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## Latining America

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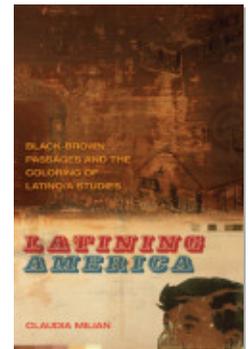
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## INTRODUCTION

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# THE COPIOUSNESS OF LATIN

The word “Latin” has migrated North.  
What happens when that happens?

—PEDRO LASCH (2008)

Not only has the word “Latin” migrated northward but, historically speaking, so have multiethnic racialized subjects. *Latinizing America: Black-Brown Passages and the Coloring of Latino/a Studies* examines how multidirectional processes of Latinness travel, break, and alter at the level of meaning, geographies, and peoples. Through a Latin, Latin-American, Latino, and Latina triangulation, I seek to chart a different but coeval path and lexicon for how cultural signifiers for the U.S. Latino or Latina have been accessed by an unexpected circle of Latin participants: U.S. African Americans and “problematic” subgroups like Central Americans.<sup>1</sup> No theoretical language or sustained academic endeavor in Latino/a studies has yet critically traced and accounted for the multiple and simultaneous frames of reference at work for the Latin body, particularly within a national language of race invested in “color” as well as “coloring.”

Attempting to revise the reigning black-white and white-brown model of social analysis, I pursue how a panoply of U.S. African Americans, Latinos, and Latinas walk in and out of their traditional designations. Sociologist Saskia Sassen has argued that “the modern twenty-first century citizen . . . is . . . being remade in bits and pieces,” and I take this prescient statement as a point of departure for constructs of Latin and Latinness as weaved into U.S. Latino and Latina subject and cultural formation (2009: 230). These subjects do not operate under a single referent of an ontological grammar of race and

sociocultural existence. Latinoness, Latinaness, Latinidad, blackness, and Africananess are literally more than they are or have turned out to be.<sup>2</sup> The detours Latinoness and Latinaness take — through blackness, dark brownness, indigence, Indianness, “second-tier” Latino status, and unmappable southern geographies — demand to be rigorously gauged. Problematizing and rearticulating the discursive order of Latino/a studies and perspectives as we presently know them is my principal purpose here.

The kinds of crossovers this project disentangles are evidenced in two incidents in the lives of brownness and blackness and their permeable borders. One brief anecdote entails Maya Soetoro-Ng, the half-white, half-Indonesian sister of President Barack Obama. Trying to live up to the category that stringently situates her, time and again, as Latina but that also exposes this term’s laxity, Soetoro-Ng told the *New York Times Magazine*: “[P]eople usually think I’m Latina when they meet me. That’s what made me learn Spanish” (Solomon, 2008). The second relates to Harvard University–educated actor Natalie Portman. The Academy Award winner made headlines not for her latest multimillion-dollar Hollywood release or for the type of exclusives aired on celebrity and entertainment news. According to one outlet, the hearsay boiled down to an apology Portman issued “after she was branded ‘insensitive’ for apparently saying she knows what it feels like to be black” (Femalefirst.co.uk, 2004). The “it” referred to Du Boisian double consciousness. In Portman’s appropriation of the actor as metaphor, her conceptualization surfaced when confronted by the demands of a fame-chasing, consumerist world and the strains of trying to pass with the rest of the populace.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Soetoro-Ng, a public redress was urged from Portman for summoning a theory that deliberates, to slightly swerve from Priscilla Wald’s course in *Constituting Americans*, on “the stranger as self, the self as stranger” and that can only originate from U.S.-situated African American blackness (1995: 7).<sup>4</sup>

These seemingly arbitrary examples of a black consciousness and the enactment of a brown language make way for a highly deliberative moment where many people locate, practice, and live a “Latinity” that meddles into the customary affairs of Latinidad. That Soetoro-Ng speaks Spanish does not institute a definitive form of Latinaness any more than Portman’s double consciousness would readily materialize U.S. African Americanness.<sup>5</sup> Yet Soetoro-Ng and Portman encapsulate the crux of my efforts. Their locations directly intercalate an indirect knowledge that displaces intrinsic ethnoracial

narratives of being. There is no precise categorical beginning, or end, for these identities-in-the-making. They speak to the power of social situations and relations as an excess of the imaginary and attest to the need for further inquiry about visual and sensory perceptions with regard to what has been constructed as ethnoracial. Soetoro-Ng and Portman induce evolving processes of identities that will be discharged again and give rise to the following questions: What makes mixed subjects singularly brown or black? Which kinds of bodies gain entrance into manifestations of Latinidad? Do these black-brown bodily migrations, which can be arranged under philosopher Alejandro de Acosta's (2007) incitation of "mobile meditations," provide a new exegesis for projects that account for other peoples and power relations vis-à-vis intertwined journeys in black, brown, and dark brown?

To be sure, we are witnessing the appearance of something vying for our attention. A multiphasic something that is letting us know that whatever might be ascribable to blackness, Latinoness, and Latinaness is being dissolved. It is becoming more expansive and tinged with a host of ethnoracial and cultural dichotomies openly encouraging a way out of a brown Latino and Latina impasse.<sup>6</sup> This additional something might be going, as Gustavo Pérez Firmat has it in connection to Cuba as proxy for a Latin atmosphere, to a "pan-Latin 'somewhere,' a locale without location" (2010: 18–19). This Latin venue sans location is enigmatically concretized by the emanation of a Latin subject. Ed Morales succinctly—but no less abstractly—sums up the coming of this Latinity: "[T]here may be more styles and variations of being Latino than there are different Latin American countries" (2003: xi). Morales's overview of Latin surplus cannot be wiped off the Latinidad map. It rightfully lacks the social scripting of one Latino, Latina, or Latin-American subject as well as a single unit of cultural and geopolitical articulation.

The notion of recognizable U.S. Latinos and Latinas is subject to revision from a Latinities standpoint that takes another look at the ethnoracial logic shaping this population. Literary critic Marcus Boon has asked, "[S]uppose copying is what makes us human—what then? More than that, what if copying, rather than being an aberration or a mistake or a crime, is a fundamental condition or requirement for anything, human or not, to exist at all? If such is the case [. . .] then the activities known as 'copying,' the objects known as 'copies,' and those who find themselves making these copies would all need to be revalued" (2010: 3–4). Boon's questions on copies and their equivalen-

cies lead us to this introduction's title as well as to my analytic maneuver: to constellate the manifold complexities of Latin signification and make use of the practice and acquisition of Latinness in ways that exceed generic brown Latinoness and Latinaness.<sup>7</sup> The copiousness of the Latin does not merely imply large and abundant quantities. It is also connotative of how Latinities are led astray and spurt out of the structuring content of U.S. Latinoness and Latinaness. The meticulous or inaccurate transference of Latin copies — the styles and variations that Morales touches on — is beside the point. These Latinities, as copies that cling to different actors and give rise to new representations, do not slip away from their “rightful” U.S. Latino and Latina brown proprietors. This copiousness can be understood as a set of new possibilities in the referents and sources for Latinness, as a new understanding from which different types of Latinoness and Latinaness are redirected and picked up. The copies are not final. They are a recurrent activity of Latined living — a participatory contact that is edited, revised, and reoriented. The copiousness of Latin thusly calls forth a new and much bolder conversation, for lest we forget, Latinoness and Latinaness slip out of brown bodies and the Spanish language.

What merits ongoing deliberation is not *who* are *the* Latinos and Latinas but *how* do “they” become as such? At what moments do these Latinities, with indiscriminate sites of attachment, emerge? I am interested in how other liminalities activate the inflection Latinity and how this word's paradigm affixes itself to — and migrates in the direction of — U.S. Latino, Latina, black, dark brown, and discursively parenthetical bodies. Notice that I intentionally refrain from employing in this instance the term “Latinidad,” as it is unquestionably tied to a collective ethos located no further than its surrounding U.S. Latino and Latina criterion. This does not mean that Latinidad, as a category and incubator of Latino/a thought, will be completely ignored or dispensed with. Its currency in the academy, especially in Latino/a studies' guardianship and organization of Latino/a knowledge, impels my desire to investigate how it crosses paths with blackness, dark brownness, and marginal U.S. Latino and Latina subgroups. To cite Latinidad and its limits, as currently theorized, I need to identify and critique it as such.

The Latinities herein are highly mindful of the different reflections of living as a form of U.S. Latino or Latina but not as Latino and Latina. These Latinities provide illuminating traces and insight into what unstable Latined

lives look like and might mean in this century. But these Latinities by no means suggest an endless line of peripatetic individuals walking in and out of a U.S. Latino and Latina turnstile. Rather, this book gestures toward new formulations of Latinoness and Latinaness that do not solely depend on a definite, firm color and national origin or that, in some cases, are even specific to the United States. The core of my study refigures how Latino/a studies' construction of Latinoness and Latinaness looks outside this field and its relation to ideological white Americanness to think of new possibilities beyond national identities and brown symbology.<sup>8</sup>

In asking about national identities, I also inquire about which types of incipient denationalizations of (Latin) citizenships are taking place, to return to Sassen's proposition (2009: 229). U.S. public and political perceptions cast Latinos and Latinas as foreigners from a "separate nation, 'as a country that is separate and apart from the United States'" (Dávila, 2001: 83).<sup>9</sup> For Sassen, denationalization captures "something that remains connected to the 'national' as constructed historically, and is indeed profoundly imbricated with it but is so on historically new terms of engagement" (2009: 229). These new terms of engagement deliberate on the incompleteness of "minoritized citizens" or migrant status, which "brings to the fore the work of making, whether it is making in response to changed conditions, new subjectivities, or new instrumentalities" (228).<sup>10</sup> I solicit Latinities as one mechanism that culls on the kinds of incompleteness essential to the "normalization" of a particular mode of Latino/a studies. Brownness as designative of U.S. Latino and Latina identities, as presently manifested, cannot adhere, and neither can blackness as appropriate only to a U.S. African American context. Blacks, browns, and dark browns enter, move into, and interfere with one another's color lines, and not unidirectionally either, or horizontally, but vertically as well.<sup>11</sup> These black-brown-dark brown color lines pass for and cross through one another.<sup>12</sup> They reshape and are not sedimented, even though I recognize that this book's methodology still brings to light an ever-present, dissolving line. A line, as established by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is "a long, narrow mark or band" in mathematics. But it is also "a straight or curved continuous extent of length without breadth." Its curvature—effectively, a *bending* line—can connect "all points having a common property on a map or graph." The *OED* also qualifies a line as "a sphere of activity; a direction, course, or channel."<sup>13</sup> The crossing lines summoned here, as domains of activ-

ity, often strip the weighty signifiers that ostensibly jell the Latino and Latina place in U.S. social imaginaries and political memberships.

My premise, mapped in four chapters, is that Latinities offer a conceptual framework that plots other subjectivities and localities that have yet to be charted within and beyond the configurations of *Latinidad*. This task proves demandingly difficult to chart, insofar as such an approach has not been delineated or critically diagrammed within Latino/a studies.<sup>14</sup> Since *Latinidad* has yet to graph these other ways of activating and wrestling with the ambiguities undercurrent in the construct of Latinness, Latinities are introduced as a potent and voracious symbol that circulates and changes among porous populations and geohistories.<sup>15</sup> Brownness, variations of the Spanish language, and Latinness enact a working ambiguity — a *Latinity* — that does not conceal, reject, or erase its uncertainty and equivocation. Instead, the vagueness of these Latin possibilities makes and remakes itself precisely because Latino and Latina are a product of ambiguity.

Latinities, with its variable currents and transfers of meaning, parse the vocabulary subscribed to U.S. blackness, brownness, and dark brownness. Latinities operate as questioning incitations that give careful consideration to new, even “unknown” and unsituated Latino and Latina modalities. Doing so entails theoretical efforts that aim to capture my contributions to Latino/a studies. My critical feat results in an analytic search that tracks the shifting contours of Latinoness and Latinaness in a language heretofore unacknowledged. Other than *Latinidad*, there are no additional key terms in Latino/a cultural studies that encapsulate the nuanced ways that Latinoness and Latinaness have been entered, recalibrated, exited, entered yet again, and *enlivened* by different groups. This approach requires new avenues for understanding why concepts like Latinities have been solicited to provide a scholarly recontextualization of how “perturbative” forms of Latinoness and Latinaness are lived and come alive in creative and undetermined patterns. The same applies for the proposed verb advancing this book’s title, “*Latinizing*.” These designations methodologically perform the ways that the signifier *Latin* hosts a free flow of people and stirs with or without the easily assumed Latino and Latina subject in *Latinidad*.<sup>16</sup>

Such open-ended possibilities demand a distance from U.S. Latino and Latina authenticity and the ontological grammar of *Latinidad*. Thus, Latinities emerge and their meanings alter depending on the context and

in the process of subjectivation. There is not one decisive way of presenting and defining a particular Latinity at hand. But this approach should not be misread as a colloquial cop-out. To demand transparent and sharp certitude around the ever-evolving terms and terrains of Latinities is to restrain black-brown–dark brown passages and limit their unpredictable prospects. The unrestricted flexibility of Latinities cannot be linearly smoothed in the same manner as the more reliable and complete Latino and Latina equation and narration proffered in Latinidad. A necessary requisite, Latinities give this analysis elucidative insight, as the point of continuous excavation is the idea of Latinoness and Latinaness as provisional.<sup>17</sup> Latinities are held together by their acknowledgment of just how much these subjectivities are consistently moving and remapping the U.S. terrain and its imaginary.

As such, *Latining America: Black-Brown Passages and the Coloring of Latino/a Studies* raises two central concerns: What is a Latino or Latina? And how do these social actors arrive at such a discourse? Versions of Latinities are manifested as a reprise, in plural form, appearing by necessity in each of the chapters. Latinities are an outwardly verb that signals the adjective “Latin,” which is enumerated by the *OED* as pertaining “to those countries of Central, North, and South America in which Spanish or Portuguese is the dominant language, spec. as Latin America.”<sup>18</sup> Needless to add, this is not an account of the Latin language (cf. Clackson and Horrocks, 2007). The “Latin” in Latinities is not meant to sinew, within the realm of Latinoness and Latinaness, a canonical language akin to how Latin has played out in the West’s cultural history and development. As a common but evaluative thread among various populations, Latinities are an overlay of meaning that parses the grammar subscribed to blackness, brownness, and dark brownness. I pun on Latin as much as the Latins, who are thought to cohesively populate a community of “Spanish people” through the latter’s affiliation with a body politic in which traces of a black and brown (ethnoracialized) vernacular evolve into new conceptions. These Latinities can constitute what Nicholas Ostler approximates through the phrase *ad infinitum*, meaning “on and on, without boundary” (2007: 317). Repetitive though they may be, these Latinities take form through continuity and rupture, differing in each context and eroding into another formation. They are not U.S. Latino and Latina specific, although they draw on the brown formulations of U.S. Latinidad to tease out the troubling limits of such an articulation.

By contrast, *Latinidad* bears an ideology impaired by its own referents or illusory connection as an inherited, unitary lineage that devolves into an intelligible U.S. Latino and Latina membership. And yet Latinoness and Latinaness often pose a dilemma, as these tend to be contested sites because of the trappings found in the nationalistic appendages that come with the category.<sup>19</sup> Latin body politics are repeatedly disputed spaces that empty out the identificatory categories of Latino and Latina — taking them to the meanings and classifications that have been presumably expunged from *Latinidad*: blackness and dark brownness.<sup>20</sup> The problem for second-tier groups who have “no” intellectual history or clear genealogical evidence of U.S.-grounded Latino and Latina life and experience is that their Latino and Latina experiential situations must be retold so as to wrestle with the lacks and insufficiencies found in the present Latino/a studies project. The color palette this study considers may appear to preclude other groups such as Asians.<sup>21</sup> My goal, however, is hardly exclusionary. I seek to build on the idea and practice of Latinoness and Latinaness through dark brownness and blackness. These signifiers stand associatively close to — and paradoxically distant from — each other in the production of a *Latinidad* that, as Richard Rodriguez sees it, is reconciled through brownness as the primary habitus for Latino or Latina personhoods (2002: xii).<sup>22</sup>

A further clarification is in order. My intent is not to focus on U.S. Afro-Latinos or Afro-Latin Americans from the Hispanophone Caribbean. Rather than exclusively turning to the Spanish-speaking Caribbean for clear-cut and solidifying experiences and representations of blackness, I set my course toward the study of the more subtle but still resonant preoccupations with the semiotics of blackness and dark brownness in the Mesoamerican geographies of Mexico and Central America and U.S. Latinos and Latinas tracing their heritages to those regions. I do not refute or deny that there is a black presence in these areas or within U.S. Latino and Latina populations.<sup>23</sup> For my purposes, I am concerned with the rhetoric and invocation of blackness, brownness, and dark brownness in Mesoamerican contexts.<sup>24</sup> I am also interested in how a supposed parenthetical blackness, often presumed as being antithetical to brown Latinoness and Latinaness, passes through different bodies beyond the categorical delineations of “standard” blackness. My objective is to initiate a dialogue with writers, narratives, and experiences that have been previously ignored or written out of Latino/a studies: the south-

ern, the black, the dark brown, the indigenous, and the Central American. The idea of problematic blackness for U.S. African Americans and problematic dark brownness for U.S. Latinos and Latinas within Mesoamerican contexts has not been fully investigated in this field. The academic tendency in Latino/a studies has been to orbit around the Hispanophone Caribbean, seeking to neatly point and comprehensively index blackness in the American hemisphere through this geography. Here, blackness and indigenous darkness are shepherded to the forefront as they inhabit the presumably browned Latinized body.

My monograph's quest does not set to endeavor with the institutional or intellectual history of U.S. Latino/a studies.<sup>25</sup> It is not an account for how the field of Latino/a studies becomes "Latino/a studies." The book interrogates *what* enters as Latino and Latina in the field and how Latino/a studies rearranges or unplugs *Latin* significations from the premises of Latinidad.

With this explanation of my motives and timely contributions, I now turn to critically review the theories and components of Latinidad. Getting back to these basics marking the premises of Latino/a studies affords a genealogical entry into my intellectual initiatives. It also situates the framework for Latinities as a conceptual language.

### Grammar Matters: Latinidad and Latinities

Promoted by France, Latinidad and its variants, Latinity and Latinité, were launched during the second half of the nineteenth century, initiating imperial and colonial differences in the region that Walter Mignolo skillfully modifies as "Latin' America." Mignolo puts across that "'Latinidad' was the ideology under which the identity of the ex-Spanish and ex-Portuguese colonies was located (by natives as well as by Europeans) in the new global, modern/colonial world order" (2005: 58). This credo has been an example "of the kind of modern/colonial translation that captures and transforms people, cultures, and meanings into what is legible and controllable for those in power" (144). The organizational hierarchies of this world order suggest that U.S. Latinos and Latinas, much like Latin Americans, have operated, as Mignolo assesses it, as copies of the Latin in the European sense. "*In the imperial imaginary*," he remarks, "Latin' Americans are second-class Europeans while Latinos/as in the U.S. are second-class Americans." But while Latinidad operated as a previ-

ously colonizing tool for European imaginaries that pushed a “colonization of being,” it has now emerged, for U.S. Latinos and Latinas, as a “decolonizing project” (64).

This decolonizing project is made up of, as historian Virginia Sánchez Korrol claims, established U.S. Latino and Latina populations such as Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American, that are also matched with “relatively recent arrivals, predominantly from the Dominican Republic and Central and South America, with long-time U.S. residents; English speaking with Spanish speaking; aliens with citizens; and documented individuals with undocumented immigrants” (1996: 5). At the center of this ever-evolving pan-ethnic category stands the cultural and political necessity for what sociologist Felix Padilla conjectured, during the mid-1980s, as “Latinismo.” This model grants “an ethnic-conscious identity and behavior distinct and separate from the individual ethnic identity of Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Spanish-speaking groups” (1985: 1). Although Padilla’s tenet is comparativist in scope, his Latinismo’s parameters are clearly drawn by Hispanophone ties. Yet Latinismo “represents a collective-generated behavior that transcends the individual group’s national and cultural identities” (162).

Grounding Latinismo a decade after Padilla’s case study, Suzanne Oboler’s *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives* takes up this outlook as “the forging of unity among Latinos in the struggle for citizenship rights and social justice in the United States.” Of equal importance is “the need to provide second and later generations of Latin American descent with a broader framework for examining the meaning and implications of their respective national, racial, linguistic, class, and gendered diversity in the process of constructing that unity” (1995: xix). This deployment of Latino, Latina, and Latin American unity of thought incites discussions on the aggregate nationalities, ethnoracial locations, and institutionalizations of the U.S. Latino and Latina public face, as it were. Sociologist Agustín Laó-Montes posits that Latinidad, “as a form of identification lies in its historical production as a U.S.-based constellation of identities of peoples of Latin American and Caribbean descent” (2001: 15). He explicates that “it is crucial to conceive Latinidad not as a static and unified formation but as a flexible category that relates to a plurality of ideologies of identification, cultural expressions, and political and social agendas” (8).<sup>26</sup> While Laó-Montes’s Latinidad appears more permissive — what Sánchez

Korrol also introduces as “a heightened sense of awareness and receptivity”—a U.S. Latino and Latina subject can be largely informed by some nationalities that may have more visibility and historical presencing than others (1996: 5). Such subjectivity can also draw from the more aurally “visible” and acceptable modalities of the Spanish language.<sup>27</sup>

In this sense, Latino and Latina lives—already homogenized by the aforementioned umbrella demarcation—can become more uniform in the production of a *Latinidad* that subsumes its subjects through the sole emphasis of coalitional alliances. This leads one to wonder whether there can be a Latino or Latina self separate from a—or even *the*—Latino cause. Such approaches could lock a subject in a Latino- or Latina-specific inflexible *Latinidad* and in a direction that is unable to meet other ways through which widespread Latin spheres are being accessed, interrupted, and reconfigured. Conceptually speaking, this is what Latinities aim to elicit: to move beyond the limiting locations of *Latinidad* and result in a larger “ethic of care,” as Joan C. Tronto envisions it.<sup>28</sup> Tronto’s precept infers “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.” An ethic of care necessitates “daily and thoughtful judgments about caring.” It is a process of being active. Tronto elaborates that it also entails “care as an action, as a practice, not as a set of principles or rules [. . . It] can occur in a variety of institutions and settings. Care is found in the household, in services and goods sold in the market, in the workings of bureaucratic organizations, in contemporary life” (1998: 16). The potential to care about collective, everyday *life* surfaces within and outside the reliable and predictable criterion that falls under *Latinidad*.<sup>29</sup> These emergent commonalities and practices of care, informed by the myriad spaces of Latinities, would raise questions not only on how one *knows* *Latinidad* but also on how one is capable (or perhaps even incapable) of getting it “right” and, indeed, of achieving it—living it—“rightly.”<sup>30</sup>

As presently mapped, studies of *Latinidad*—concisely phrased by Deborah Paredez as “the process of Latina/o identity making”—generally focus on the organized pursuit for consensus building (2009: xiii). Through social movements and community affiliations, *Latinidad* (or, in the Spanish plural, *Latinidades*) stress these loci of political activity: (1) uncriminalized,

fully functional U.S. citizenship rights; (2) governmental representation at the local, state, and federal levels; (3) socioeconomic equality; and (4) dissenting, analytic voices regarding the mainstream media's disparaging representations and commodification of U.S. Latino and Latina body politics. But as anthropologists Nicholas De Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas have demonstrated, there are multifaceted — not to mention contradictory — tensions within the variegated and highly selective sociopolitical imaginaries storing the contemporary uses of what grows into an enclosed *Latinidad*. De Genova and Ramos-Zayas focus on the contours that *Latinidad* takes within Chicago's Mexican and Puerto Rican populations. They identify these groups' dissimilar approaches to a panethnic partnership through any of these platforms: (1) a *Latinidad* as the "American" abjection of the U.S.-born; (2) a *Latinidad* composed through migrant illegality as well as a *Latinidad* without Puerto Ricans; (3) a *Latinidad* in opposition to African Americans; (4) a *Latinidad* as an articulation of working-class solidarity; (5) a *Latinidad* as a strategy of middle-class formation; and (6) a fractured *Latinidad* through institutional contexts, whiteness, and power (2003: 178–210).<sup>31</sup>

These *Latinidades* allude to, as María Lugones has stated in the context of the forging of alliances, a Latino and Latina panethnic logic of narrow identities assuming an "epistemically shallow sense of coalition based on coincidence of interests" (2006: 76). As outlined, the aforementioned pan-Latino identifications set forth what José Esteban Muñoz has called "the affective overload that is *Latinidad*" (2000: 73). Muñoz doubtlessly punctuates a noticeable schism that leads one to interrogate why such political activism and social expectations can be theorized as "*Latinidad*" in light of their expeditious deletions. Furthermore, there are no analytic terms available for the theorizing of collective Latino and Latina dissonances, variances, and disagreements. Lugones incisively explains that people of color in the United States learn maxims "to deal with white supremacy in rather narrow enclaves" (2006: 78–79). Such an outlook clarifies, to some degree, why this coincidence of interests — posited, at first glance, through an extensive arrangement of *Latinidades* with divergent boundaries in terms of Latino and Latina national as well as political affiliations, different generations, and sexuality — remain specific to Latino brown and white American objectives.

A similar binary is also entrenched in a *Latinidad* that connects to U.S. Latino and Latina cultural practices. Myra Mendible explains that a cultural

Latinidad is “implicated in a history of U.S. marketing and entertainment distortions of Latino/a cultures.” These representations have “met resistance from many Chicano and Latino critics [who] have questioned the usefulness and effect of such labeling, for example, its tendency to homogenize peoples whose histories, language usage, and circumstances may differ significantly or to alienate U.S.-born Latinos, who may not speak Spanish or share other identifying criteria. There are also legitimate reasons to suspect bureaucratic attempts to regulate, profile, and monitor a growing constituency of over 40 million people” (2007: 4). These findings are informative, but central to my efforts is the attempt to call attention to and investigate more precisely brown-white Latinidad distortions from within brown, dark brown, and black Latino and Latina states.

Latinidad, as presently articulated and generally adopted, is hardly useful for my analytic purposes. Its dual-directional model of identity and working signifiers are ensnared in the logic of white and brown. This book dialogues with recent approaches to Afro-Latinidad — for example, Agustín Laó-Montes (2001, 2007), Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (2010), and the Afro-Latin@ Project — to the extent that it is concerned with the African diaspora in the new world.<sup>32</sup> But it also constructively departs: Afro-Latinidad scholarship has the tendency to give primacy to Caribbean geographies in the Americas. Discourses on Afro-Latinidad, moreover, are often dependent on tangible, phenotypic black bodies to study Latinoness and Latinaness from one location: blackness. While some work on Afro-Latinoness has approximated, in part, what I am trying to articulate, such studies have not investigated in an extended way the kinds of cross-identifications that propel me. I scrutinize how the U.S. color line crosses paths with a Global South and unravel how habitually perceived brown subjects cross into, circulate, and revamp the operational semiotics of both blackness and brownness. In this way, discourses on Afro-Latinidad and Latinidad are expanded, as they shift to new articulations of Latinities north and south.

One could consider, as a brief illustration, the expressive sketches of Latinizing that Junot Díaz demonstrates in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. The novel centers on Oscar de León, a nerdy, sci-fi-loving, pop culture aficionado, and his family’s migration from the Dominican Republic to northern New Jersey. The shadow of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo’s dictatorship follows Díaz’s subjects. In their deeply meshed past

and present, Oscar's family struggles with the effects of the inescapable new world curse, *fukú americanus*, "or more colloquially, *fukú*" (2007: 1). But the origins of *fukú americanus*, which as speculatively written in the book's inaugural sentence, imply myth or hearsay—"they say it came first from Africa"—is not a mere punch line propitiously executed in Latin. It provokes thoughtful inquisitiveness on its sources and lineages, on what accounts for its presence, and what it means for the Latined diaspora of lowercase *americanus* to be conjoined by an interminable *fukú*. Díaz globalizes this emergent but fairly obfuscated subject adjusting its "who-ness," "what-ness," and "how-ness," but not necessarily guaranteeing a clear (read: Latino) outcome.

The types of *americanus* encountering, in some measure, the evenly spaced and distributed *fukú*—"because no matter what you believe, *fukú* believes in you"—eclipse Afro-Latinoness, *Latinidad*, and a formal nationality (Díaz, 2007: 5). In one telling instance, Oscar de León, whose name appears to have an ironic alliteration with the Venezuelan salsa performer Oscar D'León, is acknowledged as a new species through the visionary greeting, "Hail, *Dominicanis*."<sup>33</sup> This acknowledgement gives prominence to the open conditions of Oscar's traveling Latinities. Under Díaz's pen, this Latin subject is a revision of both Dominican and American subjectivity. It is a "God. Domini. Dog. Canis" and takes a new, "illegible" speciation depending on the geographic, physiological, and linguistic barriers at hand (171).

Like Oscar's Latinities, there is no fixed form or stable geography to Díaz's text, which like Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1998), was first conceived in Mexico City.<sup>34</sup> Its multiple story lines, cultural vacillations, and interlacing linguistic styles admit a Spanglish marked by an urban vernacular or a bigger language that bears the influences of literary and nonliterary texts and practices from the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe. Not to be discounted is Díaz's use of footnotes as well, which gives a scholarly quality to the story line. Yet the quick-witted annotations amuse through their historical and political irreverence in the plotting of the similarities and differences of Dominican, Dominican American, and U.S. Latino and Latina life.<sup>35</sup> The novel's open-ended resources exceed local and national circumstances. They are a new source of explanation for the "Latino" and "Latina" plenum and how it has been read. Communicative Latinities emerge through a Latined mode of rewriting, from the *Dominicanis* archive, the variable form and content of *Latinidad* and its

memberships. Like Díaz's hero, the literary lineage of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* moves across the boundaries of cultures, creating a Latined literary history that draws out, borrows from, and is steeped in a vast range of relationships and discourses that may, as a popular phrase goes, pop in—or pop out—anywhere.<sup>36</sup>

The Latinities evoked chronicle the various ranges of the Latin that currently fissure Latinidad. By passing through different bodies, geographies, and cultures within and beyond the United States, we see how black, brown, and dark brown “passing lines,” to recall Brad Epps's term, point to the limitations of the white-black, the brown-white, and the brown-black dyads (2001). They defy confining classifications and living states of interregnum that also amount to what Veronica Gonzalez has called “twin time” (2007). Such Latinities demand a shift in the brown vocabulary we presuppose and understand as Latino or Latina today, since Latinity calls for *re-cognition* in ever-widening global migrations. “Re-cognition” is inserted here, rather than misrecognition, because a given, recognized Latinity is not “wrong” per se. Through re-cognition, the ambiguous Latin subject has been acknowledged for what it can also be, which is interpreted as an admissible Latinity.<sup>37</sup> It is another formulation of Latino and Latina, not so much because the classification cannot index a subject's definitive identity, but because its incoherence is also hauling another meaning (cf. Muñoz, 2000). Latinities steer toward a dynamic mode of analysis that is attentive to emergent subjectivities as well as the categories needed to affirm them. What I have said thus far can and does sound provocative, particularly when Latino/a studies seems to be at stake. In view of this concern, I ask what we in this field are to do with this type of questioning and analysis. As a reassessment of the tools of Latinoness and Latinaness, my approach calls for different ways of thinking about and orienting the changes engulfing Latinidad to open a space for moving Latinities.

Latinities offer a conceptual shift in multiple interwoven discourses and how these shape the subject. They are a “re-articulatable” panethnic space where the subject is constituted in relation to blackness, brownness, and dark brownness but also in terms of language, ethnicity, nation, class, gender, sexuality, and race, depending on the context. Latinity is the action of the “thing” that “becomes” re-cognized in locations outside its own ethnora-cial and cultural particularities. Latinities are re-articulatable because they

become a different discursive element and provide a necessary distance from how normative U.S. African American and U.S. Latino and Latina projects have been bounded and represented. Routine life practices and occasions must be revisited and rewritten, reminding us that “blackness transcends North America — and even Africa,” just as much as Latinness surpasses Latin America (L. Gordon, 1995a: 2). Seen in this manner, the irreducibility of African and Latin signifiers transverse, slip, and disperse. They generate Latinities that swirl around us without parochial boundaries — taking us to the immense yet contradictory sites and passages of being and dwelling in the Americas.

### In Short/*Breve Faciam*

*Latining America: Black-Brown Passages and the Coloring of Latino/a Studies* delves into the cultural connections and global crossing color lines of blackness, brownness, and dark brownness. Latining speaks to the Latinities that have yet to play out in — and pass through — the U.S. social structuring of Latinos, Latinas, and African Americans.<sup>38</sup> To be Latined, according to the *OED*, is to be versed in Latin. To “Latin it” stands for speaking or writing in Latin and therefore corresponds with a Latining. A Latining of the Americas, as signified in *Latining America*, circulates the need for becoming better acquainted with and versed in the marginal black-brown–dark brown literary passages that are seldom read in comparative form and in English and Spanish within U.S. academic contexts.<sup>39</sup> Angie Chabram-Dernersesian gives observant care to this matter, most notably as it corresponds to Spanish and Latin American departmental politics and their relationship to U.S. Latinos and Latinas. She writes that “the time-honored practices of traditional [Spanish] departments that appeal to *la hispanidad*” often allure to “an overarching unity of Spanish-speaking peoples while delivering curriculums that selectively foreground elite Spanish, Latin American, and Latino traditions.” While these elements of “elite traditions” are not sharply defined, Chabram-Dernersesian taps into how Latina/o studies is articulated and positioned in the U.S. academy. She notes, “Other legacies considered to be too popular, indigenous, domestic, working class, or too American for Spanish (American) Eurocentric tastes are ignored, underrepresented, or directed to ethnic studies departments” (2003: 107).

I give precedence to these U.S. Latino and Latina concerns in relation to Africana blackness. This Latinizing tackles a Latin vagueness paradoxically grounded in what has come to be extracted as “that other negativity, U.S.-based Latin American working class” or as a U.S. Latinoness and Latinaness that simultaneously “suggests a broad and aged otherness to Anglo American modernized norms—but an otherness constituted as almost an absence within the Western episteme” (Zimmerman, 1992: 14). A passage also means to not be impeded by or restrained from activity and movement. The black-brown passages inferred are biographical journeys into each presumed prohibitive U.S. Latino, Latina, or African American space, admitting us into the various passings that have been activated in the unsteady, daily stages of blackness, brownness, and dark brownness.<sup>40</sup> Finally, a word on the last part of this book’s title: *The Coloring of Latino/a Studies* is a nod to the “colored folk” euphemism for black. It also indicates a diversification in the multiple forms of Latinities “re-coloring” the particles that have been airbrushed from the production of Latino and Latina brownness. This coloring takes two striking forms: the ethnoracial and cultural paradigm of black versus brown and the normative terms that write off other Latino and Latina subpopulations from the Latinidad map.

The subsequent chapters explore how Latinness is being triggered through an illustrative, but hardly definitive, quadrant of these renderings: Southern Latinities, Passing Latinities, Indigent Latinities, and Disorienting Latinities. These Latinities build on Mignolo’s (2005) idea of “Latin” America as they take on the ways that the region has been conjectured. They also depend on Lugones’s (2006) incisive rearrangement of hyphenated Latin-American beings and worlds. As a referent, Latin-American is a stimulus for the constitution of Latin subjects—within and outside the United States—that may be regionally, culturally, or racially intangible.<sup>41</sup> An amalgamated invisibility gives form to U.S. Latinos and Latinas as well as Latin Americans in the United States and Latin America. “Latin” America (in the U.S. Latino and Latina sense) and Latin-America (in the América Latina or Latinoamérica denotation) are extant interpretations of Latinness that have been Americanized in the United States. I hyphenate Latin-American to point to the conflation of U.S. Latinos and Latinas as well as Latin Americans, while building on Latinized representations for the worlds that (“southernly”) Latins dwell in and migrate from.

*Latining America* is organized around four chapters, where each directs attention to different themes and composites that describe divergent and neglected forms of Latinidad. There is dynamism in play along each unrestricted and flexible Latinity. This approach enacts the nonlinearity, continuing contexts, and relevance of corresponding Latinities from chapter to chapter. The book's structure conceptually spans the twentieth century. It investigates, as a whole, how certain lives and traveling bodies have taken shape as "black" or "brown" or been relegated to the U.S. Latino and Latina margins. The study defies U.S. Latino and Latina stasis, if not the unilateral genealogy of Latinidad. The volume progresses from the black-white color line and brown-black passing lines, as accessed by black Latinos, U.S. African Americans, and dark Latinos, to the empire line, as confronted by U.S. Central Americans.

The first chapter, "Southern Latinities," builds on the Du Boisian color line. I extend this color line to broader crossings where the movement of racially marked bodies, geographies, and critical awareness install an emergent Latinity within a "local" south (i.e., the U.S. South) and engage with it through the conceptual category of the Global South. My use of the latter builds on theories and geographies to account for alterations to—and by—the black, Latino, and Latina subject. I recognize, as Jonathan Rigg has observed, that the Global South "is also known, variously, as the Third World, the poor world, the less developed world, the non-Western world, and the developing world." Through these constructions it is also difficult, as Rigg details, "to begin the process of thinking about the Global South without also irrevocably linking it with the challenge of development and the stain of poverty" (2007: 9–10). Not dissimilar to Rigg, my intellectual attempts are neither about poverty nor development. As an analytic concept, the Global South, paired with the adoption of what Raewyn Connell (2007) identifies as "Southern theory," allows for epistemological overlaps where the parameters and geographic extensions advancing the idea of the U.S. South—for example, a plantation economy, processes of racialization, U.S. South–U.S. North migrations, and the creation of empire—highlight changes in U.S. national dynamics and in regional characteristics. Global peripheries are thus reconfigured, often analogously to the U.S. South in an open-ended charting of the geographic and geohistorical. The Global South's contours allow me to rigorously question how regional spaces are mapped and how certain geographies are imagined as the main purveyors of absolute blackness and brownness.

Chapter 1 also draws on Evelio Grillo's (1919–2008) *Black Cuban, Black American* (2000). It relocates the Southeast's black-white color line through Grillo's continuous crossings of black-Latin-white divides, spanning the 1920s onward. The value of this autobiographical cartography is not simply attributed to Grillo's black Cubanness. The memoir's cultural weight is also due to this differentiation: the "recovery" of Grillo's Hispanic/Latino life, as reclaimed through Arte Público Press's *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage* series. This editorial effort by "the premier center for research of Latino documentary history in the United States" functions, in the press's words, as "a national project to locate, preserve and disseminate Hispanic culture of the United States in its written form since colonial times until 1960" (Latinoteca.com, 2010). I bring into focus the value of the heterogeneity of blackness as it brushes alongside the heterogeneity of Latinoness and Latinaness. In examining Grillo's "Latinization" or "Hispanization" within literary studies, my interpretive lens does not attempt to signal that there are no black Latinos in the United States. Grillo's entry into the double locations of Latin-blackness and Americanness needs to be emphasized as one paralleling the multidirectional Latinities that surface in his rather exiguous publication. Grillo's double perspectives situate an interdependent Latin blackness derivable from a shifting historicized black-and-white South and a seemingly dehistoricized brown, alien South.

The ("*Nuevo*") alien South that I rethink approximates *Africana* and Latino/a disciplinary distance and can more affirmatively articulate what I call open double consciousness. That Du Bois's double consciousness is already "coterminous with his career-long effort to think outside the space and time of the nation" is hardly questionable (Cooppan, 2005: 300). Yet my figuration of "open" to a racialized double consciousness "extends it beyond its origins" (Gooding-Williams, 2005a: 205). My synergistic call to investigate Du Boisian double consciousness in relation to Latino/a and African American studies (and by association American studies as well as Latin American studies) need not be superficially dismissed as an old new thing, meaning a recycled undertaking of an "old notion."<sup>42</sup> More than a century after Du Bois propounded what Vilashini Cooppan has recognized as "the necessity of learning to think doubly about the scene of political identification," double consciousness is a resource for emergent subjects who, characterized as aliens and American intruders, are situated outside the U.S. national symbolic of white and black

(2005: 299). Du Bois's work, Robert Gooding-Williams also concedes, "invites appraisal from many disciplinary perspectives [. . .] because its impact and significance cannot be reduced to the terms available to just one such point of view." His pertinence continues "to shape valuable discussions of black literature and racial politics in postsegregation America" (2005a: 204).

But Latino and Latina oppositions in postsegregation America differ from Du Bois's. The doubling of the Americas, north and south, is one instance that cues us on the exigency to open a double consciousness for populations who have not been historicized within the U.S. black-white dyad. Latino and Latina polarities—or twenty-first-century peculiarities—range from U.S. American/foreigner, Anglophone Americas/Hispanophone Americas, and U.S. Latinos/"Other Latinos" to black English speaker/brown Spanish speaker, African American Southeast/Chicano Southwest, and black-white America/incompatible Latinities in, and colorings from, the Americas.<sup>43</sup> I assign "open" to double consciousness to allow the entry of other subjects from varied geographic directions and ethnoracial configurations who must also labor with the meaning of how they may or may not fit in the foundational American coupling of white and black. Allow me to say that open double consciousness does not—nor does it pretend to—substitute Du Boisian double consciousness. It is meant as a rhetorical move that opens up room for the discursive maneuver of Latino and Latina collective "alienness." It strives to flesh out the everyday relationship of double consciousness (i.e., of being black and American) to new embodied doublings that are dislodged from the "American" landscape and that should go away from the United States. The openness of open double consciousness vies for the open constitution of mobile subjectivities as well as for the possibilities of transnational citizenships in the "active making of diverse kinds of rights-bearing subjects" (Sassen, 2009: 230).

Chapter 2, "Passing Latinities," broadens the meanings of Chicano and Chicana border theory to two central figures of the Harlem Renaissance: James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938) and Langston Hughes (1902–67). The Harlem Renaissance, also variantly known as the New Negro Movement and the Negro Renaissance, is widely considered, as Winston Napier presents it, as "the most dynamic cultural event in the history of black America." It propagated "a literary and cultural explosion that would establish the black writer as a seminal social force" (2000: 2).<sup>44</sup> Through a South-South discus-

sion, my primary task is to inspect how a passing, transitory South informs Johnson's and Hughes's African Americanness. This reading, dating from the 1910s to the 1930s, allows for an intraethnic comparative examination of how the shifting shades of color of these eminent authors gesture toward an evolving Latinity in Nicaragua, Mexico, and Cuba. I link these cultural workers' contributions to larger U.S. Latino/a and Latin-American literary oeuvres like the *crónica* and border art, considering the former's prominence as a genre in Latin America and the latter's emblematic marker on Chicano and Chicana identity and imagination. This interpretive means does not elide the literary genealogy of U.S. African American cultural producers. Somewhat echoing the *crónica* form at the beginning of the twentieth century, African American literary thinkers wrote "mainly in magazines established to report on their society" (Napier, 2000: 1).<sup>45</sup> The *crónica*, as Paul Allatson qualifies it, is "an accepted and popular literary genre in Latin America, but less common in the Anglophone world." This writing form includes "short meditative pieces, autobiographical in scope, and characterized by a combination of personal confession, everyday observation, and a memorializing drive" (2004: ix). My underscoring of such Latino/a and Latin-American interdisciplinary modes of expression points to larger forms of cultural exchanges that exceed their specific "brown" or "black" fields of study. In channeling U.S. African American cultural production into Latino/a studies and its literary traditions, I am trying to also expand the Latino/a canon's signifying practices.

The penultimate chapter, "Indigent Latinities," proceeds with an inquiry of how the meanings and resonances of undesirable blackness, dark brownness, indigence, and Indianness are signified in post-World War II Chicano and Chicana subjectivities. I am preoccupied with what become South-South crossing lines of contention vis-à-vis the ideological construction of a Chicano and Chicana brownness that extends to U.S. Latinoness and Latinaness. The Latino and Latina category has been generally regarded as an "overly vague idea" (Jiménez Román and Flores, 2010: 2). Along these lines, brownness can be clearly added to this indeterminate ethnoracial Latino and Latina qualifier. This third chapter thus makes a case for the obligatory dark brown and black counterparts of a more populous brownness. My undertaking seeks to understand what has produced the spread of Latino- and Latina-specific brownness. Developing my analysis through autobiographical works by Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Richard Rodriguez, I take to task the cultural

representation of dark brownness and its leap to brownness. A parenthetical disclosure: Piri Thomas's canonical memoir, *Down These Mean Streets*, does not have a foundational presence in this section. His autobiography has undeniably served as the quintessential text in Latino/a studies to categorically demonstrate an "Afro-Latino" identity.<sup>46</sup> Although the scope of *Latinizing America* is not the Hispanophone Caribbean or Nuyorican subjectivities, I recognize, nonetheless, that Thomas is doubtlessly an authoritative resource in Latino/a studies. And I rely on Thomas, in an abbreviated but far-reaching way, to show how the disparate ethnoracial categories in his Puerto Rican and Cuban household—that is, black ("*negrito*"), dark brown, almost black ("*moreno*"), Negro ("*moyeto*"), and dark-skinned ("*tregeño*," "*tregeña*")—speak to Chicano and Chicana subjectivity and Mesoamerican representations of pejorative Indianness, "*lo indio*," and disparaging blackness, "*lo negro*" (1997: 340).<sup>47</sup> Such comparative conversations addressing the various Latino and Latina color lines have yet to be sufficiently reflected on and augmented in Latino/a studies.

The concluding chapter, "Disorienting Latinities," explores late twentieth-century migrations and the formation, post-Cold War, of U.S. Central Americans as "new" Latino and Latina invisible subjects. It looks at how Latino and Latina subgroups like Central Americans arrive at Latinidad. By doing so, a cultural and intellectual unmappable South is wrestled with in terms of the regional significations of Central America and the discursive deportability of the isthmus's bodies. If U.S. Central American migrations, among others, are almost exclusively understood, in Juan Gonzalez's (2000) terms, as a "harvest of empire," this part of the book is concerned with how to turn the assumed protracted appearance of such groups into a U.S. Latino and Latina "harvest of knowledge," as Sánchez Korrol posits (1996: 8).<sup>48</sup> The perceived lateness of Central Americans is theorized through Arturo Arias's arrangement of the new Central American–American paradigm, a diasporic consciousness that can be likened to wide-ranging Latino and Latina cultural politics and displacements (2003: 185). Arias's concept embarks on a possibility of re-cognition for groups marked by a hierarchical separateness—denoted in this chapter as a "Guatepeorian Latinidad"—that stands in categorical opposition to (normative) Latino and Latina otherness.

These Latinities, by no means coherent and complete, canvass the remains of overlooked blackness and dark brownness in a Latino and Latina context

and the vestiges of other groups, like Central Americans, who, up to now, have not discursively passed into — or are problematically situated within the makings of — Latinidad.<sup>49</sup> The horizon of identity is always in the process of becoming, as it crosses paths with an otherness “of color” as much as with the “white otherness” Du Bois spoke of in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1996b). I attend to the struggles of the body as it walks in and out of the dormant voids written out of Latinidad’s grammar. Each resituated repetition of Latinity in this work becomes, in a manner of speaking, an archeology of Latinities attendant to life stories that propound, in Gerard Aching’s words, “an aesthetic elaboration of ‘facts’” (1997: 116). Memoirs, autobiographies, and life-changing happenstance lay the groundwork for my revisiting of black-brown stories that have remained unchronicled despite their seeming collaboration and efforts to widen our understanding of Latin intersections.

Jane Gallop’s theorizing of the anecdote upholds its fruitfulness. Emphasizing pivotal moments that tell stories about theory, Gallop acquaints us with a threefold language milieu that accounts for the critical insights such lived incidents offer, recognizes them as both “literary and real,” and renders them “‘interesting’ precisely for their ability to intervene in contemporary theoretical debates” (2002: 2–3). Her elucidation forcefully moves along with this Global South discussion through the disentanglement of the quotidian, what Rigg, in his pursuance of “a grammar that makes living decipherable,” also calls, as his book title puts forward, *An Everyday Geography of the Global South* (2007: xv). With it, Rigg “explores the details and minutiae of local lives and livelihoods and the local structures and processes that create such everyday lives and which are, in turn, created by them” (7). His scholarly immersion in the commonplace is fueled through “everyday living,” as “the everyday begins and ends with the personal.” Rigg depends on anecdotal daily occurrences for the fashioning and retelling of “‘ordinary’ people” (17).

To this end, *Latining America* draws on chronicled lives, narrative production, travel dispatches, urban tags, and television programs from a cultural studies perspective. This variety gives insight into how Latined, dark brown, and black lives sculpt and voice Latinities in the Global South. My overarching intention is to treat the accounts referenced here as cultural bodies of thought departing from certain constructions of literature that bind it to such strict methods as close examination. This book’s interpretive angle centers on specific cultural and historical moments, concentrating on textual ap-

proaches like discourse analysis and conceptual exploration to evaluate how individuals engage in and theorize everyday processes of subject formation.

While *Latining America* is in conversation with U.S. African American studies, it remains crucial to remember that it is an intervention in and a contribution to Latino/a studies. I position my work as a critic and theorist within the rubric of a flourishing Latino/a studies that also turns to the signifying economies of absence: blackness, dark brownness, the U.S. South, and Latin America's other Souths, like the Central American isthmus. Ifeoma Nwankwo (1999–2001) has noted that the two contemporary domains encircling U.S. African American scholarship are African American studies as a field and a hemispherist approach to American studies.<sup>50</sup> Latinos and Latinas, in like manner, seem to fall between the space of Latino/a studies and a continentally driven American studies. But to which routes will African American and Latino/a studies be pushed, especially within Latin America studies, too? How will these disciplines dual-directionally cross over? And what will allow for their continuity, as Latinities proceed with their flood of departures and points of arrival? My engagement with Latino/a studies proffers an investigative space by which to think through the role of African Americanness and blackness in the production of the Latino and Latina citizen-subject as well as the field of Latino/a studies. As Nwankwo has also reminded us, U.S. African Americans are not provincial, and neither are Latinos and Latinas (2006).<sup>51</sup> They do not exist in a single place. By bringing African American studies discourse to Latino/a studies arenas, we are able to shift from the “pure” aims or seemingly inert black or brown predicaments from these disciplines, deliberate through new concepts and enunciations, and enable new histories in the making.