Decolonizing Diasporas

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Chapter 5

Apocalypso

When the Other appears to be the One. Apocalypso.
—Michelle Cliff, “In My Heart a Darkness”

In the last chapter I argued that a decolonial reparation must sustain a reparation of the imagination. Such a process would necessarily entail an ethical demand for decolonial love re/produced through technologies of relations across difference, and the labor of imagining other ways of being human in the modern/colonial and settler colonial world. This chapter examines the futurities that emerge from the Afro-Atlantic Hispanophone diaspora, and traces forms of decolonial love and resistance conjured through Afro-Atlantic imagined futures. The preoccupation with futurities and imagining possibilities beyond coloniality is central to decolonial poetics, practices, and politics. This is because the science of transforming the human is not only about historicizing how Man has come to overrepresent himself as the human, but also about mapping and imagining new ways of being human in the present and future. Thus, I trace some of the ways in which these Afro-Atlantic authors and artists trouble tropes of racialized Blackness, conjure apocalyptic worlds, and center Lucumí and other Afro-Atlantic systems of religious syncretism as acts of decolonial love. Rather than imagine utopian liberation or dystopian futures, the writers that I study in this chapter imagine how apocalypses and what I call “worlds/otherwise” take root in the ruptures between modernity and coloniality, and are forged by the collision of domination and resistance. Their temporal scope is both the present and the near future.

Ruptures

In this chapter, I examine some of the tropes that emerge when Afro-Latinx and Afro-Hispanic cosmologies and ontologies collide against past and ongoing colonial forms of domination. The Afro-Latinx and Equatoguinean poetics I engage with throughout this book offer other ways of understanding physical and metaphysical borderlands, including thinking through
islands, archipelagoes, and transatlantic migrations and diasporas. They also reimagine temporal, spatial, and affective boundaries through their troubling of colonial logics and their centering of being human as praxis. Gloría Anzaldúa’s conception of la frontera as a space where the “Third World grates against the first and bleeds” is an apt scaffolding for ways to think through how Black ontologies and forms of domination endemic to colonality can be imagined and experienced as two worlds cutting against each other. For Anzaldúa, these worlds grate against one another, creating ruptures or borderlands where languages, peoples, and land and spiritual practices survive, adapt, and resist domination. Building on Anzaldúa’s metaphor, I contend that ichorous or sanguinary ruptures across modernity and colonality contain the makings of new worldviews, or worlds/otherwise, which have the potential to reimagine the human and humanity.

The imaginative potential that arises from within these ruptures articulates new possibilities. In examining these ruptures and resistances, we bear witness to the fantastic, the spectacular, and the unnerving. These moments verge on the supernatural and let us glimpse what I am calling worlds/otherwise, or the Afro-Atlantic imagination, which center practices, knowledges, and histories that span centuries. Worlds/otherwise fashions new possibilities for Black life and ways of being in the world for both the present moment and the future. Imagining worlds/otherwise entails engaging the apocalyptic, the ends of worlds birthed by the non-ethics of modernity, colonality, and settler colonialism. These worlds/otherwise turn the known trajectory of the present on its head, and center Black women and femmes as the linchpins for salvation in the apogee of anti-Black and heteropatriarchal modernity. These worlds/otherwise are part and parcel of a reparation of the imagination, and offer perspectives from the peripheries of the Afro-Atlantic world.

Tracing worlds/otherwise means engaging in the future work of thinking, writing, and acting that humanize peoples condemned by colonality and ongoing forms of colonialism. Worlds/otherwise understands how people’s lives matter in the present and how they are essential to the future. Future work, as I employ it here, brings the damnés into the present and imagines them in the future as fully human subjects. I see this as a practice in relation to Christina Sharpe’s articulation of what she calls “wake work,” or “new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery’s afterlives, to survive (and more) the afterlife of property.” Wake work is “a mode of inhabiting and rupturing this episteme with our known lived and un/imaginable lives.” Imagining worlds/otherwise is a form of future work that acts as both a refusal and an indictment: it is a refusal to succumb to the necropolitics of modernity and an indictment of the interlocking systems of oppression which demand and produce destierro and advance the continued destruction of the global environment. Future work is also an embodied—corporeal and affective—rejection of that which requires the death of the Sacred. In this way, future work makes space for worlds/otherwise or other ways of
practicing humanity in the present, in the past, in futures, and across diasporic spaces and imaginations.

While Afrofuturism engages across similar politics, modalities, themes, and sciences, I posit that Afrofuturism and imagining worlds/otherwise are not simply synonymous or reducible to one another. For example, many of the works that engage in imagining worlds/otherwise may not self-select or fit neatly within the bounds of the genre of Afrofuturism. In my analyses of these works, I make every attempt to respect the authors and their contexts. Thus, I am careful not to label them as Afrofuturist solely because they may be legible within the genre. Rather, I attempt to see how their works fit both within and outside of the parameters of Afrofuturism, and represent a form of future work produced by Afro-Atlantic writers, thinkers, and artists. One such work that falls both within and outside of the genre is Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel’s *Panga Rilene*. When this book was published in 2016, he was asked at a public round table in Barcelona if he had used the genre of Afrofuturism as inspiration for the novel. He noted that he had not heard of the genre or knew of the work, but he showed interest in how the category could expose him to a wider readership.

In the 2002 special issue on Afrofuturism in *Social Text*, Alondra Nelson defines Afrofuturism as “sci-fi imagery, futurist themes, and technological innovation in the African diaspora.” The special issue marked one of Afrofuturism’s most visible forays into digital and academic modalities. Since then, Afrofuturism as a field has grown to include work across myriad forms, genres, and centuries. Currently, work on Latinx-futurism is found primarily in Chicano studies, but Latinx Caribbean writers and artists, on the islands and in the diaspora, have taken up the genre in written works and digital media. Online communities have also been essential to the collective envisioning of Latinx-Caribbean-futurism. The dominance of Anglophone Afrofuturist work also requires structural analysis. We must contend with how racist and sexist publishing markets and venues (which are more readily accessible in the global North and in Anglophone-dominant spaces) shape what works are circulated, and where, when, and how. As a result of these factors, the Internet becomes the next best place to create and imagine Afrofuturist work. Within these contexts, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Hispanic futurities remain underexamined.

In developing the concept of worlds/otherwise, I engage the study of Afrofuturism and Afro-Latinx futurities as related genres. My meditation focuses on the tropes and practices that emerge in the future-oriented work of Afro-Latinx and Afro-Hispanic artists. In Equatoguinean literature, the genre play that often marks the interest and investment in futurities has only recently made it to publication. *Panga Rilene* (2016), for example, centers on an African femme (in an unknown future time) who continually attempts to piece together the histories that provoked her community’s dystopic existence. In Ávila Laurel’s imagination, Africans in general, and African women
and femmes in particular, survive in a catastrophic future engineered by the heteropatriarchal, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous exploits of modernity. Yet these characters are understood to be fully human subjects who enact self-determination. His work illuminates the slivers of liberatory possibilities that exist even within a dismal global outlook. Junot Díaz’s short story “Monstro” has a similar apocalyptic plot that demonstrates a related interest in what happens at the nexus of late capitalism and environmental exploitation. Both texts imagine worlds/otherwise as an apocalypse in the immediate future.

In another framing of worlds/otherwise, I examine the visual/sonic work of the Afro-Cuban French musical duo Ibeyi and the Cuban-American writer Daniel José Older’s young adult novel, Shadowshaper. I argue that Ibeyi and Older take up Lucumí, Santería, and related ritual practices as central to imagining worlds/otherwise. Their work is representative of a break from the fixed temporality of secular modernity, and demands that we contend with the spatial, spiritual, and temporal divides of the here and now. Imagining and calling forth worlds/otherwise requires a centering of other ways of knowing. The prophetic (foretelling near-future apocalypses) and syncretic (ritual practice) future works that I examine in this chapter are not utopian by any stretch of the imagination. They are shaped and fashioned by the crossings made during the transatlantic slave trade, and the myriad known and unknown lives sacrificed to the sea, to plantations, to the compound, to the whims of masters, mistresses, overseers, and hunters. They center the afterlives of slavery, colonialism, dictatorship, and destierro. They offer practices to bring ancestors to the present and bring generations into the future. These imaginaries and practices are culled from flesh, and as such carry with them the weight of over five centuries.

Sacred

In her chapter “Pedagogies of the Sacred,” M. Jacqui Alexander engages memory as “a Sacred dimension of the self.” Alexander examines how Sacred knowledge “comes to be inscribed in the daily lives of women through an examination of work—spiritual work—which like crossing is never undertaken once and for all.” Thinking through the Sacred is of critical importance because “the majority of people in the world—that is, the majority of women in the world—cannot make sense of themselves without it.” Thus, our liberation practices must think through and with the potentiality of the Sacred, which is inextricable from the lives and histories of women of color. These pedagogies of the Sacred can be seen across Ibeyi’s 2015 eponymous album, which features the delicate vocal and artistic mastery of sisters Lisa-Kaindé Díaz and Naomi Diaz. The Diaz twins are Afro-Cuban French artists who, with their 2015 album, track the connection between the spirit world and the sonic using Afro-Cuban ritual practices, or Santería, to trouble temporality.
In his book ¡Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality, Edwin David Aponte explains that Santería is an African-based belief system:

*Orishas* (Spanish: *Orichas*; Portuguese: *Orixas*) also traveled across the Atlantic with the captured enslaved Africans to the Americas. In the context of the horror, persecution, and death that defined colonial slavery throughout the Americas, transported African-based belief systems interacted with the Christianity presented to the slaves, as well as with indigenous beliefs and practices. These enslaved societies of the African diaspora in the Americas formed and fashioned new ways of knowing and being connected to the past that have contextual relevance to the present time. The translated African traditions developed in many ways in the Americas. One way this blended and contextualized sense of the holy developed was in the tradition that developed in Cuba, commonly known as Santería, “the way of the saints,” but also by the name Lucumí (also spelled “Lukumi”), *La Regla de Ocha* (the way of the Ocha), or as *Iwa*/*Orisha* worship.  

“Ibeyi” is the Yoruba word for “twins,” and within the cosmology of Santería, Ibeyi are the children of Changó, the orisha of fire, thunder, and justice, and of Oyá, guardian of the cemetery and the orisha of tempests and storms. Some practitioners believe that Ibeyi are actually the children of Oshún, the orisha of sensuality and the river, and many others understand that Ibeyi are raised by Yemayá, the orisha of the sea. It is important to note, then, that the *Ibeyi* album includes songs dedicated to both of these orishas. According to Miguel A. De La Torre, “there are seven paths to Ibeyi, each with different gender combinations and names.” Lisa-Kaindé and Naomi are female twins, and the orishas Ibeyi are represented as “sacred twins” who are “treasured” by all the orishas. I contend that Ibeyi’s move to bring Santería into their public and mainstream musical practice is part of a radical tradition of salsa, rumba, jazz, and other musical forms that have brought Afro-syncretic practices to public audiences. This is particularly important because, as Aisha Beliso-De Jesús has argued, Santería has been “publicly demonized” and “used as justification for racial dominance in the transition from Spanish colonial governance to a republican nation in the early twentieth century.”

In focusing on Ibeyi, this chapter expands the cartographies of the Hispanophone Caribbean diaspora linguistically, temporally, and spatially to include France as a place of diaspora/exile, and as an integral node of the African diaspora and the Caribbean. It also adds a different vector to the Cuban diaspora, and makes a connection to France as part of the *La Regla de Ocha* or *Santería* diaspora.

The *Ibeyi* album includes several “cantos,” or songs, and intonations dedicated to the orishas in Lucumí, which is a practice of Afro-Cuban Santería. Ibeyi’s lyrics, music, and video images serve as palimpsests; overlaid texts,
images, and sounds that are elegies to Eleggua, Oyá, Ochún, Changó, Yemayá, and other orishas. These cantos to the orishas include chants in Yoruba, French, English, and Spanish and are reflections on mourning, ecology, and love. These languages and modalities are likewise markers of the impact and reach of past and present colonial empires, and mark forms of embodied resistance—a central aspect of ritual practices in the “New World.” Here I examine a series of Ibeyi’s songs and accompanying videos, stills, and visuals in order to track how they trouble temporality, charge the listener/viewer to conjure worlds/otherwise, and create audio and visual palimpsests that fashion spaces to imagine Afro-Cuban and Afro-diasporic syncretic and cultural practices as part of the future.

In Lucumí, all ceremonies open with a tribute to Eleggua, the first orisha to be greeted, as he is the guardian of the crossroads. Ibeyi begin their album with a chant for Eleggua as the necessary link to the ancestral worlds, and follow with a song to Oyá, the orisha of the marketplace, guardian of the cemetery gates, and wielder of hurricanes, lightning, and an army of the dead. In “Oya,” Ibeyi describe everyday moments of joy followed by a problematic schema. These lyrics are accompanied by their digitized voices, which create the sound of an organ and baroque chords. When the beat drops, the rapid and deep sounds of the batá drum emerge in full force. Ibeyi follow a call-and-response pattern with one another. Throughout “Oya” they pose the possibility of small delights—“even if I feel the sun on my skin,” “even if I see the most beautiful thing up in the sky,” “even if my hand’s skin catches the wind”—juxtaposed against the challenge, (“if I don’t feel you”). After each verse, Ibeyi cry “Take me Oya,” four times in chorus.

Ibeyi position spirits and ancestors as necessary if they are to take pleasure in living. Having gained access to the ancestors from Eleggua, they plead with Oyá to take them past the gates of the cemetery so that they may merge their living world with the ancestral world. The video for “Oya” (figure 6) is a black-and-white matrix that takes the viewer from a black hole into a cypher of bare trees and dense forests. Continuously entering new forest landscapes is disorienting, haunting, and dizzying. The viewer is simultaneously made to focus on the inextricable link between ritual practice and the landscape. In fact, throughout the video the twins become a visual representation of a human and ecological palimpsest. Here Ibeyi clues us in to their practice of futurities by enticing the viewer to fall into their digital and visual/sonic scape, beckoning towards worlds/otherwise.

In their music and their video images, Ibeyi make future work into a dialectical practice. Following George Ciccariello-Maher’s meditation, decolonizing dialectics marks the emergence of “new struggles” and “new ruptures throwing forth new renewed identities that deepen contradictions and press toward different possible futures.” While Ciccariello-Maher takes up political theory and Venezuelan radical politics, his discussion of the role of dialectics in ushering in futurities through struggle is critical, particularly
Fig. 6. Stills from Ibeyi’s video for “Oya”—a haunting nightscape of trees and the specters of Ibeyi as a palimpsestic image; aerial view of tree cypher in a nightscape; an overlay of images showing Ibeyi sitting on the branches of a felled tree.
for those operating in peripheralized positions or condemned to the under-
side of modernity. Ibeyi thus engage in a dialectical play that moves towards
worlds/otherwise, highlighting practices, knowledges, and histories towards
new possible futurities that center relationships with the ancestors and ritual
practice. For example, through their sonic and visual works, Ibeyi take the
ancestors with them into their future work, as they simultaneously demand
to be taken by the ancestors to a known and unknowable past. This struggle,
represented by dueling demands within the practice, continues to play out as
they link their music to the practice of Osha throughout the album.

By making this musical offering to the ancestors, Ibeyi follow a ceremonial
pattern in their music. It is significant that they follow “Oya” with “Ghosts,”
as Lucumí practitioners often say “Egun first,” meaning “ancestors first.”
In “Ghosts,” their second full-length song, Ibeyi welcome the listener and
describe a scape of destruction: “Welcome to my earth / It’s a crying shame /
We have built a foolish world / Busy fighting, full of lying and denying.” In
these lines we glimpse a possible present, but certainly an imagined dystopian
future world. The sisters then hail worlds/otherwise by singing, “My ghosts
are not gone / They dance in the shade / And kiss the black core of my heart /
Making words making sounds making songs.” Their ghosts, the ancestors
and the generations to come, are not gone but rather right there alongside
them, dancing “in the shade.” Ibeyi have crushed modern colonial logics that
imagine time as linear and ghosts as implausible beings. They do away with
the hard-and-fast divides of the living and the dead by singing that these
ghosts “kiss the black core” of their hearts and make words, sounds, and
songs. The core of their hearts are black, or Black, and as they beckon the
ancestors, their Black hearts are kissed, blessed, taken care of by the ances-
tors. Here, they signify that Blackness is the core of their ontological being, a
generative life force that is affirmed and loved by those who matter the most:
Egun, first. Ibeyi thus conjure Blackness in diametrical opposition to the defi-
cit signifiers that Blackness has been assigned in the modern/colonial and
settler colonial world. As we listen to Ibeyi, we can imagine that these songs
are the very ones the ancestors are singing over the beat that Ibeyi provide.

Moreover, the lyrics in Ibeyi’s “Ghosts” depict a shameful and foolish
world where a lack of love among humans has left little goodness or love in
the world. The ghosts are a haunting and we are the haunted. The video for
“Ghosts” uses a double exposure to create a palimpsest of the twins’ images
(figure 7). The effect creates a scene where the viewer cannot see where
one twin ends and the other begins. The palimpsestic form is important to
note because it highlights another palimpsest: that of the sonic soundscape
which the twins deploy (using ritual practice rhythms and instruments, elec-
tronica, and multiple languages) and which presents Yoruba ritual as an
Afro-syncretic practice (overlapping African ritual practice, Indigenous/New
World practices, and Roman Catholic syncretism).
These palimpsests exemplify what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o calls “something torn and new.” Ngũgĩ follows Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s poetic tril-ogy *The Arrivants*, in which he envisions Black people in the Caribbean as “those among whom the god walks,” and celebrates their words, sounds, and spirituality as moments in which they are “now waking/making/with their/ rhythms some-/thing torn/and new.” Ngũgĩ calls on creative writers and arts practitioners to conjure ties to African ancestors before and after 1492, writing: “Memory is the link between the past and the present, between space and time, and it is the base of our dreams. Writers and intellectuals in these movement are aware that without a reconnection with African memory, there is no wholeness.” While I am skeptical of the “wholeness” that Ngũgĩ exalts as a possibility through the act of memory, I am committed to the vision that re-membering and rememory are acts that make fully human lives in the past-future-present possible for Black- and Indigenous-descended peoples. Ngũgĩ argues that “creative imagination is one of the greatest re-membering practices,” and cites the prayer-poetry of Léopold Senghor as an example of the importance of ancestral memories: “Let the children in bed talk about their ancestors like their parents” and “breathe the smell of our dead” and “contemplate and repeat their living voice.” Ibeyi’s album is engaged in this creative imagination that invokes the dead and makes of them living memo-ries. Pablo López Oro argues that “ancestral memory is sacred. Ancestral memory is political. Ancestral memory is an embodied archive passed on transgenerationally to and through the flesh vis-à-vis oral traditions,” and Ibeyi’s poetic forms, the music and visual arts, highlight the delicate interplay
between the ancestors and the human world, underscoring the thin veil between what is past and future (165).  

Ibeyi are not the first to create elegies in the form of songs. In fact, “Ghosts” hails an older form of sonic remembrance. The song “Llora Timbero” is a moving requiem in guanguancó form for José Rosario Oviedo. Born in 1885 to an enslaved mother, Funciana Oviedo, his birth preceded the abolition of slavery in Cuba by one year. However, he was afforded free status due to the Moret Law, passed fifteen years earlier in 1870. The Moret Law, known as the “ley de vientre libre,” or free womb law, broke with the legal doctrine of *partus sequitur ventrem* in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and ushered in a pre-abolition window in which the mother’s enslaved status would not be passed on to children in the womb. Oviedo was best known by his nickname “Malanga” and was a famed rumbero player, dancer, and singer, as well as a Santero from Unión de Reyes Matanzas, Cuba. After his mysterious death in 1927, his close friend and cajón player, Faustino Drake, penned the song “Malanga Murió” to honor his memory.

The song, which became as popular as Malanga himself, took on a life of its own and was later recorded as “Llora Timbero.” Ritual practitioners and myriad rumba and salsa artists have covered the song throughout the twentieth century. The lyrics mourn Malanga’s passing and declare that his hometown weeps because of his death. A famous version of the song, Tito Rodriguez’s “Llora Timbero” (1968), begins with a call and response that centers the singer’s feeling upon hearing the news of Malanga’s death, and the chorus subsequently responding: “Siento una voz que me dice / (coro): Are niye-e, o / Siento una voz que me llama / (coro): Malanga murió” (“I feel a voice that says to me / (chorus): Are niye-e, o / I feel a voice that calls to me / (chorus): Malanga has died”). The singer then breaks out into the oft-repeated chorus “Unión de Reyes llora / a ese timbero mayor / que viene regando flores / desde Matanzas a Morón” (“Unión de Reyes cries / for the great timbero / who comes watering flowers / from Matanzas to Morón”). Music makes of Malanga a living memory, but more so documents the mourning felt with his departure.

While the emotional aspect is primary in this song, the lyrics are also of interest in thinking about geography and spatiality. The grieving singer has memories of Malanga “regando flores” from Matanzas to Morón, a distance of almost two hundred miles (figure 8). The song’s lyrics trace Malanga’s movement across the northern side of Cuba and bear witness to his famed rumba, the public’s demand to see him perform, and the joy he brought as he “watered flowers” across the island. Within these contexts we come to a different understanding of Afro-Atlantic geographies, informed by an Afro-Atlantic cosmology, and are able to track movements across Afro-Atlantic Hispanophone diasporic locations through the medium of music.

A Cuban documentary on Malanga, titled *Al compás de Cuba* (ca. 1960), takes place in Unión de Reyes about fifty years after his death. None of the
people interviewed there could remember where he lived or what he did for a living (he was an agricultural worker), but they all knew the song and knew that he was an important person from their town and was famous throughout the island. The narrator tells the viewer that although no one had tangible details about his life, they all knew him: “Efectivamente nadie pudo darnos detalles concretos de la vida de Malanga. Pero todos conocían a Malanga. Malanga no existía en un lugar específico de Cuba, pero estaba en toda Cuba. Malanga se convertía en un símbolo. No estaba en ninguna parte y estaba en todas, como la rumba” (“Indeed, nobody could give us concrete details of the life of Malanga. But everyone knew Malanga. Malanga did not exist in a specific place in Cuba, but was in all of Cuba. Malanga became a symbol. He was not anywhere and was everywhere, just like the rumba”).

Of importance is Malanga’s role as a symbol for Cuba and as a stand-in for the music and art of rumba. Likewise, the lack of any photographs or images of Malanga is also significant. Some accounts note that he was self-conscious about being photographed due to his short stature and features: “Era bajito, prieto, gordo, barrigón, de ojos saltones y expresivos, nariz afilada, con marcas en la cara como de viruela: hombre de muchas mujeres, fiestero, simpático, ocurrente, además persona bien llevada y querida por todo el pueblo” (“He was short, black, fat, potbellied, with bulging and expressive eyes, sharp nose, with marks on his face like from smallpox: a man of many women, partying, nice, witty, a person well taken and loved by all the people”). Whatever the reason, Malanga refused to be photographed, and so the only record of his

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**Fig. 8.** Map of Cuba with Matanzas and Morón marked. These are the cities that are referenced in the sonic elegy dedicated to Malanga.
craft and his impact come from documented firsthand accounts and Faustino Drake’s 1927 song.

If we juxtapose the absence of visual images of Malanga with Ibeysi’s relative photographic and visual overrepresentation, we beget yet another way of mapping the geographies of Afro-Atlantic syncretic practices. Ibeysi’s work overwhelms the viewer and listener with possibilities of seeing, hearing, and feeling the collision of the spiritual and material worlds. They make Egún’s presence and ancestral memories known through the embodied practices of music-making, dance, and image curation. On the other hand, “Llora Timbero” is a sonic remembrance with no visual counterpart beyond the embodied memory of those who cover the song in ritual practice and popular culture. When we overlay the re-membering work of Ibeysi and the elegy dedicated to Malanga, a vibrant palimpsest of future work practices emerges. Through stories, songs, images, and blank spaces, these works hold space for us to continually bring forth ancestral futures in the present.

Another such elegy is Mongo Santamaría’s song “Chano Pozo,” dedicated to the late Afro-Cuban jazz musician Luciano Pozo González. Chano Pozo, as he was best known, was also a Santero (dedicated to the orisha Changó/Santa Barbara) and was recognized as one of the greatest Cuban percussionists on the island and in the United States. His murder in New York City in 1948 rocked the jazz world and inspired the masterful rumbero Mongo Santamaría to write the requiem “Chano Pozo.” The song mourns his passing but declares that his memory lives on as long as drums sound: “Este güiro es para Chano aunque en la gloria él está / Después de haberlo perdido lo tenemos que mentar / Mientras suenan los tambores / Nadie te podrá olvidar / A ti, Chano Pozo / A ti, Chano Pozo / Mi amigo Manteca adiós, mi amigo adiós / Adiós mi amigo del alma, adiós” (“This güiro is for Chano / Although in the Glory he be / After having lost him / We have to tell him / While the drums sound / Nobody will be able to forget you / You, Chano Pozo / You, Chano Pozo / My friend Goodbye / goodbye, my friend / goodbye / Chorus: Goodbye my soul friend, goodbye”).

In highlighting these two examples of musical elegies in my discussion of Ibeysi’s future work practice, I aim to underscore that the act of remembering through ceremonies and music is a long-standing practice within Santería. What Ibeysi offer as Afro-Cuban Santería singers and artists in the twenty-first century is a critically related practice. Instead of mourning their dead, Ibeysi imagine the dead as behind them, holding them, and most importantly, continuing alongside the living. This is not to qualify songs of homage and grief as being less prescient, but rather to show how Ibeysi’s poetic forms, the music and visual arts, highlight the delicate interplay between the spirit and human worlds, and underscore the thin veil between what is past and the future. That their songs on the Ibeysi album are dedicated to both their father and their sister is also important to note, for it interrupts the masculinist movidas made within some forms of Santería that often hold space to laud
the greatness of male practitioners. Ibeyi’s sisterhood, kinship, and spiritual and feminist practice create a critical space within this genre of music that is linked to syncretic remembering practices that bear witness to intergenerational and ancestral influences.

The images in the video for “Ghosts” underscore the witnessing of the ghosts in the song—they are “not gone.” Instead, Ibeyi visualize a haunting. This haunting is a mirror that reflects the twins back to one another, reveals them to us (the viewer), and exposes them to their ancestors. The video shows multiple images of the twins overlaid and in the midst of movement. In figure 7 they emerge from within each other, while in figure 9 we see the image of the cajón being played up close. The video then shows the image from further away, zooming out to see the player. The image of hands playing a cajón is important here, as Naomi learned to play the cajón and the batá drum in memory of their father, the famed percussionist Anga Díaz.

The viewer sees Ibeyi as ghostly figures always accompanied by another version of themselves or the other. As Ibeyi trouble sight, they trouble worlds. As each twin appears as the other and then as one, I follow Michelle Cliff’s speculation, “When the Other appears to be the One. Apocalypso.” Cliff makes this statement as an observation on passing for white as a Jamaican woman and confronting anti-Black racism within a presumed white space. The revelation of Cliff as Black is the “Other” appearing as the “One.” In the retelling of this encounter, Cliff posits that the colonizer’s perspective cannot understand her fair skin as being related to Blackness, Jamaica, or the Caribbean. The wonder, the anxiety that it provokes, creates what she calls an
“apocalypso,” a cataclysmic failure. Part of this is that Cliff is the living proof of foundational violence, and the other is that the colonizer does not expect to see this person—one who does not fit into the boxes they have made for the colonized—looking back at them, looking like them. “When the Other appears to be the One” is likewise useful for thinking about the relationship between generations of Afro-descendants.

Ibeyi act as both the apparitions of the ancestors and the generations to come. This worldview destabilizes dominant logics and dismantles colonial worlds. In other words: Apocalypso. Ibeyi emerge as the apparitions of the ancestors, as reflections of each other, and as a specter of the generations to come. The ghosts are the Other and the One. They bring forth an apocalypso of colonial logics that seek to sever or deny the roots of ritual practice and the power of memory. Katherine McKittrick contends that “the site of memory begins to re-imagine a different worldview, wherein black lives are validated through black intellectual histories and the physical landscape” (32). I build here on both Sylvia Wynter’s meditations on the catastrophe of 1492 and Nishitani Osamu’s argument that the colonial logics of “Man1” turned colonial cartographic or spatial movement across the Atlantic into a temporal movement that cast Indigenous peoples, and later Africans, as ahistorical nonhumans and exploitable subjects. Ibeyi subvert the founding colonial logic of Man1 and atheistic Man2, and in turn offer the possibility of the Other appearing as the One.

In figure 10 we see Lisa-Kaindé emerge as a ghostly spirit from within her own prostrated body. Her body may be asleep but the spirit is awake or awakening, perhaps being beckoned by worlds/otherwise. The first lines of “Ghosts” point to the ecological and human destruction brought on by the living: “Welcome to my earth / It’s a crying shame / We have built a foolish world / Full of lying, full of crying and denying.” This beginning can be juxtaposed with their hook: “We ain’t nothing without love.” Thus, even a world destroyed by human limits can be, to some extent, remedied by love. This is not just any love, but a decolonal love, an ancestral love, a black femme love, a kinship love, and a sisterhood love. It is a sustaining love that underscores the limits of the living while pointing to the abundant possibilities of finding fulfillment in ritual practice.

Ibeyi’s next song, “River,” beckons Ochún, the orisha of love, sweet water, and fertility. They sing, “I will come to your river / Wash my soul again / Carry away my dead leaves / Let me baptize my soul with the help of your waters / Sink my pains and complaints / Let the river take them, river drown them.” In this video we see the sisters lying side by side, submerged underwater (figure 11). They are being held down, fists on their chests, and pulled under by disembodied arms below them. They take turns surfacing, singing their portion of the song to Ochún, and then are submerged again. During different parts of the video, the sisters open their eyes under the water, proof of its sweetness, for they would not open their eyes under salt waters. They
remain in this underwater world, a womb, throughout the song, sacrificing breath for communion with Ochún. The song ends with a slow chant to Ochún in Yoruba. This is one of many times that ritual songs are chanted in the album, marking another level of their musicality and another traversing of worlds—communing with other practitioners of Lucumí.

Finally, the song “Think of You” opens and ends with a sample of the artists’ father, Anga Díaz, playing a beat on what may be the batá. He instructs them, “Usted va jugando siempre con los sonidos. Pueden hacerlo, por ejemplo” (“You go playing always with the sounds. You can do it, for example”). He then begins to give an example that is never heard or unheard because Ibeyi’s own music comes in. Ibeyi immediately begin with the “moyuba,” an ancestral roll call or invocation, which “can be understood as a structuring ritual” that “generates a hierarchy linking living priests, the dead, and oricha.” Thus, Ibeyi sing to acknowledge the ancestors and orishas. M. Jacqui Alexander explains the moyuba as “an expansive memory refusing to be housed in any single place, bound by the limits of time, enclosed within the outlines of a map, encased in the physicality of the body, or imprisoned as exhibit in a museum.” This refusal, she adds, “takes its inheritance from the Crossing, which earlier prophets had been forced to undertake from the overcrowded passageways in a place called Gorée, the door of no return, still packed centuries later with the scent of jostled grief so thick that no passage of human time could absorb it.” Ibeyi chant the moyuba with all its complex and attended grief, accompanied by bare drums and intermittent synthesized clapping. They sing, “We hear laughter and we think of you,” “If
Fig. 11. Stills from Ibeyi’s video for “River”—Naomi and Lisa-Kaindé submerged under water dressed in white; in one image Lisa-Kaindé opens her eyes under water, in the other image Naomi emerges to sing lyrics.
we sing they may come guiding all of our steps,” “You live through us, Papa, we’re singing for you,” and “We walk on rhythm and we think of you.” The palimpsest that Ibeyi design in “Think of You” includes the sonic and vocals, the drums, and the voice of their late father, which opens and closes the song. They conjure images of laughter and of walking on rhythm. In effect, this masterful song is a rupture in the veil of modernity, a crack where worlds/otherwise are being created.

Ibeyi’s future work makes space for us to faithfully witness and remember the past, to strengthen us for present struggles, and to bring forth different futures. By playing with the sonic, they also play with temporality, taking us deep into the rhythmic and spiritual world of Lucumí epistemologies and describing the hauntings and futurities embedded in this Afro-syncrhetic practice. This is powerful for a number of reasons, primarily because of how ritual practice and the Sacred have been evacuated from the secular logics of modernity. Alexander writes, “It is not only that (post)modernity’s secularism renders the Sacred as tradition, but it is also that tradition, understood as an extreme alterity, is always made to reside elsewhere and denied entry into the modern.” Through their use of the sonic/visual, Ibeyi emphasize that knowledge of ritual practice and Afro-diasporic cosmologies is key to subverting narratives that evacuate ancestral ties and cast syncretic practices as unimportant or illegitimate forms of epistemology. Ibeyi’s album and its accompanying videos are likewise maps of colonial modernity, as Santería is being practiced and reimagined by Afro-Cuban French femme twins in France. In doing so, Ibeyi represent other and more recent forms of transatlantic crossings, including the surge of Latinx Caribbean migration to European metropoles. Ibeyi are part of a long line of practitioners who have used the Sacred in their artistic practices and who break away from dehumanizing logics as they bring worlds/otherwise into being.

**Spirit Work**

Daniel José Older’s young adult novel *Shadowshaper* (2015) is the first novel in the “Shadowshaper Cypher,” and takes up many of the same themes seen and heard in the *Ibeyi* album. Older, a fantasy and young adult writer of Cuban and Jewish ancestry, is, like Ibeyi, a practitioner of Lucumí or Santería. For Older, Lucumí is a faith that he carries “in the blood” and it represents “a very beautiful, very deep, very philosophical religion with lots of complex spirituality and community.” Writing from his adopted home of Brooklyn, New York, Older’s work is part of a growing number of critical novels for young adults written by Latinx authors. *Shadowshaper’s* protagonist is Sierra Santiago, a talented Afro-Puerto Rican muralist who lives in Brooklyn with her mother, father, and grandfather and is mourning the recent loss of her grandmother, Mama Carmen. Once Sierra notices
the supernatural events happening around her and her role within them, she joins her friends Bennie and Tee, her brother Juan, her love interest Robbie, and a Columbia University librarian named Nydia Ochoa in a race against time to decipher why the murals in her neighborhood seem to be fading, crying tears, and changing shape before her eyes. Sierra suspects that this has to do with the disappearance and sudden apparition of community elders as zombie-like “corpuscles.” She soon realizes that there are battling ancestral spirits, anthropological co-optation, and familial secrets involved.

Set in contemporary Brooklyn, the novel conjures worlds/otherwise wherein the spirits of the dead are clamoring to speak to the living through an innate spiritual and corporeal practice called “shadowshaping.” Shadowshapers must be initiated, similar to ritual practice, and must be taught how to become available vessels and wielders of the spirits that surround them. As the story progresses, Older reveals that shadowshaping is a practice that creates space for ancestral spirits to become embodied through artistic and creative expression—painting, drawing, dancing, storytelling, body art such as tattoos, and so on. Shadowshaping has its roots across different Caribbean Afro-syncretic belief systems, including Santería, Lucumí, Voudoun, Candomblé, and Lwa; and water, the sea, and ancestral veneration are central to the operative system.

Furthermore, shadowshaping is a practice forged in kinship and community relations. Shadowshapers are initiated by other shadowshapers across racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds. Thus, the practitioners are pan-Caribbean and intergenerational, and as a result, heterogeneous art forms and creative practices lure the spirits to the shadowshapers. The spirits lure the shadowshapers, as well, by moving through paintings, drawings, sketches, and music. When Sierra begins shadowshaping, she is visited in her dreams by “[a] hundred million souls,” who, with centuries-long stretches, “reached their long shadowy fingers up from the depths of the sea” (148). For Sierra, these dreams beget feelings that are at once “calming, uplifting, terrifying, sorrowful,” and movements that are “gentle and deadly like the tide” (148). The souls that visit Sierra in her sleep are bounded within and outside of the sea, hailing crossings of the Middle Passage, migration voyages, and other diasporic movements. Shadowshaping in conscious and unconscious states allows Sierra to drift “somewhere in the middle of all those souls—a flash of living flesh amidst so much death” (148). She is able to listen to these centuries-old spirits as they “whispered songs about their lives and deaths, a swirl of loves lost and remembrances, hymns and murder ballads” (148). Through her dreams, Sierra realizes that to be a shadowshaper is not only “the power to transfer spirit into form” but to be a conduit for history itself—one antithetical to the patriarchal production of knowledge (225). As Xhercis Méndez notes, in the ritual practice of Ocha, “the materiality of the ‘human body’ functions as both a sacred vessel for the Orisha and a channel for communal well-being.”51
*Shadowshaper* engages in future work by creating worlds/otherwise in at least three ways. First, like Ibeti, Older’s novel ruptures colonial temporal and spatial logics, incorporating ancestors and spirits within the narrative as active participants in the lives of the living. This construct centers and values Afro-Caribbean cosmologies, which have been historically devalued and “subordinated to the European cosmos,” and not “expected to accord any significance to modernity’s itinerary.” Second, in challenging Western conceptions of the body (and particularly the white supremacist and cis heterosexist biometrics of race and gender), the narrative documents the destructive implications of those structural logics within familial, interpersonal, and spiritual relations. The protagonist, Sierra, is a teenage Afro-Latina who, despite her age, race, and gender, is not only initiated as a shadowshaper but also becomes the most powerful wielder of spirits in the city. Finally, the act of shadowshaping, or becoming a vessel for ancestral spirits through the creative arts, is an action that defies coloniality. Older creates worlds/otherwise by making shadowshaping the ability to reconfigure the body as a conduit for the spirit worlds. This destabilizes temporal, spatial, and spiritual logics that would cast such spirits as inherently evil. Méndez contends that “practices such as ritual possession rematerialize ‘human bodies’ as open, porous, and ultimately permeable to divine forces.” I argue that by casting the spirits as divine, powerful, and in communion with the living, Older offers a generous and complex (and perhaps more familiar) schema for understanding relations with the dead—particularly for Afro-Diasporic and Latinx readers of young adult literature. Finally, in *Shadowshaper*, apocalypso appears within the very structures of shadowshaping. For example, Sierra learns more about her skills as she deciphers the poetic riddle, “The one lures the other who in turn lures the one” (188). As she unravels the clues that lead to the culprit behind the death of the elders and the restless stirring of the spirits, Sierra realizes that she must become the other by taking in the spirits and fighting against the colonizing forces that want to bring about the shadowshapers’ end. Sierra is both the other and the one, shattering colonial logics, traversing planes between the spirit and material worlds, and accepting her inheritance as the most powerful shadowshaper.

In crafting this novel, Older marks Brooklyn as a critical site for the Puerto Rican diaspora. He traces the intimate syncretic and cultural ties of Afro-Puerto Ricans to Africa and the Antilles. It is critical to emphasize that the protagonist is Afro-Puerto Rican, a political move that centers Blackness in Puerto Rico despite the ways in which it is often evacuated or minimized in the histories told about the island. Puerto Rico, as noted by Kelvin Santiago-Valles and Petra Rivera-Rideau, has been marked erroneously as the whitest nation of the Hispanophone Caribbean. Rather than an empty marker or catchall trope for Afro-syncretic practices, Blackness or African descent scaffolds the structure, choices, and contentions that Sierra faces within the spirit world while she is grappling with her own personal identity, transition to adulthood, and familial relationships. Older’s young adult novel is likewise a
kind of spiritual bildungsroman, with the protagonist coming to consciousness about her place within her family, community, and ancestral lineage.

While the novel’s setting showcases a rapidly gentrifying city with accompanying dispossession and racism, Older also puts significant emphasis on challenging these structures as well as subverting the insidiousness of anti-Blackness in Puerto Rican families. The “off-hand bigotry” that Sierra faces from her aunt, Tía Rosa, becomes an important part of how we understand her resilience; we witness her identity formation in the face of Tía Rosa’s racist remarks and her own internalized self-doubt (78, 151). For example, while Sierra positively describes her hair as a “fro stretched magnificently around her [like a] halo,” Tía Rosa derisively describes it as “all wild and nappy” (10, 78). Although neither “wild” nor “nappy” can be construed as inherently negative, for Tía Rosa these comments signal her disapproval of Sierra’s disregard for the unspoken yet understood project of Latinx mestizaje, which telegraphs the desirability of whiteness and its aesthetic and sociocultural trappings. Carlos Pozzi argues, for example, that the racial colonial project has had lasting effects on Latinxs, visible in the “implicit statements” and dichos that attribute “value to ‘being white,’” despite their denial of racist attitudes. In one scene, Tía Rosa scowls at Robbie’s Haitian roots, and warns Sierra that if a potential partner is “darker than the bottom of your foot, he’s no good for you!” (77). Sierra faces an unspoken hierarchy in her family since, as Ylce Irizarry notes, “[one’s] skin color is not a problem in and of itself; rather, one’s skin shade—the level of its lightness or darkness—is the determining factor of one’s place in social and familial hierarchies” (158). At one point, Sierra realizes that although she has “shrugged off” her aunt’s insidious anti-Blackness, it has stayed inside her like a “tentacle,” and reemerges as self-doubt “from somewhere deep inside her” (77, 80). In one of the most intimate moments of the book, Sierra reflects on her own utterances of being “not enough” and confidently declares in front of her mirror that she is “more than enough” (80). Older underscores that self-acceptance and self-love are not instantaneous movidas for Sierra, but rather ones that come with time and with the realization of her identity as a descendant of the most powerful lineage of shadowshapers. Shadowshaper reveals that migration and diaspora to urban centers like New York City require the formation of complex community relations and “interdependence” in order to sustain syncretic belief systems. While shadowshaping and its accompanying knowledges are difficult to protect, the novel shows that practices and histories which are passed down can thrive in ever-changing spatial locales. Older writes that even as the “details change from generation to generation, across time and place,” the “deeper secret remains the same” (219). New York City, which is teeming with a palimpsest of spirits, becomes a fertile ground for shadowshapers and the myriad souls who wish to commune with and communicate through the living. Sierra and her friends are living through a wrenching transition in Brooklyn, and
the shifts in the ways that the spirits must be protected mirrors the struggle of gentrification in the neighborhood. Older underscores how developing strong ties with the ancestors and spirit world leads to collaborative and communal practices—in Sierra’s case, access to a pan-Caribbean collective of shadowshapers. These practices serve the needs of both the living and the dead.

Furthermore, the novel indicts those who undermine the work of women in the spirit world, and condemns colonizing researchers who, in the quest to accumulate power, come to see themselves as deserving of all Sacred knowledges. Sierra’s grandmother, Mama Carmen, was Lucera, the most powerful shadowshaper, but Grandpa Lázaro’s machismo and male ego slowly infiltrated the practice. He attempted to excise Mama Carmen and refused to initiate Sierra as a rightful heir of Lucera’s powers because he had convinced himself that “shadowshaping was for men” (218). In “Transcending Dimorphism,” Méndez counters scholarship on Santería that attempts to circumscribe its practices through modern/colonial gender arrangements. Rather than center dimorphic human bodies and “read” gender within ritual practice, Méndez argues that certain aspects of ritual practice can and should be read as non-gendered. Specifically, she contends that ritual possession makes it possible for different bodies (race, gender, sex, ability, age, and class notwithstanding) to embody an orisha and thus be reconstituted as Sacred. While in the novel the spirits of ancestors and of the dead are not necessarily orishas, there are similar logics at play. The shadows are able to take multiple shapes, forms, and movements from shadowshapers of all different bodies. Thus, Méndez argues, “to only foreground the Orishas as dimorphically sexed or racially gendered is to obscure the extent to which Orishas are themselves fluid and can be understood to manifest in and flow between multiple forms and materialities.”

While Grandpa Lázaro’s stubbornness weakens the shadowshapers, the novel’s antagonist is Dr. Jonathan Wick, a Columbia University professor who encounters the shadowshapers in his research on “urban spirituality systems” (40–41). He attempts to extract and consume all the Sacred knowledge he can co-opt, even that to which he is not entitled. Wick tries to manipulate the spirits rather than be a vessel through which they act and move in the world of the living (275). By colluding with a trio of dark spirits called The Sorrows and through the use of “binding magic,” Wick tracks down and kills shadowshapers as he attempts to find and steal power from the mightiest shadowshaper, Lucera (129). Wick is representative of those who inherit a legacy only to control and destroy it. His desire to “wipe out the ‘shapers and keep the power to himself” ignores the fact that “without Lucera there’s no shadowshaping, but without shadowshaping there is no Lucera” (220). As “entwined” forces, Lucera “drew power from the spirits and the spirits workers” and “returned it to them tenfold” (220). Thus, Wick’s radical individualism is antithetical to the spiritual kinship and community linkages that are the crux of shadowshaping.
Sierra grows to know more about herself as she learns how shadowshaping links her to her ancestors, and specifically to her grandmother Mama Carmen, whose position as the centrifugal force of shadowshapers had been felled by her husband’s machismo. Her husband turned the shadowshapers into a “boys’ club,” thereby facilitating Dr. Wick’s patriarchal and colonizing research. As Sierra inherits Lucera’s matrilineal powers through Mama Carmen, she feels that “light, invincible, unstoppable, infinite light flooded through her veins, filled each of her organs, poured out of her mouth, covered her skin” (224). Of these spirits Sierra says, “they were so full of life it was easy to forget they were dead. They pulsed with the love of all things alive, a powerful yearning that Sierra could taste” (148–49). The novel also serves as a critique of academics who attempt to co-opt spiritual practices, knowledge, and power. Older thereby indicts the forms and functions by which white supremacy enables unethical researchers to act as definitive, all-knowing vessels.

**Luminous/Dystopias**

If Ibeyi and Older beckon us to their worlds/otherwise and challenge us to see beyond our immediate realms to the spirit world around us, then the works of Junot Díaz and Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel problematize the role of Blackness in our past and futures. The second half of this chapter engages Díaz’s short story “Monstro” (2012) and Ávila Laurel’s novel *Panga Rilene* (2016). I examine the role that Afro-Atlantic subjects play in reckoning with Blackening diseases at the end of the world(s). In a stark contrast to the ripples and luminous possibilities across Ibeyi’s sonic/visual work and Older’s young adult novel, both “Monstro” and *Panga Rilene* point to ruptures that beget dystopias in an unknown near-future. In these dystopian worlds, forty-foot-tall cannibal monsters and square-faced women isolated atop beam-like structures live apocalyptic realities produced by technologies of oppression and violence.

Díaz tells us that the word “apocalypse comes to us from the Greek *apocalypsis*, meaning to uncover and unveil.”63 Here, apocalypso takes on another form, a form in which the schema of Man, who has overrepresented himself as the human, brings on its own catastrophic demise. Hailing Cliff’s provocation, “When the Other appears to be the One. Apocalypso,” I contend that the apocalypso of colonialism for the Other becomes the Apocalypso for the One.64 These texts bring Aimé Césaire’s “boomerang effect” into the imaginary by conjuring decolonial futurities wherein the colonial world of Man is destroyed by its own in/action.65 These worlds/otherwise emerge from within nations and peoples wrecked by legacies of colonial, neocolonial, and capitalist logics and exist in a time of extensive environmental destruction, geopolitical instability, and racial, economic, and social inequality.
Race, gender, and sex become central to the narratives; racialized Black-ness becomes a deadly and incurable epidemic that changes the course of history.

In “Monstro” and Panga Rilene, Black girls and femmes are the key to the future. While in Ibeiyi’s sonic/visual work and Older’s Shadowshaper Black women and girls are vital conduits to spiritual worlds, Black girls and femmes are central to world-saving, or at least truth-seeking, in “Monstro” and Panga Rilene. Thus, the futurities emerging out of these peripheralized Latinx and Hispanic Afro-Atlantic worlds are fiercely femme, feminist, and Black. In Panga Rilene, sexual and reproductive labor is transformed through a man-made ecological catastrophe, while in “Monstro” sex and desire propel the protagonist towards an apocalyptic epidemic. As Díaz notes in an interview with Paula Moya, “The whole reason I started writing this book is because of this image I have of this fourteen-year-old girl, a poor, black, Dominican girl, half-Haitian—one of the Island’s damnés—saving the world.” For Díaz, the narrative is also about a Black girl finding love in an anti-Black world: “It’s a book about this girl’s search for—yes—love in a world that has made it its solemn duty to guarantee that poor raced ‘conventionally unattractive’ girls like her are never loved.” In Panga Rilene, the young femme protagonist, Panga, is in search of both her mother’s history and the history of how their dystopian reality came to be. In her quest for knowledge about the world around her, she begins to piece together the histories of environmental and human exploitation. Her community’s past takes place, arguably, in our contemporary reality, and Panga is not only mapping the lives of the women in her community, but also offering readers a glimpse into potentially apocalyptic futures.

Apex

Junot Díaz’s short story “Monstro” (2012) imagines the end of worlds brought on by a rapidly spreading and mysterious Blackening disease. The reader encounters a nameless narrator contending with an apocalyptic epidemic: an unknown virus which has taken root in the Caribbean. The island of Hispaniola, specifically Haiti, is ground zero for this virulent disaster. Thus Hispaniola, the touchstone for New World modernity, the space through which modern colonialism, empire, dispossession, and slavery spread, is now the place where a disease to end humanity will incubate. Díaz offers a narrative of a cataclysmic disaster as a decimating terror that will cause a pandemic attacking a civilization which is incapable and uncommitted to solving the catastrophes it has called into being. Here, Césaire’s indictment is prescient: “A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization. A civilization that uses
its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization.” Following the destructive and deadly path of colonialism, the disease in “Monstro” is a global threat. Césaire’s articulation of the boomerang effect is prophetic for the uncontrollable Blackening disease that spreads as virulently as imperialism and colonialism.

“Monstro” takes place during an exacerbated environmental and humanitarian crisis: an overheated planet, a dying ocean, and egregious inequalities of race, wealth, and health that allow the affluent to live safeguarded from the dying Earth through technologies (“bafflers”) that literally shield them from the elements. This near future also features radical geopolitical shifts, including the revelation of Chinese and Indian currency as the global standard (renminbi/lakhs) and a change in geopolitical roles between nations and superpowers (highlighting Crimea’s attack on the Russian hinterlands). The story is narrated by an unnamed protagonist, but one who reads as similar in character to Yunior in The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, a working-class diasporic Dominican who is attempting to tarry with the island’s elite during a summer vacation. Like Yunior, the protagonist is a “time witness” who recounts the epidemic that transpired during his summer visit to the Dominican Republic.

Under the guise of accompanying his ill mother to the island to oversee her treatment and recovery, the “shallow” nineteen-year-old narrator quickly finds himself in a matrix of misadventures alongside his wealthy college schoolmate and his elite circles. Díaz deftly loads us with race, class, and gender dynamics as the protagonist outlines a scene in which his sick mother is tended by tía Livia, a nurse and “the muchacha who cooked and cleaned,” and whom we can infer is a criada conscripted to labor in the family home. In doing so, Diaz underscores how late “hyper-capitalism” and collapsing ecosystems demand racialized femme and underclass child labor. By chronicling and critiquing structural and everyday forms of anti-Blackness and anti-Haitianismo, Díaz makes palpable the racial politics undergirding “Monstro.” These forms of racialization include intense economic and social stratification, which in turn are aggravated by the rapidly spreading disease called “la Negrura,” or the Blackening.

As the protagonist moves between his lower-middle-class familial and elite Dominican circles, we bear witness to what Lorgia García-Peña calls the “prevalence of anti-Haitianismo in the Archive of Dominicanidad.” The looming shadow of the U.S. Empire is also present as the protagonist struggles with his desire to belong to the privileged circles of his university classmate, a playboy and aspiring photographer named Alex. The protagonist understands Alex’s privileges as part of a set of resources and opportunities that have been foreclosed to him as a working-class Afro-Dominican diasporic subject. While his mother and family were “stuck in Darkness, with mosquitoes fifty to a finger and the heat like the inside of a tailpipe,” he was with Alex and his wealthy friends, “privando en rico inside the Dome,
where the bafflers held the scorch to a breezy 82 degrees F. and one mosquito a night was considered an invasion” (4). Yet while the narrator accompanies those living in luxurious homes overlooking the “Drowned Sectors” of Zona Colonial, his phenotype and “Dark Accent” mark him as Other, an outsider to their world (4). He thus inhabits multiple levels of what Josefina Báez calls “el Níe,” the phenomenon of being neither from here, nor there (ni de aquí ni de allá).72 In her analysis of Báez, Garcia Peña underscores el Níe’s queerness, pointing out that the word is a Dominican colloquialism for the “taint,” or perineum.73 Thus, the dimensions of race, class, and sexual desire reflected in the secondary arc of the story—the narrator’s erotic desire for the beautiful Mysty and her suggestive relationship with Alex (who is bisexual)—demarcate the protagonist’s own sexual desires and limits. Similar to Yunior’s foils in Oscar Wao and in Díaz’s short-story collection This Is How You Lose Her, the protagonist of “Monstro” declares that “culo,” or ass, was the “end” of him; or rather, “when the world came to an end, [he] was chasing a girl” (1).74

The virus begins with a small boy in a relocation camp during one of the harshest heat waves on record: “Shit a hundred straight days over 105 degrees F. in our region alone, the planet cooking like a chimi and down to its last five trees” (2). At first the outbreak doesn’t cause alarm because there are “all sorts of bizarre outbreaks already in play: diseases no one had names for, zoonotics by the pound,” and those who seem to succumb to the disease are the most vulnerable members of the island’s population (2). This disease, la Negrura, starts with the skin, the epidermis, and then “work[s] its way up and in.” The infected rarely die but rather become comatose and zombie-like. The symptoms, described as a “black mold-fungus-blast that come on like a splotch and then gradually started taking over you, tunneling right through you,” are likewise metaphors for the growth of empire (1). “Coral reefs might have been adios on the ocean floor,” the narrator notes, “but they were alive and well on the arms and back and heads of the infected. Black rotting rugose masses fruiting out of bodies,” therein linking the flesh-infecting disease to the effects of global climate change (2).

La Negrura is quickly misidentified as a local Haitian disease and thus loses the attention of international medical teams. As the disease progresses, those afflicted begin to fuse together. The narrator describes a “glypt” (a form of visual technology) of the first victims: “a pair of naked trembling Haitian brothers sharing a single stained cot, knotted together by horrible mold, their heads slurred into one” (2). The disease became comic fodder: “Negroses thought it funny. A disease that could make a Haitian blacker?” (1). This story, like much of Díaz’s work, reveals the racism, misogyny, and anti-Haitianismo in everyday conversations. While the protagonist’s mother and aunt feel empathy for their neighbors, one of his tíos dismissively opines, “Someone needs to drop a bomb on those people” (2, 4).75 The general resignation in the face of a catastrophic ecological and health epidemic uncovers a
deep-rooted refusal to bear witness to the humanity of the infected Haitians. The prospect of blowing up Haiti during a crisis is something that even the protagonist considers a mercy, illuminating a pitiful anti-Haitianismo spreading like la Negrura within himself (4).

As la Negrura develops and spreads without a known pattern, relocation camps are established for the infected. There, the latter began to congregate and demonstrate strange behavior, demanding to be in close quarters with other infected, or “ingathering” (3). Seemingly healthy people also suddenly began to migrate involuntarily to the quarantine zones (3). Soon, the “victims” stop speaking, with the exception of collective bloodcurdling shrieks called “the Chorus” (4). The fear of these victims being zombie-like undead creatures emerges when one of the only remaining researchers, a Haitian epidemiologist named Noni DeGraff, learns that thermal images of the infected and those exposed to the camp “radiated blue” like the dead, rather than the red of a living person (9). The disease peaks when the “Possessed” begin a chaotic massacre described as an outbreak of homicidal violence and a “berserk murderous blood rage.” Afterwards, the borders between the Dominican Republic and Haiti are sealed, even as hundreds of thousands of non-infected Haitians flee the zone for safety (10).

When a bomb is dropped on Haiti shortly thereafter, its effects permeate the Caribbean, causing “8.3 tremors felt as far away as Havana, San Juan, and Key West” (12). These cities represent some of the earliest Spanish territories in the Americas, mirroring the spread of colonization throughout the Caribbean and the Americas, and the longue durée of its effects. “The Detonation Event” deadens every electronic apparatus “within a six-hundred-mile radius,” destroying the bomber that dropped the bomb, causing thirty-two commercial planes to “plummet” from the sky, drowning hundreds of ships and seacraft, causing fires, crumbling sea walls and the heat-protective domes (12). In other words, it causes apocalyptic ramifications, with a telecommunication dead zone that impedes all communication across the Caribbean. Hence, those on the island of Hispaniola are the only witnesses to the “forty-foot-tall cannibal motherfuckers running loose on the island” (12). Documentation in the form of “soon-to-be-iconic Polaroids” (photos) confirm the existence of a giant zombie-like cannibal, “what later came to be called Class 2, in the process of putting a slender broken girl in its mouth” (12). These Polaroids include captions with biblical verses: “Numbers 11:18. Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (12). Since, according to Alex, “a photograph can change todo,” the story ends with Alex, Mysty, and the protagonist setting out to document the fall of humanity with a Polaroid camera. The reader can deduce that this is the very same camera that captures the infamous Polaroid photo of the “slender broken girl” in the mouth of the cannibal (12).

Díaz’s dystopian scenario imagines the end of the modern colonial world through a precise and humiliating formula. The spatial and temporal locus of
colonial horror, the place where millions of humans are subjected to “thin-gification,” is likewise the place where cannibals who eat the Man who has subjugated them are bred.77 La Negrura, as the precursor to the colossal cannibals in the Caribbean, requires contending with meditations on the figure of Caliban in The Tempest. The colonial, linguistic, and racial subjugation in the play, alongside Caliban’s constant resistance, have made The Tempest and the character critical tropes for writers across the postcolonial Caribbean and its diasporas.78 “Monstro” forces us to engage with the longue durée of the cannibal trope: the “cannibal” of 1492, the Shakespearean anagram of cannibal and Caliban as signifier in 1611, and the diseased-transformed cannibals that Díaz conjures at the end of the world in the Caribbean.

In his famous treatise on Caliban, the Cuban critic Roberto Fernández Retamar cites Columbus’s Diario de navegación in order to locate the earliest accounts of said encountered cannibals. Fernández Retamar cites this entry, dated November 23, 1492: “[The island of Haiti], which they said was very large and that on it lived people who had only one eye and others called cannibals, of whom they seemed very afraid” (6).79 In this colonial record, Haiti is the initial locus of modernity’s cannibals. For Díaz, Haiti is the place from which modernity may find its end at the hands of cannibals created by the disaster of ecological corruption caused by modernity.

Díaz’s “Monstro” is thus a form of future work that foretells of another boomerang effect. Bearing this mark of an inhuman Other, the Carib, Fernández Retamar continues, “will become a cannibal—an anthropophagus, a bestial man situated on the margins of civilization.”80 Following Armando García’s reading of racialized and sexed Caliban figures in Migdalia Cruz’s play Fur, I argue that Díaz’s dystopian worlds/otherwise imagines the end of the modern colonial world through a precise and humiliating formula.81 García juxtaposes The Tempest with Aimé Césaire’s A Tempest, and posits a conceivable sociality against colonialism that can, in effect, emancipate a dehumanized subject. Cruz’s play—about a Latina named Citrona who is enslaved by Michael, an older white man, and his servant, Nena, who is also his psychological captive—ends with Citrona killing and cannibalizing both Michael and Nena. “Citrona,” García argues, “turns to cannibalism as the only expression of freedom available to her.”82 While both Shakespeare and Césaire’s plays end with Caliban still enslaved, García argues that when Cruz’s cannibal “eats her oppressors, she challenges the idea that freedom from colonial terror is dependent primarily on the oppressed being able to speak.”83 The protagonist truly frees herself through the act of eating those who have enslaved her, and in the act of killing and “cannibalizing her master,” Citrona “desires to end the time of the colony and also move toward a different world” (351). Likewise, “Monstro” complicates Cliff’s assertion, for in this story the Other appears to eat the One. Apocalypso. Díaz, then, offers us a complex Afro-Latinx futurist narrative that centers class, race, sex, and gender relations at the apex of worlds/otherwise.
Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel’s novel *Panga Rilene* (2016) is also set in an apocalyptic future where ecological destruction remaps the lives of the protagonist and her nation, which is known only by the coordinates 08°28′00″E-26°29′00″N (often shortened to “NE”). This novel marks a turn to a new genre for this seasoned author, who has primarily written about the colonial and contemporary dictatorial period in Equatorial Guinea, and it is in fact the first Equatoguinean novel to extend into the genre of science fiction and Afrofuturism. Ávila Laurel’s work has long borne witness to lived experiences that often remain unseen and unheard, particularly for Africans living on Atlantic islands under dictatorial regimes. In *Panga Rilene*, he moves into some unknown time in the future in which the nation has emerged following an occurrence that changed “TODO” (15; “EVERYTHING”). The novel is a retrospective account wherein the protagonist, Panga Rilene, learns about her mysterious mother, for whom she is named, and by extension, about the histories that created life in NE. Early in the narrative Panga inherits an apparatus, a “bumping machine,” and later a small tablet, which allow her to search and document her experiences. These technologies, which function only by bodily touch or blood sample, are essential for Panga to come to consciousness about the dystopian existence of her nation (73, 97).

*Panga* begins by offering geographical overviews and temporal references for NE (15). The novel takes place in an unknown future beyond A.D., where “kriptón” is the epoch reference (34). In this era after “TODO” has happened, Panga’s nation is reclusive and comprised only of women—all with square faces, “tan rectas como las paredes de una caja” (“as straight as the walls of a box”)—children of all ages, and a singular elderly man named Netig (27). The nation of 08°28′00″E-26°29′00″N consists of communities of square homes suspended in the air on a single beam covered with a material akin to coconut fiber. From each beam hang four to seven square houses, creating the effect of leaves on a tree. A common terrace atop each of these beams acts as the only communal space available to the women and children. Each beam features an unused staircase and an aerial pulley system, which allows the watchman, Netig, to access any of the homes. The women reach their houses by climbing up and down the fiber-covered beams, often with children clinging to their backs (29).

It is revealed that the women, so isolated, are called to engage in a ritual procreation practice in which they sit on penetrating apparatuses and recite loyalties to the state: “Ninguna de nosotras se atrevería a lanzar su desafío al estado de cosas tal como se presenta ahora” (174–76; “None of us would dare to launch a challenge to the state of affairs as it is presently”). While the female children stay in the community, all the male children mysteriously vanish after a few years, thus sustaining a women-only society: “Todos los niños que abrían los ojos en nuestro sitio llevaban en una parte desconocida
de su pequeño ser la llamada de otro sitio que no conocíamos, una llamada tan fuerte que propiciaba su abandono de nuestro país tan pronto como ganaban aptitudes con los dos pies” (70; “All of the boys who opened their eyes on our site carried in an unknown part of their little being the call from another place that we did not know, a call so strong that it propitiated their abandonment of our country as soon as they gained skills with both feet”).

This reclusive existence is further impacted by environmental disasters. Panga details the barren valleys that surround 08°28’00”E-26°29’00”N, and notes how even the rains “transportaban un número tan elevado de sustancias químicas que los que tuvieran algún tipo de patología, o aquejados de alguna debilidad especial, podían morir ante la mera exposición a los mismos” (38; “transported such a high level of chemical substances that those who had any illness or were somehow in a weakened state could die from the mere exposure to it”). This chemical-laced rain akin to toxic gravel is far from the only danger the women face, since they are randomly accosted and searched by soldiers: “No tardaban en aparecer los soldados del fierro, ataviados con llamativas botas y acompañados de perros furiosos” (41; “The soldiers of the iron, dressed in flashy boots and accompanied by furious dogs, soon appeared”). The community subsists on a single food source, smigg, “un combinado de granos y crustáceos que decían que era un alimento equilibrado” (“a combination of grains and crustaceans that was said to be a balanced food”) around which they develop a digestion ritual called “la danza del puf” (“the puff dance”), which consists of dancing and passing gas on the communal terrace (44, 67). Panga’s narrative seeks to understand the precarious nature of their lives, a “supervivencia” that “pendía de un hilo” (42; “survival that hung by a thread”).

In Ávila Laurel’s narrative, the future is also predicated on exploitative practices and maintaining silence around oppression. In fact, dictatorship is remembered as instrumental in the creation of 08°28’00”E-26°29’00”N. The narrative follows the series of events that led to Panga’s catastrophic reality, which indicts contemporary forms of power and domination, and likewise engages in a foreboding meditation on the human impact on the environment and nonhuman animals.

Panga’s ancestors are said to be people “gently rocked by the sea,” or people living on islands. The processes leading up to “TODO” left those living on islands and in littoral spaces in destierro, torn from their lands. She learns that in the hyper-capitalist world that preceded “TODO,” the sea was privatized and emptied of all life. The privatization of the sea was later accompanied by control over access to the sea; wealthy world leaders, dictators, and other powerful men would prohibit access in order to prevent witnesses to the ecological catastrophe. The ensuing exploitative and toxic agricultural practices turned lands barren and produced mass starvation in NE (144–46).

Here, Junot Díaz’s meditation on the forces that wield natural disasters into postcolonial apocalypses becomes a prophetic lens through which to
read Ávila Laurel's narrative. “The very forces that place us in harm’s way,” Díaz argues, “often take advantage of the confusion brought by apocalyptic events to extend their power and in the process increase [our] vulnerability.” In Panga’s epoch, the sea itself is utilized as a site of terror and control. In one telling scene, Panga recognizes that a ritual pilgrimage to look upon the sea is in fact part of a set of scare tactics that agents use to ensure that women cooperate with the reproductive politics of their nation. The ritual pilgrimage culminates when the women are brought to the sea. But rather than an expansive ocean, the group gazes upon the corpse of a woman with an unexpelled umbilical cord, floating in a clear bucket of water (88). There, Panga comes to understand that this pilgrimage is an implicit threat, a warning to not impede their male children from leaving, to not obstruct the new order of things, for fear of becoming like the corpse of the woman floating in the “sea.”

As the novel examines the sociopolitical and economic processes that generated “TODO,” the reader becomes aware that Ávila Laurel’s pre-apocalyptic time is eerily similar to contemporary geopolitical occurrences. This is acutely revelatory if we are to conceive of apocalypse across different worldviews. For example, the Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Whyte argues that for many Indigenous communities, the catastrophe of current and impending climate change is not a coming apocalypse but rather the apocalypse, here and now. Whyte argues that this is because Indigenous ancestors would not recognize the kinds of capital-driven, ecologically splintered practices that we understand to be commonplace within contemporary Western epistemes. Thus, if apocalypses arrive to “uncover and unveil,” we can understand Panga Rilene as future work that exposes our current apocalypse and its heinous, desolate, and exploitative aftermath.

Panga Rilene is not only a foreboding notice against the death sentence of late capitalism, mass consumption, and environmental destruction; it is also a warning that centers colonialism, racialized Blackness, and the practices of faceless corporations, greed-driven dictators, and First World consumers that upend the lives of poor and dispossessed classes. At the crux of the narrative is Ávila Laurel’s critique of how wealthy and powerful people dispossess the poor of their lives: “En aquellos tiempos en que los poderosos podían disponer de las vidas ajenas y comerciar con ellas como si se tratara de cualquier mercancía” (106; “In those times in which the powerful could dispose of the lives of others and trade them as if they were any merchandise”). We learn that the mining of a powerful mineral by the company SA Manto or Manto SA (which we can read as an anagram for the agricultural corporation Monsanto) has accelerated “TODO.” This company “se dedicaba a la extracción de un mineral que en la lengua local recibía el nombre de malañang, que era una sustancia no solamente llamativa por su exótico nombre, que lo era en aquellos tiempos, sino por el asepecto desagradable del mismo, asimilable a los despojos desechables de algunos animales” (106–7; “[it] was dedicated
to the extraction of a mineral that in the local language was called malañang, which was not only a noteworthy substance because of its exotic name, which it was in those times, but because of the unpleasant aspect of it, similar to the feces of some animals”). The repulsive and fetid mineral “tenía muchas aplicaciones en la industria, pues tanto podía usarse como combustible, y como aislante de primer nivel” (“had many applications in industry, since it could be used as fuel, and as a first-class insulation”), but its power likewise led the miners to a “desplome espiritual” (107; “spiritual crash”).

Similar to Díaz’s inexplicable “Negrura,” Panga learns that the malañang mining advanced into a Blackening disease, or “Negruzco,” which blackened and rotted the miners’ skin and also caused spiritual devastation for those in contact with it (107–9). The Negruzco and the “desplome,” or ontological desolation, spread widely due to the overseer’s cruel treatment of the miners, as he toyed with their lives and safety by limiting their access to gloves and other basic protective equipment (107). The trial that attempted to confront these atrocities ended with the miners being disappeared, all except for one. Netig, a senior engineer, was ordered to establish NE’s community of women, potentially the widows of the miners. Thus, rather than an all-powerful watchman, Netig is actually a man in service to others, and his rotting-flesh condition—which Ávila Laurel alludes to in scenes where he painfully urinates pus—corrlelates to his history as a miner.

Netig’s powerlessness within the matrix of the apocalyptic system is perhaps what leads him to offer Panga the forbidden objects: the bumping machine and the tablet. It is Panga, however, who learns how to use these machines with her body and blood, and in so doing asks the questions that lead her to imperfectly trace the histories that have created the conditions for her very existence. Her quest to learn about her mother and about the types of kinship formed in her community means that she is one of the very few people in NE to understand their histories before and after “TODO.” Thus, she develops a sense of duty to the liberation of her kin and community.88 Furthermore, Panga’s blood and flesh are needed for the technology to function, creating a corporeal connection to the machines that troubles facile notions that divide human and analog, and digital and cyborg. In fact, Panga’s questioning, her epistemic concerns, and her ontological experiences during the catastrophic kryptón era suggest a fundamental shift in the world that she inhabits. And while Panga can and should be read as a femme hero, Panga herself resists gender dimorphism, questioning if she is in an anatomically female or male body. This becomes a critical challenge to the terror-driven reproductive world she inhabits. Her intimate, personal, and public resistance underscores many forms of coming-to-consciousness within community.89

_Panga Rilene_ showcases a future that mirrors both Junot Díaz’s “Monstro” and his essays on the disastrous effects of the 2010 earthquake on Haiti. Díaz forecasts a collective global future of “stricken, forlorn desolation, a future
out of a sci-fi fever dream where the super-rich will live in walled-up plantations of impossible privilege and the rest of us will wallow in unimaginable extremity.” Those who remain on the underside of such a system are left “staggering around the waste and being picked off by the hundreds of thousands by ‘natural disasters’—by ‘acts of god.’” 90 However, I argue that Ávila Laurel’s narrative is not solely reducible to a dystopia orchestrated by greed, racism, and disregard for human and nonhuman life. Instead, a glimpse of worlds/otherwise emerges at the moment of Panga’s coming-to-consciousness, thus mirroring Fanon’s turn in Black Skin, White Mask where he asks his readers to feel “the open dimension of every consciousness.” 91 In Panga, we have a character who embodies and complicates the last line of Fanon’s text: “Oh my body, always make me a [femme] who questions!” 92 Panga Rilene takes place in a community of Black femmes and indict structures—eerily comparable to our present-day structures and practices—that require Black and Indigenous death. The novel offers us a glimpse into an apocalyptic worlds/otherwise similar to Diaz’s “Monstro,” where a Blackening disease represents the inception of the end of the world. Both narratives have apocalypse at their center, albeit in different ways. But unlike Diaz’s narrative in which the afflicted Haitians become zombie-like cannibals who threaten to consume the One, Panga Rilene has no triumphant rise. Instead, it reveals a slow coming-to-consciousness, resolute but without a known resolution.

Reveal

In examining four distinct works and genres (sonic/visual, young adult literature, short story, and novel), this chapter engages distinct yet related aspects of future work. I first examined how Afro-syncretic cosmologies, or the Sacred, are conjured to produce apocalypsos. They thus fracture colonial, temporal, and spatial boundaries, and usher in worlds/otherwise. The music and videos of Ibeyi and Daniel José Older’s young adult novel Shadowshaper center practices of Santería and trouble notions of fixed temporalities and futurities. In doing so, they invoke worlds/otherwise or present futures in which ancestors live alongside and guide modes and practices of being in the world. In the second half of the chapter, I analyzed how dystopian worlds and contagious viruses become part of Afro-Atlantic apocalypsos wherein only Black women and femmes can bring hope to these worlds/otherwise. Junot Díaz’s short story “Monstro” and Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel’s novel Panga Rilene each center a disease of Blackness—Negrura and Negruzco, respectively—at the end, or arguably the beginning, of worlds. In these two texts, a mysteriously incurable disease and the mining of a black mineral act as the backdrop to social/political struggles and challenges to the oppressive order of knowledge and being. Blackness is thus deployed as both a curse and a salve in these worlds/otherwise. However, in each of these four works, Black women,
girls, and femmes are the epicenter of possible futures: they are the ones who have the power to conjure ancestors into the present/future, and they are the ones who can either detonate the end of worlds, or save them.

These narratives, emerging from a distinct yet related set of histories, languages, and realities thrust through the ruptures of coloniality, represent an/other appendage of Afro-Atlantic futurisms. Thus, it is in those ruptures that Ibeyi (Ibeyi), Older (Shadowshaper), Díaz (“Monstro”), and Ávila Laurel (Panga Rilene) break apart fixed spatial and temporal planes by troubling Blackness and racialization, and insisting that Afro-syncretic practices, including Lucumí and Santería, are key lenses through which to imagine other ways of being human, and being human as practice within a longue durée of ancestral memory. The futurities depicted across these texts are made possible by engaging practices that lead readers and the protagonists in a seemingly backward motion. They take us past the “future” and into a realm where, if we are to see liberation, we must take our ancestors and our histories along with us. This, then, is representative of a practice of decolonial love, a recuperative project that is both futuristic and liberatory.93

Decolonial love as future work envisaged through our pasts is necessarily a technology for social transformation, and is a method through which we can reimagine human ontogeny and sociogeny.94 Decolonial love in worlds/otherwise manifests as attention to 1492: the past before it, the past since, the subterranean roots created by it, and the dead beneath the sea.95 It can be imagined as looking into the “vast and inconsolable” sea to make visible what was disappeared, and make futurities beyond coloniality perceptible.96 Worlds/otherwise is invoked and revealed through ritual practice and human and ancestral communion, even as widespread diseases, desolate quarantine camps, and the clash of spirit worlds threaten to collapse the earth.