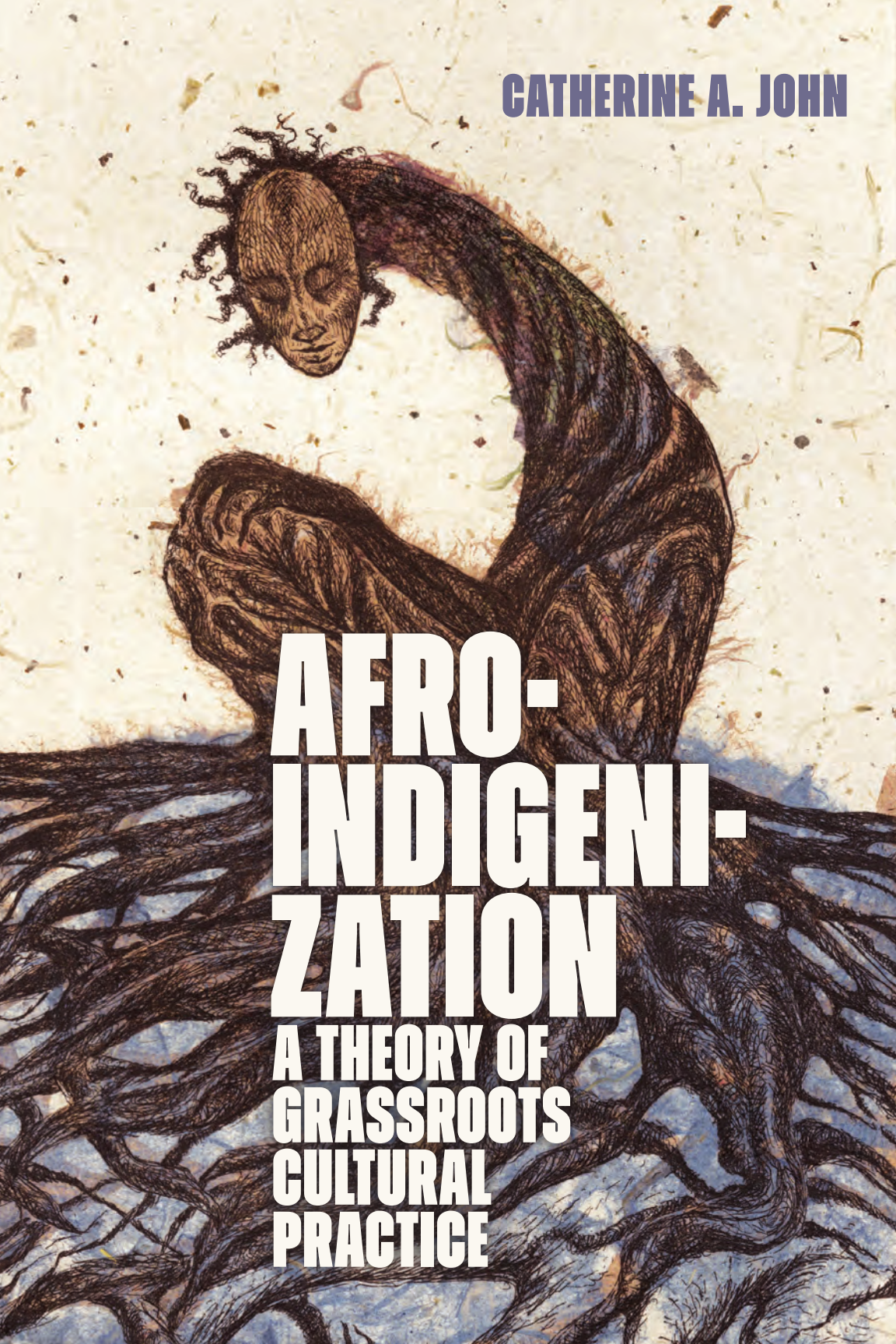
CATHERINE A. JOHN



AFRO-INDIGENI-ZATION

A THEORY OF GRASSROOTS CULTURAL PRACTICE

AFROINDIGENIZATION

The Religious Cultures of African and African Diaspora People
Series editors:
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CATHERINE A. JOHN

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TO

FAY MONICA

THANKS FOR BELIEVING THIS WAS POSSIBLE

TO

VÈVÈ CLARK, AUDRE LORDE, GLORIA NAYLOR,

OCTAVIA BUTLER, AND TONI CADE BAMBARA

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

TO

ABOUBACAR SIDICK

THANKS FOR YOUR "SOUL MATE" LOVE AND GROUNDINGS

TO

JULIA ERICA

THANKS FOR BEING MY TWIN

TO

FITZ ALLEN

THANKS FOR HAVING MY BACK FROM THE OTHER SIDE

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This book has come from twenty years of struggle—including the transition of my father and then my mother, the loss of one marriage and the gaining of another, the arrival of my niece and nephew, two major surgeries, the loss of two or three friendships, twenty-three and a half years of survival in the "red dirt" state of Oklahoma added to several years in the ocean state of Rhode Island. The writing of this book was accompanied by high blood pressure, stress, witnessing the shift in spiritual health that the academy has caused some of my comrades in struggle. At the other end of the spectrum, there was also lots of love, joy, and fulfillment. Through it all, my incredible cultural and intellectual community of family and friends living in various parts of the country and the world kept me afloat. I want to give thanks to Dianne Stewart, Jacob Olupona, and Terrence Johnson for taking a chance on this book; to editors Miriam Angress, Elizabeth Ault, and Ben Kossak for their support at Duke University Press; to Gabriela Raquel Rios, whose intellectual engagement helped me see an old project with new eyes and whose massive support helped me through a difficult time; to my sister Julia, for being there at any hour of the day or night—and also for being my warrior protector, flying back and forth from Baltimore to Oklahoma to be with me and deal with doctors when I was in the hospital in 2019; to my little sister Kirsten Edwards for picking up the slack when Julia had to go home—thanks for all the walks that kept me sane; to Francesca Sawaya for helping me talk through these ideas for more than fifteen years and for being a true friend within the space of academia; to Aunt Hope Stewart for being a second mother to me—I will cherish your memory always; to Rashid Campbell and George Lee for being willing to tell your stories and share honest truths; to Deborah G. Plant for the big sisterly groundings, love, and lessons in self-compassion when the struggles were real; to my colleague Joshua Nelson as well as my former

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Introduction

KRIK: Afroindigenization and *Marasa* Consciousness

Throughout the Afrospora, there are storytelling traditions.[1] The stories told in the chapters that follow are a weaving of voices that are not mine alone (KRIK).[2] They are my publicly shared theoretical testament, honoring the people and experiences that have shaped my insights. The KRAK—my afterword—incorporates another Afro-Caribbean storytelling response, one that suggests that the teller has interpreted rather than added to the story being told. Throughout this book, my periodic personal tone is meant to emphasize that we, the descendants of enslaved Africans who are also scholars, are not separate from the theories we devise. I also wanted to break away from a disempowering aspect of the language endemic to the European philosophical project. Many of us imbibed these modes of expression as graduate students, and while the theories may have empowered us, the vocabulary and terminology became a part of the alienation we were trying to interrogate. I wanted to push back against an entrapment that many of us, as scholars of color, did not have the language to fully articulate. A secondary concern was making the book more readable for nonacademics.

Why this book and why now? At a moment that is chronologically after the pinnacle of the Black Lives Matter movement's impact, and during a period of national and political reaction to "things Black," *Afroindigenization*

offers a deeper understanding of the *cultural* perspectives of the descendants of enslaved Africans, one that is a comprehensive disrupting of the notion that enslavement and oppression are the sole forces propelling our vibrational power. There is much more here. Ours is the sonic fuel that outsiders both desire and disdain without having a full understanding of the potency we mobilize or why there is such a hunger for the cultural expression we generate. The beauty and profanity of our dynamism have had worldwide impact, directly and indirectly generating millions of multinational corporate dollars. This book's core concepts, *Afroindigenization* and *marasa* consciousness, help explain the complexity of this African diaspora cultural mystique from the inside out. I attempt to add clarity to *how* the forms of internal power that are our driving juice are also a kind of foundation that supersedes centuries of degradation.

But I must begin, and I begin in the tradition of "Afrosporic" respect, with a short praise song for Fay John, my mother. In the summer of 2010, Fay was battling colon cancer. We drove from her home in Palm Bay, Florida, to Tampa to meet with doctors and explore experimental treatments. As we drove, we talked as we usually did about all manner of things. I had been going back and forth between a few different book ideas for several years and I asked Mummy which of them she thought I should pursue. She said, "I think the world needs this one" when I described the book that has materialized here. I drove her to the home of one of her friends. We spent the evening playing a game of scrabble. It began simply enough but inevitably and deceptively transitioned into a competition since Mummy hated losing at anything. Mummy passed away that October. She had a master's degree in botany from McGill University. In the 1970s she headed up the science department at Sam Sharpe Teacher's College in Granville, Jamaica. Sam Sharpe, now a Jamaican national hero, led a rebellion of the enslaved on the island.

This book commemorates one of my mother's favorite sayings, bequeathed to her by Simon Clarke, the founding headmaster of Sam Sharpe College. Quoting Clarke, Fay often said, "There is no such thing as disappointment, just developmental opportunities." As Black persons educated during the era of Jamaican independence, US civil rights, and Black Power, my mother and Simon Clarke came from people whose pride and hope were contagious. Not everyone was like them. But no matter what happened, they always got up in the morning.

Inspired by these thoughts, this book makes two primary claims. First, we, the descendants of formerly enslaved Africans dispersed throughout

the Afrospora, embody and manifest a type of displaced Africanized indigeneity. Our ancestors were indigenous to continental African places at one point or another. They were people with distinct histories, mythologies, stories of origin, and culturally specific ways of being. I say "displaced indigeneity" to make it clear that I am referring to histories that are distinct from those of First Nations peoples indigenous to the Americas or continental Africans who were not removed by the transatlantic trade. The late Trevor Purcell, cultural anthropologist and former chair of Africana studies at the University of South Florida, spoke to me once about the importance of "indigenous knowledge." He was referring here to knowledge coming from the African and African diaspora grassroots, informing our ways of knowing and understanding the realities we were bound to negotiate.

Our displaced Africanized indigeneity is a result of a violent rupture characterized by the Middle Passage—a rupture that we did not have the ability to avoid—and I am suggesting that our displacement, because of the violence with which it occurred, rather than erasing our indigenous understandings of ourselves, drove our knowledge underground, deep into what Elizabeth Alexander refers to as "the black interior." Second, the displacement from cultural roots forced into being processes of psycho-spiritual recuperation in our efforts to avoid or recover from physical and emotional trauma. I refer to this process, which is the primary occupation of this text, as *afroindigenization*. The twin process associated with it—*marasa* consciousness—refers to the reconciliation or coexistence of contradictions.

Afroindigenization and *marasa* are grassroots theories of consciousness. They emerge, even if they are disguised, where the most oppressed and segregated segments of Afrospora societies exist—where the largest indigenous derivatives are maintained. Afroindigenization is a way of theorizing the notions of internal power at the heart of the cultural practices enacted by the descendants of Africans enslaved in the Americas. The term *afroindigenize* is a verb and *afroindigenization* is a noun. The concept requires us to comprehend how we took power from within ourselves and used it to manipulate spaces and places externally. A deeper understanding of how this manipulation of energy was possible will help explain the international fascination among both hegemonic and oppressed peoples across the world with Afrospora cultures emanating from North, South, Central America, and the Caribbean. Afroindigenization is a description of the means by which those of us who were externally de-indigenized drew on the remnants of our "displaced indigeneities" and re-indigenized ourselves in a manner of speaking.

Our re-indigenization has taken sacred and profane forms. It has also often been an intuitive rather than fully conscious process.

My project is an attempt to demonstrate through a series of examples what afroindigenzation looks like when enacted. Methodologically the book is excessively diverse, bringing together critical analyses, folktales, interviews, biographies, hip-hop lyrics, dance practices, literary analyses, and assessments of gender identity. This heterogeneity was necessary in order to explain the mythological, experiential, lyrical, embodied, and intellectual forms that afroindigenization and *marasa* consciousness take on. These concepts crosscut Western disciplinary boundaries, linking not just writing and oral culture but also song and folklore, the visible and invisible realms—in short, any cultural expression that gives diaspora persons the space to interpret their lived experiences.

The mermaid stories in Woodside, Jamaica, in the first chapter, highlight the ways folklore in the Afro-Caribbean setting doubles as submerged forms of power connected to non-Western ways of being that are nevertheless embedded within Christian frameworks. The hip-hop Krump dancing and the poetic lyrics addressed in chapter 2 expose the through line of spirit, once again with possession and mountings manifesting in secular space yet serving a sacred purpose for disenfranchised youth. The oral artistry of the MCs, also analyzed in this chapter, demonstrates the contradictory *marasa*-like nature of Black life. The third chapter, focused on constructions of the feminine, is attuned to the ways in which Black female power in the Afrospora has as part of its underbelly a spiritual dynamism mirroring earlier, continental African modalities. Finally, the young male debaters whose stories claim the final chapter demonstrate the power of *marasa* energy in terms of their ability to reroute negative aspects of their lived experience while also afroindigenizing the denigration associated with the N-word into a powerful tool used to win debates. The diversity of the material referenced in the various chapters indicates "spirit" as the ever-present variable. While a range of other examples could have been chosen, I hope these particular choices are a representative sample of afroindigenization-in-practice.

The afroindigenization concept is an attempt to give deeper substance to Zora Neale Hurston's statement that "the [person] in the gutter is the God-maker, [they] are the creator of everything that lasts."[3] It is less a way of describing how the power is harnessed and then released and more a way of depicting the uses and manifestations of internalized power, once it has been generated, through a variety of modes. One example includes creolized languages in the Afrospora. African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

and Jamaican Patwa have been creatively used by the grassroots populace in both national contexts to create musical art and influence the tone, style, and speech patterns of a wide cross-section of the global community. The reengineering of the "master's tongue" into one's own tonal terrain is an instance of afroindigenization-in-action. The harnessing of internal power has been more than a survival tool for the clan; it has also transformed the alien world in which the clan finds itself.

Marasa consciousness, drawn from the scholarship of the late, great VèVè Clark, describes a *third principle*, which moves beyond the binary, creating a space in which sameness and difference coexist and contradictory impulses are sometimes reconciled. *Marasa* consciousness *is* the intuitive strategy by which the internalization of power is made possible. It is power in its rawest form; it is what would be referred to by those who participated in the ring shout in the eighteenth century as the "turn loose." As Michael Gomez states, "To get in the spirit required turning loose, and black folk could only do that within the security and familiarity of the shout."[4] The harnessing of internal power usually involves an ability to reconcile sameness and difference in a functionally resourceful fashion, one that opens the way for the group or individual to transform stagnancy or negativity into something else. We are claiming here that these spirit-based skills, in conscious and suppressed ways, were passed on as strategies of survival. As Clark herself states, "The consciousness accompanying the revision in which many of us participate has no name."[5]

Clark draws from Haitian Vodou beliefs, referencing the divine twins and the child born immediately after them as collectively symbolizing a third principle, referred to as the *marasa trois*. Within the context of ceremony, the third principle is instrumental in deconstructing the binary and opening the way for change. Clark interprets *marasa* as part of a Haitian Vodun-embodied praxis representing cosmological ways of understanding reality, which through ritualized movement allows a shift in the balance of energy to occur. Clark conceptually draws on the *marasa trois* to create an interpretive theoretical tool made applicable to the literatures of the African diaspora. Her work is the project's backbone since the *marasa trois* symbolizes the coexistence of sameness and difference that when transformed into sources of internal power are a key component of the process of afroindigenization. While Clark draws specifically on the *marasa trois* for inspiration, she appears to have identified a pattern that mirrors the structure of consciousness that is present in many African diaspora situations.

Clark draws on the work of Houston Baker, who in turn reexamines the ideological binary between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. From

Baker's analysis, two discursive strategies emerge: "the mastery of form" and "the deformation of mastery." What interests Clark is the binary represented by Washington's and Du Bois's legacies, which as she notes "is a residual construction surviving from the master-slave heritage." For Clark, a third principle exists, one she calls "*the reformation of form*." She sees the third principle as triangulating the two strategies mentioned by Baker while also revising the duality of Du Bois's notion of double consciousness. Clark elaborates, "It may well be that peasants engaged in Vodoun ceremonies in Haiti and its diaspora have provided a figure and frame through which African diaspora criticism might establish a theory of comparative literature based on the vernacular."[6] In other words, Clark suggests, if Du Boisian double consciousness articulated the duality of a material world in which "Blackness" and "Americanness" occupied distinct spheres of meaning, then the third principle, the reformation of form, emanates from the unseen realm yet has an energetic function that allows for the coexistence of sameness and difference to occur. As a result of this third factor, surviving divisive crises becomes possible.

Clark's reference to and her privileging of "a vernacular approach to literary theory" mentions the early work of Henry Louis Gates Jr.[7] Gates references Esu Elegbara, the deity in Yorùbá cosmology responsible for delivering the offerings made by supplicants to the appropriate entities.[8] Gates's use of Elegbara to ground his theories is read by Clark as a "vernacular approach," one that interprets the literature by writers in the Afrospora using traditions indigenized by their ancestors. Clark's use of the symbol of the *marasa* coming out of the Haitian Vodou peasant context is therefore meant to function in a similar way as Gates's theoretical use of Esu Elegbara.

Tracing the genealogy through folkloric tale as well as its role in ceremonial situations, the *marasa*, as described by Clark, represent the divine twins in the Vodun pantheon. In a ceremony that opens the way between the material and the spiritual realms, the *marasa* appear after Papa Legba (at the crossroads), Loko (butterfly of wisdom), and Ayizan (the divinity of "Earth" as well as the keeper of goods and markets). The *marasa* function within Clark's argument as both literal and figurative symbols, capable of transforming binaries and dualities into three-dimensional space, visually represented by a spiral. Within both Vodun cosmology and lived reality, according to Clark, the child born sequentially after the twins, referred to as *dossu* (male) and *dossa* (female), completes the unit in both the physical and the spiritual realm. The *marasa trois* are represented by ground drawings (referred to as *vèvè*) within the context of Vodou ceremonies.

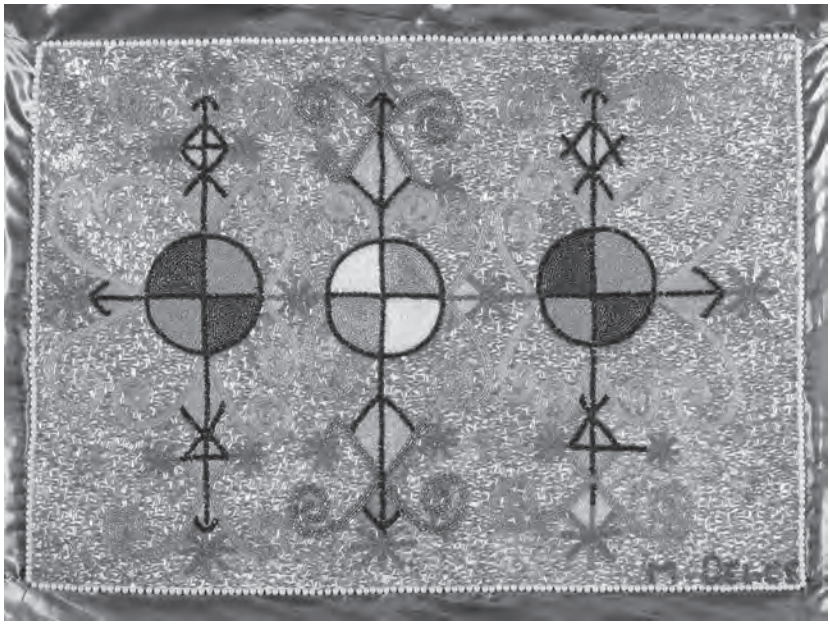

Figure I.1. *Marasa trois*, artistic rendition by Mireille Delice.

The symbol of the *marasa trois* (created by Mireille Delice), similar to the original figure displayed in Clark's article, is an intriguing representation of a "changing same" phenomenon, one in which unity and difference coexist. The visual has three joined images that contain three adjacent crosses, each surrounded by a circle, with one horizontal line running through all three circles. Three vertical lines also run through all three circles and are parallel to each other. The designs at the top and the bottom of each of the three circles are similar but not uniform; they are asymmetrical yet unified. Of the significance of the *marasa* as useful for understanding African diaspora culture, Clark states:

> *Marasa* Consciousness invites us to imagine beyond the binary. The ability to do so depends largely on our capacities to read the sign as a cyclical, spiral relationship. On the surface, *marasa* seems to be binary. My research of Haitian peasant lore and ritual has revealed that the tension between oppositions leads to another norm of creativity—to interaction or deconstruction, as it were. . . . Representations of the *marasa* in the form of vèvè assume uniformity at the horizontal and vertical crossroads, thereby ensuring a stable field of interaction with the Lwa; improvisation on the grounded form, left and right, top and bottom, encourage originality.[9]

Clark's *marasa* concept is mirrored by the work of a range of scholars describing a variety of Africana cultural locations and situations in which sameness and difference coexist. I argue here for *marasa*'s function as an umbrella term capturing the invisible third-dimensional movement that various scholars are reaching toward with their theories. One such moment occurs when Achille Mbembe describes "European thought [as] . . . tend[ing] to conceive of identity less in terms of mutual belonging (cobelonging) to a common world than in terms of a relation between similar beings—of being itself emerging and manifesting itself in its own state, or its own mirror."[10] Mbembe contrasts the European approach he describes with what he calls "re-creation" and "desiccation," which he sees as intertwined African American strategies of survival. He elaborates, "African American history is not so much about social death as it is about the permanent generation, re-creation and re-signification of life flows in the face of the forces of capture and desiccation. Of course, the two poles of re-creation and desiccation are inseparable."[11] Here is an active example of sameness and difference theoretically coexisting. What we are attempting to explain with the assistance of Clark's theories is *how* "re-creation" can occur in the face of "desiccation"—which here represents both destruction and the ability to energetically recuperate.

Like Mbembe, Amiri Baraka's construct of the "changing same" extends the conversation regarding "re-creation," using Black music as his subject. Baraka locates the coexistence of unity and difference in certain African American musicians' abilities to create discordant harmony emanating from a place of spirit.[12] Baraka references the Black Church roots of particular artists, arguing that when they move away from "the practical God, as practical, [they] seek the mystical God both emotionally and intellectually." He further posits, "John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Sun-Ra [and] Pharoah Sanders . . . [are] God-seekers . . . since God is, indeed, energy. To play strong forever would be the cry and the worshipful purpose of life."[13] For Baraka, the mystical God replaces the practical God within secular African American musical traditions, thus demonstrating a diversion from Western faith-based frameworks toward modalities influenced by non-Western knowledge systems. Here, the sonic *reconciliation* of the oppositional lines of discord/harmony or unity/difference requires *the sacrifice of energy* in order to deconstruct the binary making a shift possible: "To play strong forever would be the cry and the worshipful purpose of life." His description of a type of embodied experience, with spirit as the vehicle, illustrates what is visually depicted in the *marasa trois vèvè*.[14] What is at stake here is an enacted coexistence of binary energies, without the imperative to choose one or the other. Baraka describes

an embodied mode of being that at least temporarily requires relinquishing the mastery of the rational mind.

Delving further into Black musical structures at the level of sound, style, content, and meaning, Baraka's "changing same" metaphor exposes the simultaneity of dissonance and symmetry when he notes, "The Daddy Grace band on 125th Street and 8th Avenue in Harlem, in the Grace Temple, is a brass band, with somewhat the same instrumentation as a European brass choir, but at the lips of Daddy's summoners, the band is 'free' and makes sounds to tear down the walls of anywhere."[15] The concurrence of order and chaos is intimated once again. On one hand, the brass band instrumentation harkens back to Baker's "mastery of form"; on the other hand, the ability to "tear down the walls of anywhere" signifies the "deformation mastery." The movement between both continuums is the *marasa trois* incarnate.

Moving in tandem with Baraka's formulations is Hurston's conception of "asymmetry"—articulated as both a practice and a central organizing principle of rural Black southern culture.[16] Referring to the aesthetics of dancing, aspects of poetry, and dominant decorative design choices in many of the homes she visited during three years of field work, Hurston characterizes "asymmetry," stating that "the presence of rhythm and lack of symmetry are paradoxical but there they are. Both are present to a marked degree. There is always rhythm, but it is the rhythm of segments. Each unit has a rhythm of its own, but when the whole is assembled it is lacking in symmetry."[17] Hurston's seemingly simple observation used to describe a characteristic of African American culture is more crucial than her folksy parlance makes apparent. Similar to the *marasa trois*, Hurston suggests an intuitively functional approach to cultural expressivity, one that lays the foundation for the dynamic emerging in the music referenced by Baraka as well as the movement between re-creation and desiccation identified by Mbembe. Baraka's "changing same" as it refers to the disunified "God" within Black music and Clark's *marasa trois* are both suggestive of a capacity within Afrospora cultures for reconciling seemingly disparate energies. In each instance there is an emphasis on difference and unity coexisting.

The cutting and mixing of DJs are brought into the conversation by the work of Alexander Weheliye and Adam Banks. Weheliye refers to "mixing tactics . . . [that] provide ways to noisily bring together competing and complementary beats without sublating their tensions."[18] The competing and complementary beats coexisting are reminiscent of Hurston's asymmetry. In concert with Weheliye, rhetorician Adam Banks could be seen as using a kind of asymmetrical pedagogy of his own when he observes, "I

use the theoretical or conceptual work that the mix, remix, and mixtape do as lenses or ways to contextualize my study of a wide range of black multimedia rhetorical practices. So the chapters here cohere and yet they don't; they flow and yet they cut to other tracks, other conversations, looping in other voices in what might seem to be idiosyncratic ways."[19] Banks interprets the African American cultural phenomenon of the DJ, using the then emerging notion of "digital media" and inflecting it through an ancient West African cultural figure—the griot, who is seen as a poetic historian or storyteller. Banks staged the text using the notion of the DJ as a technological master, a contemporary griot, bringing the West African concept to life in a new way, by musically narrating and preserving the lived and felt histories of the Black Atlantic "tribesmen and women." Banks's chapters—"Scratch," "Groove," "Mix," "Remix," "Mixtape," and "Fade"—are structured according to the logic of the DJ's rhetorical relationship to his audience. Since the DJ, like the griot, preacher, or storyteller, only exists in relation to interaction with an audience, each chapter concludes with a section called the "Shoutout," which highlights for Banks's reading audience a range of actual projects using technology to expand the access of everyday people to sites of knowledge previously inaccessible. Making meaning out of the cohering and noncohering of chapters following the logic of the DJ's cutting and mixing is a demonstration of a third principle in action in an aspect of African diaspora scholarship. His use of the "shoutout" as part of the structure is also symbolically suggestive of a modernized transformation of the energy of the ring shout—with the DJ reaching out to his or her audience virtually but still being able, through technological means, to move the spirit of the listener.

Caribbean linguist Maureen Warner-Lewis closes the loop between African continental and Afrospora forms, noting, "The interplay and complementarity of oppositional forces is fundamental to traditional African perspectives on existence; linked to this is a consciousness of 'the *processual* nature of being' . . . . so that oppositions do not necessarily hold between divergent essences, but interact along a continuum of approximations which eventually intersect."[20] Warner-Lewis's insight, which emphasizes interaction along a continuum, harkens back to the "spiralist agenda" Clark attributes to the *marasa trois*. Religious studies scholar Dianne Stewart's work can be seen as afroindigenizing the scholarship on Black Christianity in the case of Jamaica—reading it against the grain and diversifying and complexifying the way notions of agency and resistance are interpreted and understood. Tying these strands together, Stewart observes, "Religious studies as well as Black and Caribbean studies scholars have emphasized [the] soul force as the connecting thread

between African religions and African protests against enslavement in the Americas and the Caribbean."[21] My study contributes to this body of scholarship, showing how the "soul-force" connection between religiosity and protest that was functional during African enslavement in the Americas is an enduring characteristic, still thriving within grassroots spaces among us. The chapters in the book are demonstrative examples of this in a variety of ways.

In the opening to *The Black Shoals*, Tiffany Lethabo-King describes a new kind of knowing—an encounter, initiated by an Anishinaabe woman's story, one that made Lethabo-King "know something new."[22] As a result, a portal opened, one in which the intersectional synergies between Native genocide and Black enslavement were revealed as interlocking spaces between two cultural traumas that do not operate in a framework with clear and finite boundaries and edges. The mutual experience of violence (Native genocide and African diaspora enslavement) is her text's connective tissue. The primary message emerges from Lethabo-King leaning into an experience of spiritual "unmooring" that made accountability to others, beyond one's Black ancestors, an imperative. The *shoal* referenced in the book's title is an attempt to find a concept capable of bridging the divide segregating Black and Native studies in the North American academy. Lethabo-King's work expands on the terrain established by scholars such as Tiya Miles, Mark Anderson, Juliet Hooker, Celia Naylor, and Fay Yarbrough, among others, whose scholarship explores the relationship between Blackness and First Nations Indigeneity in the Americas as it relates to inclusion within or exclusion from Indigenous nations based on issues of blood, family, and lineage. Further, the important writings of these scholars also explore the challenges to the colonial nation-state's recognition of subjects with both Black and Native status without one identity eclipsing the other.[23]

My text's central concepts of afroindigenization and *marasa* consciousness benefit greatly from the work of these scholars yet move more deeply into the indigeneity represented by enslaved and displaced Africans. Here, indigeneity and indigenization as it relates to Black people who are the descendants of enslaved African chattel slavery in the Americas are the focus. What I propose is not a theory of indigeneity rooted exclusively or primarily within the identities of First Nations peoples in the Americas, nor is this project situated in opposition to such theories. Rather, afroindigenization is a theory of indigeneity as a submerged cultural consciousness that took on a different form, *of necessity*. These submerged indigenous ways of being are functional—meaning they fuel energy and action in a practical sense—although they are not always part of the cognitive consciousness of the descendants of enslaved Africans. *How do we describe what we have not been cognizant of retaining but*

that is nevertheless dynamically alive and engaged with our being? My work here is a complexifying of our understanding of the enslaved Black subject as a cultural being. Although the trauma of slavery is central to our identities and is explored in the groundbreaking work of a range of scholars, *Afroindigenization* expands the public understanding of the complexity of the cultural foundations upon which enslaved Africans who were brought to the Americas stand. The theoretical labor that I do here identifies and explains *why* as well as *how* these submerged forms of indigeneity function at specific sites and in definitive moments in African diaspora spaces. Afroindigenization is a theory of movement that encompasses survival and transformation as joint action.

As a result of the transatlantic rupture, we lost concrete access to the knowledge of the ethnic nations that our ancestors by and large originated from, and because our indigenous roots were materially misremembered or erased, we were often treated as if we *never had any*. The anti-Blackness endemic to chattel slavery in the Americas as well as the literal fact of our being property shed light on why we were not just excluded from the category "human" but often also marginalized and entirely displaced from notions of "culture" and "indigeneity." Despite these displacements, the cultural products we have engineered in the Afrospora cannot be seen as exclusively resulting from our oppression. And maybe our displacement is the source of our obsession with either finding roots or insisting they don't matter. As Ifi Amadiume notes, "Much has been written in denunciation of studies focusing on origins. Yet for colonized people, historical depth and continuity on which a non-colonial status and identity depends is an imperative."[24] In our manner of expressing ourselves through our diverse forms of music, our varied spiritual modes of expression, our twisting of the colonizer's language using the remnants of mother tongues, our approaches to food preparation, the cultural practices we produced and reengineered bespeak a displaced and denied Afro-diasporized pan-indigeneity, a concept that will be discussed in more depth further on. We reproduced artistic forms and expressed philosophical world senses that were distinct and unique and at the same time similar to those of our ancestors and other Indigenous people in various parts of the Americas.

The book's first claim—the existence of a displaced Africanized indigeneity—runs counter to the dominant historical assumption of our indigeneity as erased, nonexistent, or fragmented beyond any viable recognition and coherence. I argue instead for an understanding of indigeneity as submerged and repressed but still *functional*; in other words, while conscious memories of rites and rituals may have been lost, the energy and

know-how that practically fuel action remain. This could be seen as akin to a person knowing a dance or singing a song that they don't remember learning. The book's second claim highlights what our displacement forced into being: afroindigenization—a process of psycho-spiritual recuperation from trauma, which is also an attempt to name and speak of strategies of survival that have been un-visible in plain sight.[25]

My work here expands the terrain within which we understand what constitutes indigeneity. The notion of a submerged yet *functioning and functional* identity is a twist on the assumptions that often inhere regarding our condition. What this book contributes is a deeper understanding of *how* diasporic Blackness relates to concepts of indigeneity, but on its own terms. Conceptually, afroindigenization is distinct from processes such as creolization and hybridity in the sense that these theories privilege formations emerging from contact with dominant European forms rather than varied indigenous sensibilities.[26] Furthermore, afroindigenization still has an intimately intuitive relationship to notions of the sacred, even when it is made manifest within the context of secular and profane spaces and places.

THE MODERN PROJECT AND ANTI-INDIGENOUS STRUCTURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The theoretical contributions of Sylvia Wynter's "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom" establish a frame for understanding the cognitive dissonance impacting scholars of color who draw from Indigenous modes of understanding that are at odds with Western canonical thought. Her project runs interference between the universe of enslaved Africans and European philosophy's ways of hearing. She explains how colonial notions of "the Other" as a "savage sinner" shifted from being the main way of viewing indigenous peoples and was replaced by alternate ways of seeing these "unsubjectivities" during a period of Renaissance secular humanism and the rise of Western political states. In a European pre-Renaissance moment, Wynter describes the heavens as the absolute other of the "earth," which was stigmatized and imagined to be made of "vile and base matter," "fixed and unmoving," and thus "the abode of a post-Adamic 'fallen' mankind," all of which "verif[ied] . . . medieval Latin-Christian Europe's . . . theocentric [notion] of [the] human as sinful by nature." Following from this, she argues that "Evolution/Natural Selection together with its imagined entity of 'Race'" became the new "extra human agency onto which our authorship [was] projected," replacing the "ostensible extra human agency of supernatural imaginary beings."[27]

Wynter uses the "Big Bang" metaphor to describe the process by which the West and its intellectuals "were to initiate the first gradual de-supernaturalizing of our modes of being human, by means of its/their re-invention of the theocentric 'descriptive statement' Christian as that of man in two forms."[28] Two forms of secularization of meaning attached to Western Man with a capital *M* came into existence in a way akin to the Big Bang. Man 1 emerges with Renaissance secular humanism and Man 2 with the rise of the modern political nation-state—one being a rational continuity of the other. Both, however, are a rejection of what dominated prior to the fifteenth century, when the elite clergy were subjects more worthy of salvation than the Black/Brown, sinner/savage. In later incarnations of secular "Man," while "salvation" is rejected as the framework for judging worthiness, the "coloniality of being" is reintroduced via the split between rational and sensory nature. The advent and birth of the physical and biological sciences are thus also tied to a colonial and hierarchical reimagining that "thereby [makes] possible both the conceptualizability of natural causality, and of nature as *an autonomously functioning force, in its own right, governed by its own laws* (i.e., *cursus solitus naturae*)."[29]

In other words, the Big Bang de-supernaturalization Wynter refers to, rather than being an outcome of objective, rational, and superior scientific logic, is in fact a Western project delegitimizing earlier non-Western forms of knowledge and making current ones invisible, thus reinforcing colonially inscribed hierarchies. Wynter substantiates these distinctions when she declares: "It was this construct that would enable the now globally expanding West to replace the earlier mortal/immortal, natural/supernatural, human/ancestors, the gods/God distinction as the one on whose basis all human groups had millennially 'grounded' their descriptive statement/prescriptive statement of what it is to be human, and to reground its secularizing own on a newly projected human/subhuman distinction instead."[30] Because of the de-supernaturalization of Western institutional knowledge and its replacement by the physical and biological sciences, any formulations engaging what prevailing academic discourse deems a "supernatural" or "non-rational" world order cannot escape delegitimization. The only recourse subsequently available to non-Western scholars presenting ideas in Western contexts is a kind of partial validation, which acknowledges indigenous thought only if expressed through dominant Western philosophical traditions. Wynter states: "The West would therefore remain unable, from then on, to conceive of an Other to what it calls human—an Other, therefore, to its correlated postulates of power, truth, freedom. All other modes of being human would instead have to

be seen *not as the alternative modes of being human* that they are "out there," but adaptively as *the lack* of the West's ontologically absolute self-description."[31]

Overall, Wynter's argument helps explain why approaches to Indigeneity rooted in non-Western notions of reality are often deemed "static," "essentializing," and "anti-modern" instead of being understood as "alternative modes of being human." Her analysis reveals that what is genuinely at stake is the absence of a framework for reckoning with formulations fundamentally disrupting Western science's rational claims. This schema successfully makes its own dominance invisible, and in its wake, any discourses of "the spirit" in such a de-supernaturalized universe run into a wall of hierarchical logic disguised as rational truth. As M. Jacqui Alexander argues in *Pedagogies of Crossing*, "there is a tacit understanding that no self-respecting postmodernist would want to align herself (at least in public) with a category such as the spiritual, which appears so fixed, so unchanging, so redolent of tradition. Many, I suspect, have been forced into a spiritual closet."[32] It is my hope that Wynter's discourse can help us consider the theory of afroindigenization within the register of an "alternate mode," one that will expand rather than limit future conceptualizations of "the human."

One of the challenges of New World Blackness is its trapped-ness between identity formations indigenous to the ancestors of the collective (structures that are often officially unknown or unnamed, even if they still have a practical in-group function) and the pressures of Western modernity (specific assumptions about time, space, and the "de-supernaturalization" of reality)—with neither sphere being fully adequate to address the parameters of the conglomerate experience. The duality described is loosely akin to Du Bois's formulation of "double consciousness."[33] Modernity here is represented by Western industrialization on one hand and a set of hierarchical assumptions and beliefs à la Wynter's theories of Man 1 and Man 2 about what counts as credible knowledge on the other.

If we consider the descendants of enslaved Africans as having displaced and submerged indigeneities, ones we used consciously or intuitively to self-create within the contexts we found ourselves, it is important to remember that our relationship to this modernity was often a violent one. Hortense Spillers reminds us of this violence by quoting from William Goodell's 1853 text, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice Shown by Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts*: "Assortments of diseased, *damaged* and disabled Negroes, deemed incurable and otherwise worthless are *bought up*, it seems . . . by medical institutions, to be experimented and operated upon, for purposes of . . . medical science."[34] Interpreting Angela Davis's

assessment of slavery and womanhood addressed in *Women, Race, and Class*, Spillers, demonstrating that the "un-gendering" of the African female in a dehumanizing way was also part of the institution of slavery, elaborates further: "A female body strung from a tree limb, or bleeding from the breast on any given day of field work because the 'overseer,' standing the length of a whip, has popped her flesh open, adds a lexical and living dimension to the narratives of women in culture and society."[35] The materiality of our continued outsider position within the United States after slavery is further articulated by Saidiya Hartman's description of the restrictive and provisional citizenship that operated under constant state scrutiny.[36]

Spillers makes two more noteworthy observations. For the enslaved African, "the *loss of indigenous name/land provides a metaphor of displacement* for other human and cultural features and relations."[37] She additionally declares:

> In the context of the United States, we could not say that the enslaved offspring was "orphaned," but the child does become, under the press of patronymic, patrifocal, patrilineal and patriarchal order, the man/woman on the boundary, whose human and familial status, by the very nature of the case, had yet to be defined. I would call this enforced state of breach another instance of vestibular cultural formation where "kinship" loses meaning, *since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations*. I certainly do not mean to say that African peoples in the New World did not maintain the powerful ties of sympathy that bind blood relations, in a network of feeling. . . . It is precisely *that* relationship—not customarily recognized by the code of slavery—that historians have long identified as the inviolable "Black family" . . . suggest[ing] that this structure remains one of the supreme social achievements . . . under conditions of enslavement. . . . It must be conceded that African Americans, under the press of a hostile and compulsory patriarchal order, *bound and determined to destroy them*, or to preserve them only in the service and at the behest of the "master" class, exercised a degree of courage and *will to survive* that startles the imagination even now.[38]

Spillers shrewdly accomplishes several things here: She highlights the loss of indigenous land and name as heralding the displacement of humanity and culture for the enslaved African. The offspring of the enslaved during slavery were neither orphaned in the traditional sense nor describable by conventional notions of kinship since purported kinship could be "*invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations*." In other words, the business of "breeding" slaves without respect for bloodline as well as the erratic

and capricious sale of mothers and fathers away from children, in addition to the slave master's selling off as property some of his own biological relations who were illicitly fathered with enslaved Black women, meant *kinship*, as we traditionally understand it in the West, was not functional for the enslaved transatlantic subject. Second, Spillers points out that what is often referred to as "the Black Family" in the United States, according to historians and sociologists, from the period of enslavement and afterward, is already an aberration. The very thing slavery refused to acknowledge and sought to destroy among Black enslaved peoples—notions of "sympathy," "networks of feeling," and a sense of "continuity" (the emotional ties that are assumed to hold families together beyond blood relations)—was in fact, in the absence of normative notions of kinship, *the defining characteristic* of the emerging Black family; and its continued existence, in the face of destruction, dehumanization, and violence, was seen by researchers as exercising "a degree of courage and *will to survive* that startles the imagination even now." How was this possible? Spillers does not tell us. That is not the goal of her essay. However, the ability to survive under these conditions was neither a function of the absence of culture nor the presence of oppression. We are left to reach for answers toward the "indigeneities" enslaved Africans brought with them through the Middle Passage.

DISPLACED AFRICANIZED INDIGENEITY

In 2007 I visited with Michael Witter, an economics professor at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. We talked informally for a couple of days about the political history of the island from the colonial era and later. At one point he looked at me and said I had features that reminded him of the Garifuna people. He did not know my father was from St. Vincent, one of the Garifuna points of origin. Yet mysteries connected to my father's paternal lineage make definitive answers to elements of my ancestry difficult to ascertain. My mother is from Jamaica, and my father is from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. My great-great-grandparents on the matrilineal side of my mother's line, Isabel Byfield and Charles Needham Grant, were both freed from enslavement by the Emancipation Proclamation in Jamaica. Also freed at that time was Princess Stevens, the grandmother of my maternal grandfather, Cyril George Bailey. On my father's maternal side, his grandfather, Urias Charles, married to Amelia Adams Charles, was the descendant of Hue and Eunis Charles, enslaved persons who lived through the period of British emancipation on the island of St. Vincent. The legacy of slavery, with all

its discontents, is still closer than many of us imagine. The descendants of enslaved Africans were not seen as indigenous people, particularly in North American discursive framings of indigeneity. In these contexts, whiteness traveled while Blackness did not. To be white and indigenous meant occupying the category of indigeneity without question, while being Black and indigenous was a nonstarter. Blackness in the US "one-drop-rule" landscape subsumed all other ethnic possibilities due to the stain of enslavement and inferiority. The work of Tiya Miles as well as conceptions of Blackness and indigeneity within the Oklahoma landscape elucidate these points further.

In "Uncle Tom Was an Indian: Tracing the Red in Black Slavery," Miles argues that once the enslavement of Africans became the dominant form of slavery, the realities of people who could claim kinship ties in both Native American and African American arenas became invisible and simply functioned as part of an unacknowledged Black discourse. Miles's work disrupts the de-indigenization from First Nations "Indianness" of subjects with dual heritage who were categorized exclusively as Black. She juxtaposes the stereotype of "Uncle Tom" from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel with formerly enslaved woman Cora Gillam's Uncle Tom, who was "half-Indian" and who "made both White and Black people . . . afraid of him."[39] Miles also cites ads from enslaved runaways featured in the *Maryland Gazette* and the *Virginia Gazette* between 1746 and 1776. The language of these ads subsumed people who were evidently fusions of African and Indian ancestry to Blackness exclusively. One of the strategies used was to refer to such persons as "mulattoes" (of African descent), thus relegating the phenotype associated with their appearance to a false claim that the individual was aiming to "pass" as "Indian" and escape enslavement. What Miles does effectively is highlight the erasure of Indian indigeneity as it relates to people who were a fusion of Indian and African backgrounds and ancestry. Here, "Indigeneity" is implicitly defined as "Indian." Some key quotations that support this are the following:

> A tall thin Mulatto slave, looks very much like an Indian, and will endeavor to pass as such when it suits him.[40]

> A Mulatto slave named David, about twenty-two years of age, five Feet eight or nine Inches high, a cunning artful Fellow with a sly Look, slim made, a little knock-kneed, says he is of the Indian breed.[41]

> A negro man of the name Tom, about 5 feet 6 inches tall, of a yellowish complexion, much the appearance of an Indian. . . . His hair is of a

different kind from that of a Negro's, rather more of the Indian's but partaking of both.[42]

Miles uses these ads to demonstrate the refusal on the part of slave owners to acknowledge "the right of Black Indians to be Indian by reducing Indianness to a list of 'traits' such as hair, attitude, skin color, and known relatives."[43] What the ads also make clear, however, is that contrary to what Miles argues earlier in the article ("empire as a way of life did not discriminate between Black and Red people"), by the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a determined effort to separate these categories of humanity, however arbitrary the strategy.[44] Miles's goal in this carefully articulated work is to bring discussions of "Black Indians" into the conversations about Indian indigeneity, on one hand, while having it complicate discussions of US Blackness, on the other—particularly in instances in which significant portions of the US African American population have Indian ancestry. Of interest here, however, is thinking through the relevance of the category "indigenous" for Black populations outside of and beyond their contact with "Indianness."

Oklahoma scholar Clara Sue Kidwell's characterization of elements of Choctaw involvement in nineteenth-century slave practices bespeaks the increasing divisions between Blackness and indigeneity in the state. While Kidwell's text overall delves into the complexities of Choctaw history, one particular incident suggests that by the nineteenth century, factions of the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma ascribed to notions of race-based hierarchies dictated by the mores of the dominant society. Describing a struggle between the Harkinses, a Choctaw family, and their enslaved African property, Kidwell asserts:

> On December 28, 1858, Richard Harkins, brother of George Harkins, was ostensibly drowned trying to ford the Little River. . . . There was suspicion, however, that he [was] . . . murdered by one of his slaves, a man named Prince. Confronted with the crime, Prince . . . accused a slave named Lucy. . . . The two were seized and tortured until Prince led his accusers to the place where Harkins' body was submerged. . . . He then escaped his captors, threw himself into the river, and drowned. Lucy, who consistently protested her innocence, was seized by a "lawless mob" and burned alive in the presence of her mistress, Richard Harkins' widow, Lavinia. Crucial to the situation was the fact that both mistress and slave were members of the Stockbridge Mission church and that Mrs. Harkins, although she was present at the burning and probably instigated it . . . was continued in good standing in the church.[45]

That the Choctaw and Chickasaw practiced forms of slavery more brutal than the Cherokee, Creek, or Seminole was a widely accepted belief among some descendants of the Black freedmen and freedwomen in Oklahoma. Dr. Dorscine Spigner-Littles, a member of two Oklahoma-based freedmen associations—"The Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes" and "The Freedmen of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations"—attests to these differing perceptions of the experience of Indian enslavement as part of the handed-down oral history from ancestors to descendants of the freed people. Littles's testimony is further supported by another local elder and freedman descendant, Kirbie Greene.[46] These various examples demonstrate the extent to which Blackness and Indigeneity, as the work of Kidwell and Miles and the oral testimonies of Spigner-Littles and Greene attest, function referentially as opposites. To be "Black" was to be something other than "Indigenous." But another African-influenced submerged indigeneity coexists for those who are presumed to simply be "black slaves."

While the complexity of Black and Indigenous relationships is demonstrated by Mark Anderson's research and study with the Garifuna, Dianne Stewart's work among Kumina populations in Jamaica assists us in ascertaining indigenous relevance of populations not categorized as such. Anderson struggles with defining the Garifuna as more indigenous and rooted in traditions as opposed to being Black products of industrialized modernity—which is one of the dominant perceptions of the group. He states at the outset: "The earliest reference to the word 'indigenous' recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* juxtaposes indigeneity with blackness. . . . Perhaps it is no small irony that an early use of 'indigenous' in English marked a clear distinction between proper natives and enslaved Africans in the Americas."[47] Anderson mentions Nancie L. Gonzalez's five decades of research expertise on the Garifuna, noting her view of their cultural identities as products of "modernity and its exclusions rather than traditions."[48] Anderson briefly outlines Garifuna history, describing them as a fusion of the Callinago (or Caribs) who conducted raids on European settlements and "African slaves who came to the island [of St. Vincent] via shipwrecks [and] maroonage."[49] He further notes Callinago as an indigenous word the Spanish corrupted and the English used as the derivative source for the terms *Carib*, *Caribbean*, and *Cannibal*. Being cultural and biological fusions of the Caribs and enslaved Africans, the Garifuna were also referred to as "Black Caribs." Anderson notes: "[They] were deported . . . to Central America in 1797 [when] colonial officials and planters successfully lobbied the British imperial government to remove the 'Black Caribs,' portraying them as Africans who had usurped the customs

and identity of 'pure' Indians, labeled 'Red Caribs' or 'Yellow Caribs.' They thus used blackness as a weapon to deny Garifuna native status on the island (of St. Vincent)."[50]

Since their arrival in Honduras, Anderson observes, they "have been interpellated by others as racially Black and subject to forms of oppression based on their perceived racial and cultural difference from whites and the majority population, today known as *mestizos*." Activists position the Garifuna as "a people of African descent with the juridical status of indigenous." Of key interest for Anderson is the way in which Garifuna men gravitate toward African American styles and modes of identification and being. He describes them as having "intense interest in symbols and commodities associated with 'Black Americans.'" He "investigate[s] the local meanings of 'Black America' and the ways in which Garifuna . . . appropriate styles and brands from elsewhere to fashion public identities as assertively Black and cosmopolitan in everyday struggles for status and respect."[51] It is our hope that the concept of afroindigenization can be used to further highlight the complexity of identities such as the Garifuna, in which forms of African indigeneity have been central from the beginning.

By contrast, in *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience*, Dianne Stewart's zeroing in on traditions characteristic of Kumina practitioners in the Black Jamaican landscape highlights practices that bear a striking resemblance to continental African cultural and spiritual systems. Kumina is an African-derived religious practice in eastern and western Jamaica. Stewart presents clear evidence of knowledge and understanding among Kumina folk that exceed the boundaries of enslavement and make a case for the function and presence of a displaced indigeneity. Stewart's dual analysis, first highlighting matriarchal structures and then signaling African indigenous approaches to culture and ritual among Kumina practitioners, speaks to this displaced indigeneity.

Stewart describes the matrifocal role played by Kumina queens (spiritual leaders) within the context of medicinal plants being gathered for healing ceremonies. Stewart notes: "Because women are the keepers of the Kumina culture and of its esoteric meaning and religious rituals, Kumina queens are rendered unwavering respect within their communities for their multiple roles as psychologist, doctor, priest, and judge. One must demonstrate a peculiar sensibility pertaining to both the visible and the invisible world domains to ascend to the rank of Kumina queen."[52] Stewart further refers to Kumina healers' collecting of medicinal herbs as a religious activity, observing:

> My most surprising discovery . . . was that collecting medicinal plants is a *religious* activity of supplication, libation, and absolute reverence for the natural elements in creation. . . . On the day before the Kumina [ceremony], I witnessed six members . . . gather leaves from a wide assortment of plants, trees, and bushes. . . . [There was a] formulaic prayer and libation offered by every collector before picking each plant. . . . After the prayer, a libation of white rum is always poured onto the root of the plant. . . . Practitioners gave two reasons for doing this: the first was that rum has medicinal properties that, along with the prayer, help to wake up the sleeping plants; and second, rum is the sacrifice that must be offered to the Ancestors who might be buried directly below.[53]

The works of Stewart and historian Michael Gomez shed light on how afroindigenized notions of identity heavily shaped by the African background determined collective cultural ways of being for the descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States and Jamaica, respectively. Gomez exquisitely documents the processes by which enslaved Africans in an early era in the United States shifted from continental African understandings of who they were to a more cohesive sense of collective identity through a set of frameworks born out of shared oppression and necessity as well as overlapping cultural investments, despite the reality of linguistic and ethnic differences.[54] He builds on the signature work of historian Sterling Stuckey, particularly with regard to theories about the ring shout and other practices functioning as trans-ethnic rituals binding varied elements of the enslaved population together. The ring shout, which is understood to be a cornerstone in the development of the Black Church in the United States, bears similarities to the Black family of Spillers's descriptive. It functioned as the release space for the reservoirs of feeling and preservation, connected to the submerged and displaced indigeneities the enslaved African had to call forth from within. This interior, spiritual, collective self-knowledge—pulled from the inside out—was a necessity since both the external society and the archival records were not sources of either safety or accuracy. The internal power associated with afroindigenization emerges from these reservoirs of feeling.

Stewart lays one of the cornerstones for understanding the descendants of enslaved Africans as manifesting both displaced and submerged African indigeneities. She exposes the ways in which the Christian faith is unique among faith practices in terms of its privileging of Christian truth as the only means to salvation. Stewart cites Cameroonian theologian Englebert Mveng's conception of "anthropological poverty" as helping explain the

dangers of Western Christianity for the African. Mveng's concept describes Western Christianity's projection of a "despoiled" notion of the human onto Africa—one that goes far beyond economic poverty to include identity, history, language, culture, faith, and ethnic roots as areas of *impoverishment* rather than areas capable of creating the internal resources necessary for psycho-spiritual health. If all that is Africa represents impoverishment rather than wealth, then it is something to be ashamed of, escaped, and feared rather than celebrated. Stewart uses Mveng's theory as the frame to set up "the manifestations of anthropological poverty in Jamaican religious experience," one in which the type of Westernized Christianity transmitted to Black Jamaicans has as a prerequisite cultural, spiritual, social, ethnic, and metaphysical rejection of Africa.[55] Embracing "anthropological poverty" is identified by Stewart as a prime requirement for enslaved and formerly enslaved Africans, who must reject *all* attachments to African indigenous culture as proof of their conversion to Western Christianity.[56] Western Christianity here insidiously elevates and conflates a Eurocentric worldview with the opportunity for salvation. The dehumanized conditions under which we were transported to the Americas via the Middle Passage further reinforce these assumptions: "*Not early descent into madness. Naked travail among filth and rats.*"[57] Like the violence of the journey, the Christianity extended to the enslaved early on was uncompromising.

Stewart's main point is *not* to show how Afro-Jamaican religions became Christian but instead to show "how they survived the anti-Africanness in Christianities from slavery up to the current time."[58] In so doing, she demonstrates indigenous continuities when she sets up the ideology of the dominant African-derived religions in Jamaica: Revival Zion, Rastafari, and Kumina. Obeah and Myal are established as pre-emancipation practices setting the foundation for the African derivatives to follow. The Native Baptist faith, imported to Jamaica through the missionary proselytizing of African Americans George Liele, among others, brought a kind of Africanized Christianity into contact with Obeah and Myal, which in turn influenced Revival Zion and Rastafari in different ways.

Revival Zion exercises a distinctly African form of religion while using Christianity as a kind of exterior structure. Rastafari, on the other hand, thoroughly Africanizes the Christian message in favor of a "suffering" Black population. Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie is conceived of as a Black Christ with genealogical relations to the biblical Solomon and Sheba as well as the Old Testament's King David. Rastafari's revolutionary imperative is captured by the concept "Nyabinghi," translated by some as "death to Black

and white oppressors."[59] Within Rastafari, Africa and specifically Ethiopia are envisioned as both symbolic and literal homeland. However, despite an embrace of herbal medicine, Rastafari categorically reject trance possession, divination, and blood sacrifice, all of which are central to Zion Revival and Kumina. Nevertheless, Stewart gives Rastafari credit for having the most politically oppositional ideology to European Christ-consciousness, the most radical socioeconomic critique of colonial society, and through the union of reggae music and its religious perspective, it has had the most anti-imperialist worldwide influence.

While there is substantial overlap between Zion Revival and Kumina, Stewart's work makes it clear that Kumina is the most rooted of the African continental practices that traveled to Jamaica since Kumina practitioners were not technically enslaved Africans but Africans who were indentured on plantations after emancipation, having been transported from West and Central Africa. Still, current-day Kumina practitioners identify with the descendants of enslaved Africans on the island, seeing themselves as having undergone similar struggles.

Describing the fashion in which these African indigeneities survived, Stewart draws on Leonard Barrett's "soul-force" as well as her own "theory of masquerading." Stewart quotes Barrett, stating, "Soul signifies the moral and emotional fiber of Black people that enables them to see their dilemmas clearly and at the same time encourages and sustains them in their struggles. 'Force' connotes strength, power, intense effort and a will to live. The combined words—'soul-force'—describe the racial inheritance of the New World African."[60]

Drawing on notions of continental African masquerade that represent the costumed person's temporary loss of their "identity [to] . . . become an incarnated Ancestor," Stewart states, "The institution of masquerading provided enslaved Africans in Jamaica with an aesthetic mode of concealment and protection that allowed them to preserve Obeah, Myal, and other African-derived religious traditions in variegated forms masked as Christian traditions."[61] While the argument Stewart puts forth has been made about Vodou, Santeria, and Candomblé in relation to Catholicism in Haiti, Cuba, and Brazil, respectively, it has not been made with equal consistency about African interfaces with Christianity in English-speaking regions of the Americas. As a strategy of concealment, masquerading allowed groups who "self-consciously identifi[ed] as Christian" to acquire a kind of "immunity from external attack and censorship" and preserve an internal "sustaining impact" without fear of retribution and demonization.[62] Her position opens the door

to a range of reinterpretations of the Black Church in the United States and other forms of Christian practice in non-Western cultures historically and currently.

SUBMERGED INDIGENEITIES OF THE SPIRIT

Pulling from the title of Michael Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, what would it mean if transatlantic enslaved Africans were seen as "exchanging their country marks" (losing their nation-specific ethnicities) but not losing their indigeneity since the loss wasn't really a choice? While famine, economic instability, and desire may have shaped European immigrant choices to leave the conditions in their homelands to come to America and self-invent, upon arrival, the construct of whiteness increasingly framed what it meant to be "American" (without a hyphen). Influencing the degree of assimilation they had access to, attachment to a previous ethnicity became a choice. The enslaved African, on the other hand, had to hold onto whatever cultural self-definition was available, consciously or intuitively, since the categories "human," "citizen," "settler," and "native" were unavailable. Furthermore, being seen as property meant that the physical and spiritual survival of self and offspring was a grave matter of identity. Indigeneity, in the dominant society, was publicly and partially understood in relation to a connection to land, and "we" (our enslaved ancestors) had no automatic claims or rights to land in the hemisphere. As a collective we were aggressively de-indigenized, politically, historically, territorially, and discursively. Some of us internalized the deculturation as an inferiority complex linked to the loss of home, family, traditions, and philosophical world-sense. These experiences were further buttressed by both the forces of "anthropological poverty" and a kinship rejection handed down from some of our continental African brethren and sistren, themselves affected by colonization and elitism. Many such persons viewed us as without culture and indigeneity and not "of" them. Our internalized deculturation and de-indigenization were further extended by deliberate, state-sanctioned decentering and open assault on the knowledge, practices, and beliefs of our ancestors. The assumptions of connectedness to land, traditions, and nationhood that established the foundation for First Nations Indigeneity in the Americas were at odds with the calculated severing of such a tie, synchronized with the dominion over and ownership of the body, which was the enslaved African's diasporic legacy. I am not suggesting, however, that for peoples indigenous to the Americas, the relationship to territory has been a simple affair. First Nations Indigeneity in the Americas is

rife with the complexities of land theft, industrialization, and the rise of "free market" and "global" economies, which have come at the expense of *any* Indigenous group's claim to spaces and places the powerful desired, while culturally specific First Nations approaches to governance, spirituality, and family were consistently under attack.

One of the primary distinctions being highlighted is that contemporary Afrospora populations, who are descended from enslaved Africans and who now exist within predominantly white nation-states (populations such as African Americans, UK Black people, Afro-Canadians, Afro-Germans, and Afro-Italians), manifest a submerged sense of displaced afroindigenous ethnicity. What is being alluded to is not a pure or singular ethnic reality but one that is necessarily hybrid, reflecting the complexity of the histories of arrival and movement. As scholars of Blackness have effectively argued, predominantly white nation-states tend to absorb and commodify or marginalize and deny the distinctness of the cultural expression (or Africanity) associated with Black populations internal to the state. Furthermore, within non-Black nation-states, these populations are faced with the insidious conjunction of malignment and misunderstanding coexisting alongside histories of desire, love, and theft.[63]

Yet in predominantly African-descended and Latinx nation-states throughout the Caribbean, Central, and South America, the juxtaposition of Blackness and indigeneity in relation to the descendants of enslaved Africans on one hand and First Nations Native populations on the other presents complexities worthy of reference. Juliet Hooker's essay "Indigenous Inclusion / Black Exclusion: Race, Ethnicity and Multicultural Citizenship in Latin America," in its very title, isolates an issue at the vexed heart of the matter vis-à-vis African diaspora populations who are the descendants of enslaved Africans in predominantly white or predominantly non-Black nation-states: "What needs to be explained in order to understand the gap in the collective rights won by indigenous [versus] Afro-Latin populations then, *is not* why Blacks have not mobilized as such in favor of collective rights, but what conditions have facilitated the greater politicization of ethnicity [in relation to Indian indigeneity rather] than race [the language linked to Afro-Latinx peoples] under multicultural citizenship regimes."[64]

Hooker's work exposes the misrecognition of the deeply cultural structure of Black identity in the Americas as an international problem. Discourses of "race" have historically replaced recognition of ethnicity as it relates to Black populations, specifically in relation to how these groups are perceived externally by others and sometimes internally by themselves. In an undergraduate

class I once led, an African American student had an eye-opening response to the question "What does ethnicity mean to you?" She said, "I don't know what ethnicity means to me. All I know is my mother is a Black woman, and her mother was a Black woman, and her mother was a Black woman."[65]

The term *Black*, for Black people living within predominantly white nation-state spaces, has historically taken on the weight of ethnicity in the absence of access to a territory of one's own. For non-Black outsiders to the group, "Blackness" may function primarily as a racial category, often associated with negative social constructions of difference while also being reductively reduced to skin color alone. In-group, however, the "Black" signifier in the United States may consciously and more importantly subconsciously function as a catch-all for group notions of beauty, trauma, strength, oppression, speech patterns, music and dance traditions, state violence, a culturally specific sense of humor, philosophical ways of seeing the world, and modes of survival by any means necessary. To say one is "a Black person" is to implicitly allude to all these things. Coexisting under the rubric of the single racial signifier "Black" is a sense of "pan-*ethnicity*" or submerged cultural identities. These truths are subconscious, implied, and understood for those claiming Blackness as an in-group identity. These truths remain the case even if these realities are denied or misconceived by others in the nation at large, external to the group.

Shifting to the Caribbean and specifically to Guyana, Shona Jackson's highlighting of the tensions between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese in contrast with Native Indigenous populations engages notions of indigeneity in distinctly different ways than the afroindigenization concept put forth here. Jackson juxtaposes the situation of four groups: Black people, descended from enslaved Africans who were exploited for their labor; South Asian people, descended from indentured persons exploited for their labor; Europeans who re-created the labor landscape for the purposes of their own individual and collective benefit; and Indigenous people whose claims to the land space now known as Guyana predate the arrival of all three of the previous groups. The Black Afro-Guyanese descendants of enslaved Africans as well as the South Asian Indo-Guyanese descendants of indentured laborers inadvertently stepped into a "settler colonial" framework premised on European notions of the state, thus perpetuating the marginalization, destabilization, and appropriation of land and resources of the First Nations people indigenous to the region.[66] The particularity of these regional differences in a Caribbean context, despite the similarities based on the plantation economy of old, is key. While the uneasy coexistence of the African, South Asian, and First

Nations presence in Guyana is distinct from territories such as Barbados, Antigua, Jamaica, or Haiti, it is also different from aspects of the situation in neighboring Surinam, where, similar to the Garifuna in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a long-term alliance and fusion emerged between the maroon populations of formerly enslaved Africans who escaped the plantation and First Nations peoples in the region, resulting in groups (formerly referred to as "Bush Negroes") now known as the Saramaka, Paramaka, Ndyuka-Aukan, Kwinti, Aluku, Boni, and Matawai.[67]

Unlike the previous references to First Nations people in the United States, Jackson uses the term *indigeneity* to talk about two types of "Creole" notions of belonging. Creole here refers to Afro- and Indo-Guyanese. In the first type of belonging, the physical territory is now identified as the asset of the new Creoles. The second type of belonging, one that stabilizes the claim to the physical territory, is premised on political and material rights linked to African and South Asian exploited labor and the wealth generated by the plantation economies that formed the modern Guyanese nation-state. In other words, Afro- and Indo-Guyanese are seen as being able to lay claim to these territories based on their labor being the primary resources previously exploited to develop the nation. Jackson's position is that Creole settlers—of African and South Asian descent—despite being transported to the Americas by force and coercion, are implicated in a construction of identity and nation statehood connecting *citizenship* and *rights* to the exploitation of their labor. In so doing, they marginalize the primacy of an older ancestral, spiritual, environmental, and tribal relationship to territory and space on the part of First Nations peoples such as the Wai Wai, Taino, Caribs, Machusi, Patamona, Lokono, Kalina, Wapishana, Pemon, Akawaio, and Warao. The new Creoles have therefore made of themselves unintentional bedfellows with a notion of "the state," perpetuating rather than liberating the territory's Indigenous people. Jackson cites Bonita Laurence and Enakshi Dua, who challenge Paul Gilroy's claims of modernity beginning with chattel slavery, arguing instead in favor of genocide and the colonization of Indigenous people as the "real" beginning. Jackson asserts, however, that "it is not a matter of either blacks *or* Indigenous Peoples, but it is the relationship into which they are placed under colonialism that is definitive for Caribbean modernity."[68]

Jackson's work dialogues with Erna Brodber's position on the political destiny of the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean. For Brodber, the vast majority of the enslaved and their descendants in places such as Haiti, Jamaica, and the United States were by and large outsiders to the political and cultural systems of the nations they occupied, with limited

access to social mobility—the access decreasing as the skin tone darkened. Furthermore, the system was not set up for the Black majority to even see themselves as a "group" with collective interests (something ironically adding more fuel to the fire of Hooker's analysis). If or when they did, the forces and obstacles to their freedom were large, with the Haitian Revolution being the most dominant example of mass resistance.[69] While Jackson speaks specifically of Guyana, Brodber's argument forces a more nuanced reading, of both the distinctions within the Caribbean terrain as well as the status and reach of Black people's power with regard to economic, political, and cultural self-determination, within the context of nation-states they did not design—despite token, neocolonial or neoliberal, Black leadership. Furthermore, Creole power, while complicit in state violence, is like the buffer-class bourgeoisie described by Frantz Fanon.[70] They are limited in their ability to either uplift the Black and Brown masses in their countries or break free from the stranglehold of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank debt. But Jackson's analysis does highlight a crucial political reality: The deindigenization of Black populations has made us vulnerable to colonial and neocolonial models of governance.

Tiffany Lethabo-King's work also converses with Jackson's position, maintaining that while these sagas, Black and Native, are not interchangeable and emanate from distinct experiences, with "instantiations of Black fungibility and Native genocide, the violence moves as one."[71] Lethabo-King's frame, more Afrospora than specific to one region, lives in the space of the haunting terror shaping the psyches of those emanating from experiences of genocide and enslavement. Geographically partial to North America, her narratives of Black citizenship and national power are not identical to those emanating from predominantly Black nation-states. In other words, what Blackness means in terms of power and ethnic identity, in predominantly white or predominantly non-Black territories, is a distinct kettle of fish, despite certain continuities of shared experience. While Jackson uses the term *indigeneity* to describe Black claims to land and identity in the Caribbean region effacing or usurping prior claims of First Nations people, Lethabo-King is not defining or redefining indigeneity in her argument; instead, she shrewdly refuses and complexifies the assumed boundaries between Black and Native studies, particularly in North American discourses of race and subjectivity.

To reiterate, my focus here is not to contest the interrelatedness of New World Blackness and First Nations Indigeneity as explored in the work of the scholars cited. Instead, the prime directive is to define, clarify, investigate, and further explore the pan-indigenized and pan-ethnicized identities of

the descendants of enslaved Africans on their own terms. Rather than being nonexistent until exposure to or encounters with First Nations peoples, these pan-indigenized ways of being are part of the structure of Black identities despite being submerged and/or repressed. They are attached to generationally inherited and collectively amalgamated ethnic identities, ones that are used in conscious and subconscious ways to navigate physical and psychospiritual survival of the violence of everyday life. In every instance, the sign of submerged and indigenized consciousness is the artistic expression of what Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston would refer to as "the folks lowest down."[72]

For Afrospora populations in predominantly Black nation-states like Jamaica and Haiti, national cultural identity is overdetermined, in both overt and submerged ways, by the amalgamated indigenized ethnicities enslaved Africans brought with them, alongside, in lesser ways, the ethnicities of First Nations peoples, South Asian indentured laborers, Middle Eastern immigrants, and European colonial settlers. *Afroindigenization* makes a crucial contribution to the conversation by suggesting that "modern" Black identities, far from being exclusively (even if complex) racial subjects, have a practically functioning, even if submerged and displaced, African pan-indigeneity as the underside to their drum. Despite being suppressed, these indigeneities bequeath the internal power and fuel for cultural expression among the descendants of enslaved Africans, also indirectly influencing those who are impacted by us.

A displaced Afro-diasporized pan-indigeneity is a distinct facet of the identity of the descendants of enslaved Africans, one complementing and adding layers to what is articulated in the work of Lethabo-King, Jackson, Hooker, and Brodber, among others. Here, indigeneity refers to a functioning yet repressed and inherited culturo-spiritual way of being. Its purpose is to impart the tools for understanding how to survive in the world in which the enslaved and their descendants found themselves. The sign and substance of our Afro-diasporized pan-indigeneity is not the nation-state, nor is it the labor on behalf of the state for which the Black subject is exploited. It is instead the cultural creativity of the collective and any form of expression characterized by what Kamau Brathwaite refers to as the "immanence within" or internal resources.[73] Afroindigenization is therefore a way of describing the mode and manner by which the internalization of power, described by Brathwaite, becomes enacted as cultural practice. We "afroindigenized" our realities in conscious and subconscious ways. At the heart of both afroindigenization and *marasa* consciousness are implied forms of

spiritual engagement, which are further contextualized and expanded upon when placed within the context of scholarly interventions addressing African and African diaspora religious and spiritual ways of knowing.

I return to the provocative complexity of Lethabo-King's work and the notion of the "shoal," which carves out an interstitial space between land and sea, between the rootedness of land historically associated with indigeneity and the rootlessness of the ocean associated with those transported through the Middle Passage. Lethabo-King states: "At its surface, the shoal functions as a space of liminality, indeterminacy, and location of suture between two hermeneutical frames that have conventionally been understood as sealed off from each other. I offer the space of the shoal as simultaneously land and sea to fracture this notion that Black diaspora studies is overdetermined by rootlessness and only metaphorized by water and to disrupt the idea that Indigenous studies is solely rooted and fixed in imaginaries of land as territory."[74]

Lethabo-King's refusal of duality is mirrored and expanded upon by Ras Michael Brown's contrasting of Western Christian concepts of metaphysics with the relationship between the seen and the unseen in precolonial Kongo culture:

> A western Christian conception of "religion" as essentially metaphysical and separate from other core spheres of experience assigns the beings and forces of the land of the dead to the realm of the "supernatural." In this conception, the idea of the supernatural does more than provide a cognate for the "spiritual"; it poses a fundamental divide between the physical, natural and the invisible, spiritual domains. *Kongo cultures, however, acknowledge no such duality*. Instead, the world consists of the visible and the invisible intertwined in the same space. The land of the living and the land of the dead do not represent two separate worlds. . . . This one space, the natural world, encompasses both the visible and invisible, the physical and the spiritual.[75]

The refusal of duality described by Brown as a feature of traditional Kongo cultures, the relevance of which is explored in his own assessment of the African diaspora culture in the South Carolina Lowcountry, is conceptually useful here. Afroindigenization as a practice can be seen as the internalization of a nondualistic and intertwined visible and invisible reality. In other words, if the invisible realm is intertwined with the ability to move spiritual energy, then one facet of the survival instinct in the descendants of enslaved Africans was to take invisible energy, consciously or not, and deploy it in

ways allowing the living to emotionally and psychologically survive challenges in the societies and environments in which they found themselves.

Brown goes further. Within West and Central African indigenous knowledge systems, he maintains, "it becomes possible to see a river as a natural physical body of water that does what all rivers do and to perceive that same river as a 'supernatural' path to the land of the dead where the normal dimensions of the visible realm give way to other understandings of time, space and power."[76] While Lethabo-King's notion of the shoal is powerful, Brown's analysis expands on conceptions of bodies of water as representing physical and spiritual power. His observations support Lethabo-King's critique of the legacy of enslaved Africans as solely a people displaced by the Middle Passage into transatlantic rootlessness—adrift without land claims, living a permanent second-class existence trapped between white imperialist citizenship and state-sanctioned notions of First Nations Indigeneity. In Brown's formulations, however, water is not simply a physical element representing oceanic death and the loss of home; it is also a spiritual element symbolizing *a form of internal rootedness* traveling with those who physically survived the Middle Passage, *bolstered by the energy of those who didn't*. The sign and substance of the internal rootedness are the internalization of power—afroindigenization. Our power is made manifest in diasporic forms of spirit-moving and life-sustaining cultural expression. Spirit-based practices that reignite the sacred are the healing response to trauma. The theoretical work by a range of religious studies scholars points to the mobilization of what I call "the Black sacred" as the generating source of the internal power used in the process of afroindigenization.

In her work, LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant notes that the Black body is "the link between the human and spiritual worlds, for without the body the spirit has nothing to possess."[77] This key observation supports an understanding of the body as a divine *vehicle*, a suppressed but functional aspect of African diaspora consciousness, one made manifest in the ways we use our bodies as part of our everyday cultural expressivity—which is distinct from how our bodies have been used by institutions and those with power over us without our permission. Manigault-Bryant assesses the role of the spirit-body connection in the documentary *Rize* (also analyzed in this book), citing the role of the body's use in the film as an active example of a suppressed yet divinely functional collective understanding of the body's power. Her analysis helps expand the parameters of the Black sacred in the project by referencing how the young Krumpers in *Rize* shift the energy from the physical spaces of temple and church to secular spaces. The movement from sacred to secular

space is an example of the transformative power linked to the afroindigenizing impulse. Manigault-Bryant's attention to the key role Black women play as spiritual vessels within possession ceremonies is also a valuable insight. It reinforces a metaphysical and spiritual connection to the female body in particular—on both the continent and in the diaspora. The connection between the female body and spiritual power is further explored in this book's third chapter with regard to gender identity, motherhood, and work.

Darnell Moore's interrogation of the body as a conflicted site of both degradation and transcendence expands on Manigault-Bryant's highlighting of the body as a space where the spiritual and the physical intersect. Moore describes the Black body as "thrashed . . . lynched . . . sexually assaulted . . . held captive . . . murdered . . . cursed . . . and publicly satirized. . . . It is that landscape that still smells of war and terror even as it exists in its beauty."[78] Moore pushes back against the undertheorization of the trauma experienced by the Black body on the part of theologians who favor emphasizing resilience and transcendence. He critiques the focus on recovering the Black body as a site of pleasure and rejuvenation while ignoring the coexistence of pain, terror, and trauma. Drawing on Edward Phillip Antonio's notion of a "negative erotics" (where "pleasure/sensation/eros" coexist with "pain/terror/trauma"), Moore suggests holding the legacies of pain and transcendence in productive tension.[79] His reading of the Black body as both a nexus of trauma as well as a portal of hope for the future is magnificently articulated when, despite all, he notes the body is still "the ritual space in which the divine is manifest."[80] His work adds the nuance of making it clear how internal power and notions of the sacred, at the heart of the afroindigenizing impulse, do not mean transcendence and overcoming are the only modes through which internal potency is expressed.

If afroindigenization is a generationally handed down, functional and functioning yet submerged ability to deploy, in resilient ways, the internalization of our spiritual roots, then Clark's *marasa* consciousness addresses the coexistence of sameness and difference as a principle guiding the structure of our submerged collective psyches. The *marasa* characteristic representing the movement of three is made manifest in both our scholarship and our embodied grassroots practices. Moore's insistence on highlighting both pain and resilience within the context of possession reminds us of *marasa* energy, while also resonating with Brown's theories about the intersectional nature of the invisible and visible realms. If the pain and the resilience must coexist, then it is an implied third term that makes the reconciliation or coexistence possible, while opening the way for the energetic spiraling that makes

psycho-spiritual survival conceivable. Moore's notions can also be applied to the attempts on the parts of the Krumpers in *Rize* who work between trauma and resilience, while also speaking to the rhetorical implications of Kanye West's "feeling" in Common's 2005 song "The Corner."[81] West, rapping about the contradictions of life interlaced with death, states, "I wish that I could give you this feeling / I wish that I could give you this feeling / On the corner, niggas robbin', killin' / *dyin'* just to make a *living*."

Stewart's work on concepts drawn from African feminists and womanist theologians helps lay the foundation for the project's gendered turn, linking female power as it is specifically expressed through mothering to the afroindigenization impulse and the plurality of the *marasa*. For my purposes, mothering as a symbolic construct with a grounding in the realm of the unseen is part of the larger afroindigenizing framework; it implicitly links sources of internal power, drawn on for psycho-spiritual survival to the realm of spirit. Stewart's specific concern is the absence of internal power and the presence of its opposite, "anthropological poverty," in the lives of Africana women and girls, wherever they are in the world. Similar to Manigault-Bryant, Stewart connects femininity and "the Black sacred" to notions of afroindigenization, providing insight into the structure of female power and motherhood drawn from the work of continental African scholars Ifi Amadiume and Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, whose work is also discussed at length in the third chapter. Stewart uses their theories to unearth and decenter Western gendered essentialist epistemological paradigms.

The inclusion of continental theorizations of gendered plenitude functions as the other side of Western frameworks of "lack."[82] The link between institutions of mothering as they relate to gender and internal sources of power (as opposed to "lack") in West and Central African contexts is the connection to the afroindigenizing impulse in the Afrospora. Motherhood is power in these frameworks—power extending far beyond biology. Furthermore, female power does not always manifest as benevolence. The *marasa* principle helps us understand the logic of female potency in such spaces. *Marasa* consciousness-in-action is the submerged sign and substance of contradictory power dynamics coexisting as part of our afroindigenized realities. In other words, sameness and difference coexisting, turning loose, and/or letting go are all grounded in spiritual energy and understanding. Ultimately, it is a *marasa* framing of duality that creates the ground for a spiraling solution to the crises related to gendered disempowerment in the diaspora. Religious studies scholars, when situated alongside theorists of indigeneity and Blackness, make clear that the "Black sacred" or spirit-based modes of

understanding Black reality are *the* central functional piece of both afroindigenization and *marasa* consciousness, which are functionally submerged theories of the spirit operating in diverse spheres in the Afrospora.

We, the descendants of enslaved Africans, indigenized the landscapes within which we found ourselves, infusing them with our beliefs, even though we did not own the land. Even in contemporary hip-hop culture there has been an afroindigenization of social space on the part of the most oppressed, who "rep" their "hoods" as if they were nations. Our experiences of displacement and our approach to re-creating a sense of collective culture have led to the creation of informal institutions, built primarily with ancestral spiritual traditions handed down in a variety of internal and external forms. These institutions became the cornerstone of our individual and collective self-affirmation.[83] The dynamic aspects of the cultural products we created have attracted the attention and desires of outsiders to our experiential matrix. Seeing ourselves as a people with an Afro-diasporized pan-indigeneity is a move toward disrupting the history of anti-Blackness. Within such a framework, Blackness and indigeneity become negotiations between varying degrees of displacement within the European colonial project.

While the KRIK and KRAK structure is drawn from Caribbean storytelling traditions and serves as the referential frame for the introduction and the afterword, I hope the following chapters function as the story itself, impacting different audiences in distinct ways. Chapter 1, "Mermaids in Woodside, Jamaica: Submerged Consciousness," is the mythological manifestation of the book's idea. Relying on Sylvia Wynter's early work allows me to imagine and understand how indigenized structures of consciousness functioned despite repression, with references to "mermaids" and "Myal" spiritual practices framing the modern-day mermaid lore encountered in the rural Jamaican village of Woodside.

A demonstration of the relationship between experiential and lyrical knowledge and the concept of afroindigenization is made in chapter 2, "Mountings in *Rize*: Becoming the Horse and the Turn Loose in Hip-Hop." The Krumpers' explanations in *Rize* for *why* they "Krump" is one of the best examples of afroindigenization-in-action. The links between the idea of the "turn loose" as expressed by participants in the ring shouts of the nineteenth century and the "turning loose" required for the Krumpers to "cross over" and recover from the stresses of everyday life are uncanny and are demonstrated here.

In chapter 3, "Ìyá but Not Western Woman: A Grassroots Formulation of the Afrospora Feminine," the relationship between female gender identity

and afroindigenization is explored. African diaspora female behavior seeming outlandish or inconsequential in Western spaces reappears as repressed or submerged afroindigenized gendered ways of being. The chapter therefore explores the connections between culture and gender in the Afrospora, juxtaposing them with West and Central African historic formulations of these categories, while also paying particular attention to how the culture/gender nexus connects to embodied notions of motherhood and work.

Chapter 4, "Enter the Dragons of Debate: Rashid Campbell and George Lee's 2014 Run," centralizes the biographies and unconventional debating techniques of George Lee and Rashid Campbell, two Black male debaters who "almost got away with it." The chapter highlights their clever deployment of the controversies related to the N-word as strategies for exposing the objectification of Black humanity while winning debates in the process. Using their lived experiences as unconventional sources of evidence, in conjunction with citing hip-hop artists as philosophers of culture, Campbell and Lee not only won debates but also participated in the afroindigenizing of the National Debate Tournament itself. Their rize was an example of both resilience and the internalization and use of power. The stories of their lives, narrated in their own words, bring biography into the contours of the frame, diversifying the use of voice in the project and expanding the parameters of the scholarly and the artistic within the context of afroindigenization as project and praxis. "KRAK: Jack Mandora Mi Nuh Choose None," the project's closing moment, is a brief and personal reflection on the larger significance of these philosophies of the grassroots traced throughout the book.

Afroindigenization contributes to what David Scott refers to as the meta-dimension of the archive. Insisting on the archive as linguistic and discursive, Scott situates the meta-dimension in the ways the archaeologist (and critic) bring meaning to a collection by understanding the context of the recovered material and necessarily creating both an interpretation and an opening up of a world that participates in the "construction of . . . an *institution of memory* [or] an *idiom of remembering*."[84] *Afroindigenization: A Theory of Grassroots Cultural Practice* contributes to the "archaeology of Black memory."[85] It aspires to be a resilient countermemory response coexisting in a *marasa*-like way with the realities of Black fungibility. The transformation of consciousness at the heart of our most persistent collective resilience sets the stage in a pioneering way for paradigms that, if taken seriously, could be the psychic salvation of the societies of the future.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 I borrow and expand on the use of the term *Afrospora* as defined by M. NourbeSe Philip. She used it when presenting at the Institute of Gender and Development conference in Barbados in 2018. I subsequently reached out to NourbeSe Philip for further information, and she shared the definition cited here with me in an email in 2019. "My creation of the neologism Afrospora came out of a desire to speak to our unique history. . . . The other expression I use is The Great Scattering of our people . . . enslaved Africans . . . and then the examples of Caribbean peoples moving—following work . . . to England . . . France . . . to help build the Panama Canal, then to Cuba, Afro Brazilians moving to Portugal etc.—always following work—scatterings upon scatterings. I knew that the second syllable [of Diaspora] was linked to spore, which comes from the Greek, spora, a seed, sowing, seed time. . . . Thinking of the seed, the spore, being scattered I decided to add Afro to that, to speak to the uniqueness of our scattering which began in such horrific ways. . . . I also think that inherent in the scattering, which in the case of our history can be seen to be destructive and negative, there is also a possibility in the word spore in that it is also about seeding, making new life—which still escapes us in its necessary fullness as I write, but it leaves me filled with the possibility of a seeding of African life in all its inherent beauty around the world. Am tempted to say that it would be wonderful to get the word in different African languages that speak to this activity—scattering, sowing, seeding."

2 Edwidge Danticat popularized the oral storytelling device "Krik/Krak" in her early collection of the same name. It has also been referenced in other parts of the French-speaking Caribbean, and there are similar kinds of traditions in the rest of the region.

3 Zora Neale Hurston to Langston Hughes, November 22, 1928, in Kaplan, *Zora Neale Hurston*, 131–32.

4 Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 269.

5 Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy" (2009), 11.

6 Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy" (2009), 11.

7 Clark references the chapter "A Myth of Origins: Esu-Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey," from Gates's *The Signifying Monkey*.

8 As Clark states, "Legba is the first Lwa whose presence in a Vodou ceremony must be acknowledged before ritual practice commences. He not only 'opens the doors' for interactions with the spirits through drum, dance and song but also figuratively stands at the gates of literacy" ("Developing Diaspora Literacy" [2009], 12).

9 Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy" (2009), 12–13.

10 Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 1.

11 Mbembe and Goldberg, "In Conversation."

12 Baraka, "The Changing Same," 196.

13 Baraka, "The Changing Same," 199.

14 Some might presume similarities between these formulations and Claude Lévi-Strauss's theories about mythical thought moving from opposition to resolution: "Mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward resolution" (*Structural Anthropology*, 221). However, the linguistic structure of myth and its function are not at issue here.

15 Baraka, "The Changing Same," 196–97.

16 This characteristic is one of several identified in Hurston's essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression," reprinted in *The Sanctified Church*.

17 Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 26.

18 Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 13. Weheliye juxtaposes the seemingly incongruous "mixing tactics" of hip-hop DJs with the formal structure of Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*.

19 Banks, *Digital Griots*, 7.

20 Warner-Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean*, 140.

21 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 19.

22 Lethabo-King, *The Black Shoals*, ix.

23 See Fay Yarbrough's *Race and the Cherokee Nation* and *Choctaw Confederates*; Tiya Miles's *Ties That Bind*; Mark Anderson's *Black and Indigenous*; Juliet Hooker's *Black and Indigenous Resistance in the Americas*; and Celia Naylor's *African Cherokees in Indian Territory*.

24 Amadiume, "Theorizing Matriarchy in Africa," 96.

25 I borrow the term *un-visible*, as opposed to *invisible*, from Katherine McKittrick's *Demonic Grounds*. According to McKittrick, to be un-visible is to "not really [be] invisible; rather [to be] an 'imperceptible social, political, and geographic subject who is rendered invisible due to [one's] highly visible bodily context" (18–19).

26 The discourses of hybridity related to Blackness that rose to prominence in the 1990s in tandem with the British school of cultural studies linked to scholars such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Kobena Mercer, among others, were in many ways examining structures of Black identity that were products of a modernity in which Western ways of being and seeing had infiltrated what I am referring to as more indigenous notions of Black culture. This body of

knowledge also boldly exposed and explained the extent to which much of Western knowledge was hopelessly intertwined with this "black thing." The trend was to analyze the ways in which Blackness was integral to, constitutive of, and inseparable from mythical notions of European whiteness and purity. These types of projects are extremely valuable as they paved the way for my own work. This is therefore not an anti-narrative. What is at stake here, however, are readings that go in another direction.

27 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 267–73.

28 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 263–64.

29 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 264, emphasis added.

30 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 264.

31 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 282, emphasis added.

32 M. J. Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 15.

33 Du Bois states: "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the old selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism" (*The Souls of Black Folk*, 215).

34 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 68.

35 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 68.

36 Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, xiii–xiv. This is suggested by the direction of the text as a whole, as well as Hartman's opening "Note on Method."

37 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 73, emphasis added.

38 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 74–75, emphasis added.

39 Miles, "Uncle Tom Was an Indian," 137.

40 Miles, "Uncle Tom Was an Indian," 130, quoting the *Maryland Gazette*, May 21, 1752, p. 3.

41 Miles "Uncle Tom Was an Indian," 130, quoting the *Virginia Gazette*, July 15, 1773, p. 3.

42 Miles, "Uncle Tom Was an Indian," 146, quoting the *Virginia Gazette*, November 11, 1773, p. 2.

43 Miles, "Uncle Tom Was an Indian," 146.

44 Miles, "Uncle Tom Was an Indian," 140.

45 This is the opening of the chapter "Embarrassments and Perplexities: The Church, the Nation, and Slavery," in Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 30.

46 Spigner-Littles further references this information in her documentary *Collective Visions*. Spigner-Littles also shared much of the information provided here in a phone conversation on December 27, 2019. Spigner-Littles claims from her understanding that if you were a member of the nation your allotment was supposed to be 360 acres for each person. If you were a freedman, your allotment was 40 acres. Children born after 1902 who were the descendants of freedmen did not receive land. Kirbie Greene, an elder Oklahoman who

was also a descendant of the Chickasaw and Choctaw freedmen, stated that although his great-uncles received land, they were shortly thereafter cheated out of it by unscrupulous white settlers, with the "freedmen" having no legal recourse that could be enforced in the face of naked racist aggression. Spigner-Littles further notes that it was widely held among freedmen that the Dawes Commission was predominantly if not exclusively controlled by white men. Littles reported that many of the freedmen *believed* that corruption and power allowed some white settlers with no indigenous ancestry to place themselves on the rolls and thus receive generational benefits. Greene says that his ancestors referred to such people as "five-dollar Indians," implying that they had bought their way into indigenous identity during a moment when others with "blood lineage" did not have the resources.

47 Anderson, *Black and Indigenous*, 1.

48 Anderson, *Black and Indigenous*, 11.

49 Anderson, *Black and Indigenous*, 3.

50 Anderson, *Black and Indigenous*, 3.

51 Anderson, *Black and Indigenous*, 2–9.

52 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 163.

53 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 151–52.

54 Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks* examines this issue extensively.

55 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 4–5. It must be made clear here that Stewart's references to a Westernized Christianity transmitted to Black Jamaicans is distinct from the Black Jamaican Kumina practitioners who practice something else.

56 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 4–6.

57 Jeffers, *The Age of Phillis*, 3, emphasis added.

58 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 6.

59 There are two interpretations of the term *Nyabinghi* that I have encountered. The term *Nyabinghi* has been understood and embraced within grassroots Rastafari contexts. Oral lore states that the name originally belonged to an African princess from the region of Uganda who resisted British imperialism. Within the context of patriarchally oriented Rasta society, these origins have been replaced or forgotten. (I owe these insights to a conversation with Africana scholar Greg Graham, October 22, 2021.) Second, *Nyabingi* (spelled without the h) is a Kinyarwandan word for a powerful spirit-deity coming from the precolonial Rwandan spiritual culture. Nyabingi in this context was powerful and seen as an energy capable of endowing one with the power to destroy one's enemies. (I owe this insight to Jean Nsabumuremyi from Rwanda.)

60 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 19. Stewart here is directly citing Leonard Barrett's *Soul-Force*.

61 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 220–21.

62 Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey*, 221.

63 See Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's *Becoming Human*; Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection*; Eric Lott's *Love and Theft*; and Fred Moten's *In the Break*.

64 Hooker, "Indigenous Inclusion / Black Exclusion," 300, emphasis added.
65 John, "Blackness Through a Dual Lens."
66 S. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 2–5.
67 Borges, *The Life of Language*, 22–24.
68 S. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 5. Jackson also cites Bonita Laurence and Enakshi Dua in her statements here.
69 Brodber, *The Continent of Black Consciousness*, 26, 30–31.
70 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. In his chapter "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," Fanon articulates the contradictions of the situation of a Black bourgeoisie in a colonial nation-state on the brink of decolonization.
71 Lethabo-King, *The Black Shoals*, x.
72 In his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes states: "But then there are the low-down folks, the so-called common element and they are the majority—may the Lord be praised!" (1268). Zora Neale Hurston, in "Characteristics of Negro Expression" while noting that the most self-despisement lies in an imitating Black middle class, further observes that "the Negro farthest down" is the least concerned with slavish mimicry of the elite.
73 Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*.
74 Lethabo-King, *The Black Shoals*, 4.
75 R. M. Brown, *African-Atlantic Cultures and the South Carolina Lowcountry*, 30, emphasis added.
76 R. M. Brown, *African-Atlantic Cultures and the South Carolina Lowcountry*, 30.
77 Manigault-Bryant, "African and African Diaspora Traditions," 195.
78 Moore, "Theorizing the 'Black Body,'" 184.
79 Antonio, "Desiring Booty and Killing the Body."
80 Moore, "Theorizing the 'Black Body,'" 187.
81 Lynn, "The Corner."
82 Western notions of "lack" as it relates to female gender identity are deeply theorized by and in response to the work of Jacques Lacan by Western psychoanalytic feminists.
83 By "informal institutions," I am referencing things like spiritual communities, including and extending beyond Black churches, youth groups, lodges and burial schemes, community organizations, family reunions, cookouts, church fairs, bible study groups, juke joints, domino games, community centers, and the like. These were the spaces in which consciously and subconsciously we handed down the ancestral traditions that laid the foundation for individual and collective cultural self-affirmation.
84 D. Scott, "Introduction," vii.
85 D. Scott, "Introduction," vi.

CHAPTER ONE. MERMAIDS IN WOODSIDE, JAMAICA

1 Bordelon, *Go Gator and Muddy the Water*, 69–70.
2 Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica," 35.
3 Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica," 36.