careful attention to what others looked like, how they lived, what they wore, and how they behaved. Over time, rules were created to contain transgressions. The wearing of costumes and masks outside of sanctioned events and holidays was soundly discouraged, lest disguises lead

[1] Such impulses and desires, particularly acute in the New World, have caused scholars such as Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra to postulate that Spanish America was the first modern society to formulate notions of scientific racism based on biological determinism that assigned essentialist categories to human populations. See "New World, New Stars: Patriotic Astrology and the Invention of Indian and Creole Bodies in Colonial Spanish America, 1600–1650," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (1999): 35. María Elena Martínez observes that the Spanish proclivity to indulge in human categorizations likely had medieval origins, as a means of describing hybrid offspring of the type produced by Christians and Muslims. See Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 142–143. Additional context can be found in Solange Alberro and Pilar Gonzalbo, *La sociedad novohispana: estereotipos y realidades* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2013). For non-Iberian examples of categorizing populations via biological determinism, particularly during the Enlightenment era, see Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Raleigh, NC: Alex Catalogue, 1990); and Georges L. Buffon, *Natural History, General and Particular*, trans. William Smellie and William M. Wood (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812).

to crimes, immorality, and mistaken identities.[2] People who lived as others could be labeled criminals, and those who moved across color boundaries to enjoy privileges not associated with their caste did so at their own peril.[3] When legislation failed to control behavior, social pressure impelled obedience and conformity.

Yet, in spite of the Spanish empire's craving for fixed identities, the truth is that there was great fluidity. It could be seen almost everywhere. In the early days of the conquest, as native regimes collapsed and tumbled, impostors rapidly ascended the ranks of a vanishing native nobility. Along the frontiers and in urban centers, skilled and crafty pretenders found entry into professions for which they were never intended. Mulattoes became priests, blacks became silversmiths, and plebeians of various hues became politicians and landowners of renown. Some petty criminals became native lords. A central catalyst of this social mobility was rampant racial mixture, which represented one of the realities of colonial life most threatening to the construction of an orderly society.

From the perspective of the government and the elite, the proliferation of new racial groups arising from racial mixture presented concrete problems for transferring privileges and defining social station. This was a special concern for the Spaniards since almost immediately after the conquest, what we categorize today as "race" became a means of dividing the spoils. Buttressed by their sense of technological, military, moral, intellectual, and cultural superiority, white Spaniards felt entitled to extract the best that the New World had to offer. To perpetuate this status, they designated themselves *gente de razón*, literally "people of reason," uniquely capable of making rational decisions. Even

[2] For an example of legislation prohibiting the use of masks and disguises, see a decree published April 30, 1716, to this effect. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico (hereafter AGN), General de Parte, vol. 21, exp. 211, fols. 248v–249v. This decree was intended to apply to individuals regardless of caste, gender, or social station. As the Bourbon period progressed, even wearing masks and disguises during sanctioned festivals and other events was curtailed in some locations, among them Mexico City. See Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals of Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 117.

[3] One of the most famous cases of transvestitism was that of Catalina de Erauso, who traveled the world and performed incredible deeds as a man. See Erauso, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, trans. Michele Stepto and Gabrielle Stepto (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). Another example of cross-dressing and hermaphroditism can be found in "Sexuality and the Marriage Sacrament," in Richard Kagan and Abigail Dyer, *Inquisitorial Inquiries: Brief Lives of Secret Jews and Other Heretics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004), 64–87.

more important, gente de razón were indelibly marked by their Christian faith.[4]

On the other hand, the indigenous population was marked by an inherent inferiority. Considering them heathens or at best novices in the faith, and lacking the trappings of civilization that Europeans most valued (despite their having created dazzling societies), the Spaniards relegated to the *indios* whatever was left. It did not take long for these ideas to translate into a social system: the "dual republic" that divided the people of the New World into a "republic of Spaniards" and a "republic of Indians."[5] Based loosely on the social principles of late medieval Spain where society was organized into an estate system according to hereditary landlord/serf relationships, and borrowing the social stratification underlying the corporate arrangement of Spanish cities, the dual republic was the Spanish attempt to transplant the hierarchies of the Old World onto the racial landscape of the Americas. Indians were to become almost akin to the serfs of Europe, while whiteness stood as a marker of noble status.[6]

The dual republic was not to be realized solely in a juridical sense – it had spatial implications. Early Spanish urban planners developed the concept of the *traza*, in which whites were to be physically separated from the masses of Indians. Mexico City provides an excellent example. Here, shortly after the defeat of the Aztecs, the Spanish population was housed within the confines of thirteen city blocks, located in the center of what had been the capital city of Tenochtitlan. Outside this nucleus, the indigenous population was assigned to live in four barrios, or

[4] In 1542, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca discussed *gente de razón* in his accounts of his early explorations. Enrique Pupo-Walker, *The Narrative of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), fol. 35r.

[5] An excellent overview of the development of the dual republic system can be found in María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, 61–90. For additional context see Anthony Pagden's discussion about rationality and humanity in *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[6] One of the great ironies of Iberian white privilege is that in Spain itself, *españoles* could be far from white. For an excellent treatment of the role of Moorish characteristics in early modern Spain, a sense of the complexity of Hispanicity and whiteness, and a study of how others in Europe viewed Spain's racial composition, see Barbara Fuchs, "The Spanish Race," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007), 88–98; and Fuchs, *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

neighborhoods, roughly aligned along the cardinal points of the traza. The traza's architect, Alonso García Bravo, duplicated his plans in Oaxaca.[7]

Other trazas came into being shortly thereafter. The patterning of urban space along these lines served not only as an important physical demarcator for the colonial population but also as a vehicle for apportioning privileges. Clustered around the main plaza of each new city were the primary buildings of colonial government and religious authority. The plaza was the hub of urban commerce, itself tied into a web of regional trade networks. Physically locating the white population in close proximity to these structures constituted a strong symbolic statement as to who possessed true economic, political, and moral power in the colonies. However, even within the traza there was gradation. The wealthiest and most important magnates were located nearest to the plaza's key buildings, while lesser Spaniards inhabited the traza's fringes.

With all of its exclusionary tendencies, the dual republic also served as a means of including the indigenous population into the colonial order. Although it relegated Indians to neighborhoods and townships (*pueblos de indios*) outside of the traza, the system still aspired to acculturate them to Spanish governing norms.[8] For instance, each of the four indigenous barrios of Mexico City had its own plaza and elected its own network of governing officials, primarily councilmen (*regidores*) and judges (*alcaldes*). Thus, in theory, the republic system established a separate but integrated social and political order that allowed the indigenous population a certain autonomy under the Spanish regime.[9]

[7] Manuel Toussaint, Federico Gómez de Orozco, and Justino Fernández, *Planos de la Ciudad de México, siglos XVI y XVII. Estudio histórico, urbanístico y bibliográfico* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990), 21–22.

[8] One can compare the pueblos de indios with townships inhabited by other types of colonial populations. See Brígida von Mentz, *Pueblos de indios, mulatos y mestizos. Los campesinos y las transformaciones proto-industriales en el Poniente de Morelos* (Mexico City: CIESAS, 1988). The division of the colonial settlements into republics added another dimension to "legal plurality" by opening up legal space for indigenous peoples. See Rachel Sieder and John-Andrew McNeish, *Gender Justice and Legal Pluralities: Latin American and African Perspectives* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

[9] The degree of success of the parallel political networks created by the Spaniards in indigenous communities is still a matter of debate. For central Mexico, many of the offices created were reinterpreted by the indigenous population as continuities of preconquest governing structures. See James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 30–40.

The dual republic was further conceived as a means of protecting Indians from abuses perpetrated by colonists. A cadre of moral thinkers and colonial bureaucrats feared that extended contact with Spaniards would accentuate the impact of the horrendous demographic decline that had gripped the New World. They believed that local estate owners overworked the indios, thereby diverting them from the tasks they needed for self-sustenance. Perhaps more importantly, such work diverted them from economic activities that would enable them to pay more taxes and tribute to the crown. Prolonged contact with Spaniards also supposedly encouraged looser morals: colonists were deemed quick to seduce or invite Indians to engage in activities that prevented them from achieving their true spiritual potential. Consequently, both bureaucrats and clergymen sought to separate Spaniards and Indians, especially in the sixteenth century.[10] For the clergy, separation facilitated the project of spiritual conversion. For the crown, separation offered the chance to enhance revenue streams that flowed into the royal coffers.

Perhaps the main problem with the republic system was that it was predicated on the persistent and vigilant exercise of maintaining racial purity. But almost from the outset of the colonial period, miscegenation occurred. The lack of Spanish women in the early colonies certainly played a role. Between 1509 and 1539, women represented just 5 to 6 percent of white immigrants to the Spanish Indies. Even as the colonies matured, white female immigration remained low. During the 1560s and 1570s, just under a third of all white immigrants were women.[11] Their dearth placed stress upon the reproductive capability of the "republic of

[10] An excellent examination of these themes can be found in Alonso de Zorita, "Breve y sumaria relación de los señores … de la Nueva España," in *Nueva colección de documentos para la historia de México*, ed. Joaquín García Icazbalceta (Mexico: Editorial Chávez Hayhoe, 1941).

[11] Spanish women's roles in the New World were different from those in Europe, and important shifts in the status of native women vis-à-vis the efforts of colonization much influenced the status of white women. For a discussion, see Karen Viera-Powers, *Women in the Crucible of the Conquest: The Gendered Genesis of Spanish American Society, 1500–1600* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005). Of course, the general demands of the New World environment and colonization efforts tended to affect and shape gender dynamics in unexpected ways. While far from constituting gender parity, the depth and multiplicity of roles that women took on in Spanish America has been an important area of scholarship. For an example, see Kimberly Gauderman, *Women's Lives in Colonial Quito: Gender, Law, and Economy in Spanish America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967); and Sarah E. Owens and Jane E. Mangan, *Women of the Iberian Atlantic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012).

Spaniards" – it could not completely replicate itself without cross-racial contact. A number of colonists took Indians as brides; three out of every four men did so in the Mexican city of Puebla by 1600.[12] Others, flushed with the sense of entitlement that followed the conquest, chose to sexually exploit native women. By both means, racial mixture quickly became a social reality.

These points say nothing of Africans who entered the colonial landscape. Blacks were part of the earliest expeditions of conquest, serving as soldiers, auxiliaries, cooks, and servants, among other capacities.[13] As early as the 1510s, African slaves were brought to work in the Caribbean, albeit in small numbers. However, it was later, between 1521 and 1639, with the conquests of Mexico and Peru, that Africans began pouring into the New World. As the indigenous population declined because of the effects of disease, blacks came to work on estates along the coasts of both regions. Sugar and viticulture were two particular areas of black labor concentration. Additionally, blacks were instrumental as miners in the early heydays of the silver boom. In urban areas, blacks became indispensable as artisans and domestic laborers.[14] While the exact number of Africans who entered the Spanish colonies is still a matter of debate, the general parameters of the slave trade suggest that well over 200,000 entered the realm during this time; of those, roughly half went to New Spain (Mexico). Nearly 50,000 people of African descent were recorded as working in Mexico by 1650.[15] These figures represent

[12] For an excellent synthetic treatment of the transformation of women's roles during the colonial period, see Susan M. Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): "Nearly one-fourth of first-generation Spanish settlers in sixteenth-century Puebla de los Ángeles married Indian brides" (39).

[13] Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Restall, "Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America," *The Americas* 57, no. 2 (2000): 171–205.

[14] Some discussion of the patterns of the early Latin American slave trade can be found in Herbert S. Klein and Ben Vinson III, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially chapter 2.

[15] See Colin Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico 1570–1650* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). In fact, the number of slave imports to Mexico may have been higher. The ports of Campeche and Pánuco were important sites of illegal trade for which we have few statistics. Some insights can be found in María Luisa Herrera Cassasús, *Presencia y esclavitud del negro en la Huasteca* (Mexico: University Autónoma de Tamaulipas/Porrúa, 1988). It is plausible that up to 150,000 slaves had entered Mexico by 1640, which would rank the region second in New World slave imports, behind Brazil. See Frank Proctor III, *"Damned Notions of Liberty": Slavery, Culture, and Power in Colonial Mexico, 1640–1769* (Albuquerque: University of New

tremendous numbers, given the relative size of the white population at the time.[16] The slave gender imbalance, combined with the relative inaccessibility of white women for blacks during this period meant that much of the early miscegenation took place between free Indian women and black males, or between *mestizas* and blacks.[17] The few African women who were brought to the Spanish kingdom often engaged in miscegenation with their masters, frequently by force.

Atop black forced migration came sprinkles of immigrants from Asia. Acapulco, which was a main point of trade for the Manila galleons carrying merchandise from the Orient, brought streams of immigrants, especially from the Philippines and India. While some came voluntarily, others arrived as slaves, supplementing the West African workforce. The Asian slave trade was largely illegal, undergirded with complicated legislative twists. Until definitive actions were taken to abolish Asian slavery at the end of the seventeenth century (especially in 1672), traders managed to import between 60 and 300 individuals per year. Asians, known collectively as *chinos*, were typically sold at great profit but more cheaply than Africans, making them particularly welcome in the Americas.

A vibrant and intense period of trade transpired between 1580 and 1640. In all, tens of thousands of free and enslaved chinos (estimates run from 40,000 to 60,000) entered New Spain during the colonial era alone. Many became peddlers in small goods, barbers, fishermen, construction workers, militiamen, and agricultural workers. Given that barbers also used their skills as surgeons in colonial times, there were a number of Asian physicians.[18] What may be most striking for our purposes is that

Mexico Press, 2010), 15. Note also that Joseph M. Clark's reassessment of the slave trade in Veracruz may substantially revise the total number of slaves that we currently estimate entered New Spain. See "Veracruz and the Caribbean in the Seventeenth Century," (PhD diss.: Johns Hopkins University, 2016). He believes that 155,000 slaves entered New Spain during the height of the slave trade, with 60% coming from West Central Africa.

[16] The white population in Mexico was about 125,000 in 1646. For an elegant synthesis of the number of African slaves brought into the New World, see David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9.

[17] *Mestizo* was the caste label for the offspring of a white and an Indian. *Mestiza* refers to a female mestizo.

[18] The information on Asian populations in New Spain is drawn from magnificent studies by Tatiana Seijas, "Transpacific Servitude: The Asian Slaves of Mexico, 1580–1700," (PhD diss.: Yale University, 2008); and Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), especially chapters 1 through 3, which include her estimates of the slave trade (60–61). However, see also Jonathan I. Israel, *Race, Class, and Politics in Colonial Mexico, 1610–1670* (Oxford:

some Asians, specifically Filipinos, were eligible to become members of Indian pueblos and barrios. Hence, upon arrival in the New World they were retrofitted into the dual republic system as indigenous peoples of the Spanish empire.[19] In cities like Acapulco, Puebla, and Mexico City, it was not uncommon to find Asian immigrants recorded as "indios manilos" (Manila Indians), "indios de Filipinas" (Philippine Indians), or "indios chinos" (Indians from the Far East).[20]

Africans, Asians, Native Americans, and Europeans comprised the foundation upon which New World racial mixture would occur. These groups were themselves deeply complex, given that they possessed a seemingly endless variety of national, cultural, and ethnic substrands. Obviously, although the predominant European population in the Spanish empire originated from the Iberian Peninsula, there were also immigrant streams from places like France, England, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany.[21] Similarly, *indios*, a term invented in part for administrative convenience, functioned to fuse various indigenous New World populations into a manageable category for recordkeeping. In everyday practice, not all Spaniards adopted the term, because they understood its limitations and imprecision as a descriptor. In certain frontier settings, *indio* was used by Spaniards to refer broadly to Hispanicized native populations. More specific (but still not necessarily precise) nomenclature was used to identify subgroups, such as the Pima, Otomí, Mapuche, or Apache.[22]

Oxford University Press, 1975); and Edward R. Slack, "Sinifying New Spain: Cathay's Influence on Colonial Mexico via the *Nao de China*," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 5, no. 1 (2009): 5–27. Note that I have used Slack's estimates for the arrival of Asians to New Spain on the whole, based on his survey of the literature. See Slack, "The Chinos in New Spain: A Corrective Lens for a Distorted Image," in *Journal of World History* 20, no. 1 (2009): 37.

[19] See Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico*, 143–173. She observes that after 1672 in particular, when slavery was largely eliminated for chinos, the path was paved even more smoothly for chinos who desired to become members of New Spain's native communities to do so. Their actions in this regard built on the heritage and activities of those freedmen of Asian descent (especially Filipinos) who had successfully transitioned into New Spain's *indio* communities in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

[20] Some examples include AGN, Padrones, vol. 16, fols. 226 and 245; AGN, Indios, vol. 11, exp. 166, fols. 136v–137v; and AGN, Inquisición, vol. 312, exp. 45, fol. 228.

[21] For the role of other Europeans in Spain's empire, see Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492–1763* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

[22] The category "indio" was a Spanish fabrication, and at least in the Americas, it resulted from fusing together several New World ethnic groups into a single, more manageable social category that could facilitate political, economic, cultural, and social dominance. See Robert Jackson, *Race, Caste and Status: Indians in Colonial Spanish America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 28–29.

Africans, meanwhile, through the jumbling of identities that occurred during the Middle Passage, also came to the New World in variegated fashion. Despite the many ships that brought groups of individuals from regions that had deep historic familiarity with each other (creating a form of ethnic clustering that enabled cross-communication and the preservation of certain African traditions), the broader reality was that the New World produced amalgamations of African populations that had never been seen before.[23] Groups leaving the ports of Africa often traveled under common ethnic identifiers (Bran, Biafara, Fon, Mandinga, for example). However, they might have actually defined the meaning of these ethnicities in transit as they interacted with other Africans. Also likely is that the real meaning of these ethnic group names was realized mainly through the interpersonal interactions of Africans at their destinations, whether across the Atlantic, in Europe, or elsewhere.[24] Similar phenomena could be observed among chinos crossing the Pacific, who not only represented an amalgam of East Asian and Southeast Asian populations but also conjoined small numbers of East Africans who had migrated to the Philippines and India before entering the New World.[25] By the 1700s, in parts of New Spain it had also become vogue to use *chino* to categorize individuals of mixed Native American and African ancestry. Hence, over

[23] Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), offer statements on clustering.

[24] Russell Lohse, *Africans into Creoles: Slavery, Ethnicity, and Identity in Colonial Costa Rica* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014); Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Michael Angelo Gómez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); John K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250–1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[25] Pascale Girard, "Les Africains aux Philippines aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles," in *Negros, mulatos, zambaigos. Derroteros africanos en los mundos ibéricos*, ed. Berta Ares Queija and Alessandro Stella (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), 67–74. Girard notes that by 1636 Manila's population of 1,500 colonists contained between 400 and 500 blacks, causing preoccupation among government officials. Note that these themes touch on the concept and processes of ethnogenesis. For literature on this subject, see Jonathan D. Hill, *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492–1992* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996); Antonio Olliz-Boyd, *The Latin American Identity and the African Diaspora: Ethnogenesis in Context* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010); and S. J. K. Wilkerson, "Ethnogenesis of the Huastecs and Totonacs: Early Cultures of North-Central Veracruz at Santa Luisa, Mexico" (PhD diss.: Tulane, 1972).

time, *chino* had come to mean several different things: a person from the Far East, a person who looked like someone from the Far East, someone brown, or someone who possessed a mixture of black and native ancestry.[26]

Skin color, lineage, ethnicity, culture, place of residence, place of birth, geographic mobility – these elements and more compounded the already bewildering task facing Spanish imperial administrators as they attempted to create an "orderly" society.[27] Major metropolitan centers and ports became natural sites for racial and ethnic fusion. It was clear that the dual republic system could not withstand the rapid changes occurring in the colonial population. At stake was the structure of white privilege. Indeed,

[26] At least this was the case for Mexico. According to the strict formulas of the caste system, a chino was the offspring of a lobo (already the mixture of an indio with a negra) and a negra. See "Lista de Castas," in *Artes de México* 8 (1990): 79. For more on the shift in the meaning of "chino" in New Spain, see Edward Slack's discussion based on the writings of don Joaquín Antonio de Basarás, who wrote extensively on chinos in Asia and New Spain, and who exemplified this contradiction in a two-volume work titled *Origen, costumbres y estado presente de mexicanos y philipinos. Descripción acompañada de 106 estampas en colores* (Mexico City: Landucci, 2006). See also Slack, "The Chinos in New Spain," 57–61.

[27] It is important to underscore that ethnic differences rapidly expanded the human variety that was endemic in the New World and intensified the work of administrators who were trying to generate common ties and affinities to unite the disparate peoples of the empire. Although the administrators' endgame was not true homogenization in the Americas, they did seek to create cultural bridges that were solid enough to foster fluid imperial operations, financial linkages, and a baseline level of harmony that would minimize violent outbreaks of rebellion and resistance. The hurdles of culture and ethnicity, along with racial complexity, posed a difficult barrier. Ironically, miscegenation offered a tool to overcome these challenges. The physical acts of miscegenation comprised the archetype of cross-cultural contact. In theory, miscegenation could unite individuals who were distant across the racial, cultural, and ethnic continuum. It could also bring into being new people (and hybrid cultures) forged from the shared experiences of their parentage in a specific environment. Yet at the same time mixture presented its own score of issues and tensions, since many factors could shape the cultural and social outcomes of miscegenation. As the progeny of interracial and interethnic unions emerged in the Americas, unequal access to power and privilege, regional demographic imbalances, and variances in how certain groups adapted to their environments led some people and their cultural forms to dominate others. Ultimately, the general tilt of the Spanish Empire was for miscegenation to spawn *criollo* (creole) culture, a distinctly New World product largely anchored in Iberian lifeways but richly informed by other cultural inputs. Much has been written about this. For some examples, see Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Joshua Lund, *The Impure Imagination: Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); and Ángel Rama and David L. Frye, *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).