



Chapter 3

Yemayá y Ochún

Queering the Vernacular Logics of the Waters

Solimar Otero

Sería imposible al hablar de Yemayá en la Isla de Cuba, silenciar y menos separar de ella, a la popularísima Ochún, con quien comparte el dominio de las aguas.

It would be impossible to talk about Yemayá in the island of Cuba by silencing and separating her from the popular Ochún, with whom she shares dominion over the waters.

—Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún*.¹

Lydia Cabrera’s *El Monte* (1954) is one of the queerest books ever written by a Cuban author.

—José Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*.²

The above quotes by Cabrera and Quiroga serve as useful points of entry to consider the queer nature of the performance of spiritual identities in the contexts of Afro-Cuban religious cultures. They relate how representations of Afro-Cuban religion can occur in contexts where the order of the binary is subverted by their performance. In this piece, I want to use fieldwork done with practitioners of *Santería* to investigate how vernacular discourses about gender, embodiment, and the past reorder these very categories. In the same vein, I want to reread Lydia Cabrera’s work *Yemayá y Ochún: Kariocha, Iyalorichas y Olorichas* in a queer man-

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1 ner that will also open up these categories to broader interpretations.³
2 As Cabrera merges ethnography with fiction and reported speech within
3 a form of play that troubles the authorial voice, her writing is an invita-
4 tion to question how we think about what we know about Afro-Cuban
5 religious culture. This is especially true in her representations of the
6 water deities Yemayá and Ochún, and it is the case in how practitioners
7 describe these deities and their relationship to them. In both instances,
8 we see that crossing boundaries and borderlands, especially in terms
9 of kinds of water (salty/sweet), is reinscribed with a kind of play that
10 challenges fixed notions of subjectivity. Thus, the relationship between
11 Yemayá and Ochún, as demonstrated in the idea of a devotee being
12 a “child of both waters / *hijo/a de las dos aguas*” exists as an insider
13 category that is open, multifaceted, and not fixed.

14 As a folklorist, I offer this noted vernacular relationship between
15 especially women and their female deities as a productive place to start
16 thinking about the spaces in between categories of subjectivity that entail
17 gender, race, nation, and embodiment. In using the terms “women”
18 and “female deities,” I also am suggesting that both Cabrera and my
19 collaborators in the field provoke a more complicated reading of gender
20 and embodiment than the accepted binaries surrounding these subjects.
21 The way that Afro-Cuban religion reconstitutes itself—through writing
22 and praxis—makes us understand that certain kinds of agency are found
23 in liminal spaces. These in-between spaces can be found in many sites of
24 symbolic and cultural production: between waters, deities, subjectivities,
25 and genres of writing. How these domains meet and merge in Cuban
26 *Santería* also expands our thinking about the nature of Afro-Atlantic
27 religious cultures, their temporality, as well as how we perceive diasporic
28 paradigms of religious performance like song, dance, divination, *pataki*
29 (a traditional mythological narrative), and so on. This piece, then, asks us
30 to think about the relationship between Yemayá and Ochún as providing
31 a template for understanding the intersectional practices that Afro-Cuban
32 religious discourse performs.

33 Of course, the ritual, mythological, and discursive creativity sur-
34 rounding Yemayá and Ochún that I am exploring in Afro-Cuban reli-
35 gious cultures has parallel expressions in Africa and other parts of the
36 African Diaspora. For example, in Nigerian Aladura churches, where
37 ritual creativity and co-penetration exists between Yoruba traditional
38 religion (*esin ibile*) and Christianity, it is believed that Olorun (God)
39 divided the waters in two: into the salty and sweet water realms of
40 Yemoja (Yemayá) and Osún (Ochún), respectively.⁴ Also, according to
41 R. C. Abraham’s classic *Modern Dictionary of Yoruba*, variations exist in
42 Yoruba mythology, ritual, and belief as to whether it is Yemoja (Yemayá)
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who gives birth to Osún (Ochún) or if it is Osún (Ochún) who gives birth to Yemoja (Yemayá).⁵ In Brazil, there is also a good deal of creativity and fluidity in how the relationship between Yemanjá (Yemayá) and Oxum (Ochún) is described, understood, and made into religious praxis.⁶ As a continuation of this Afro-Atlantic conversation exploring the boundaries, qualities, and fluidity between Yemayá and Ochún, I investigate how practitioners and scholars of Afro-Cuban religious cultures have a unique contribution to make in terms of questioning rigid categories of gender and embodiment through this special connection.

As indicated, this piece explores the connections between the deities, the *orichas*, Yemayá and Ochún as expressed in Afro-Cuban belief. I am interested in troubling the notion of bounded relationships between deities, vernacular religious expressions, notions of embodiment, and gendered personhood. *Los hijo/as de las dos aguas* is an open designation given to devotees of both *orichas* that signifies a fluid connection between the two divinities that is expressed in ritual knowledge and the performance of religious history through storytelling. This set of relationships serves as a model for how to understand discourses of incorporation especially within women's religious work that focuses on boundary play.⁷ The relationship between these two entities highlights an openness to religious interaction in the history of the African Diaspora in light of new ways of thinking about how ritual creativity performs at the borders of race, gender, and sexuality.⁸ This is especially the case in terms of how the connectedness of the Afro-Catholic manifestations of Yemayá and Ochún may also be read as sites of boundary play that defy notions of ritual and ethnic purity through the symbolic interplay between La Virgen de Regla and La Caridad del Cobre, respectively.⁹

My initial fieldwork in Cuba on Afro-Cuban religions began in 1999. As a Cuban-American returning to Havana's neighborhoods of Arroyo Apolo and Mantilla where my mother was raised, Claudina Abreo González and Mercedes Zamora Albuquerque, the women priestesses discussed briefly in this chapter, have served as my mentors, collaborators, and spiritual consultants.¹⁰ These women play the role of *madrinas* or godmothers for many seeking spiritual and religious guidance and their ritual activities provide a central conduit in creating and maintaining spiritual kin networks.¹¹

Yemayá and Ochún Revisited

Claudina Abreo González is a priestess of Ochún who has been practicing the religious traditions of *Santería*, *Palo*, and *Espiritismo* for over thirty

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1 years.¹² Here I want to examine how Abreo González, as a daughter
 2 of Ochún, understands her relationship to Yemayá through traditional
 3 narrative and vernacular criticism of these narratives in ways that help
 4 us question whom gets to create, interpret, and situate knowledge in
 5 Afro-Cuban religious contexts.¹³ These vernacular aesthetic sensibilities,
 6 as metafolklore and as a form of oral literary criticism, abound in the
 7 performance of Afro-Cuban traditional narrative and ritual.¹⁴

8 Abreo González told me a *patakí* that exemplified for her the
 9 relationship between Yemayá and Ochún. In her version of the story,
 10 Yemayá and Ochún are sisters who trade physical attributes to help each
 11 other. Here is how she phrased the tale:

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13 Ochún era una mulata muy linda, tenía un cuerpo muy ele-
 14 gante, muy bonita. Pero, no tenía pelo. Ella tenía el pelo muy
 15 cortito, no tenía pelo, no. Entonces, ella le dice a Yemayá,
 16 ‘Mira, tan linda como yo soy, y sin embargo no tengo tu
 17 pelo.’ Yemayá tenía el pelo largo, [gesto a la cintura], y de
 18 lo más bonito. Y Yemayá le dice, ‘Mira, para que seas feliz
 19 completa yo te voy a dar mi pelo.’ Y le da el pelo a Ochún.

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21 Ochún was a very beautiful *mulata*; she had a very elegant
 22 figure, very pretty. But she had little to no hair. She wore her
 23 hair very short; she really didn’t have any hair. One day she
 24 says to Yemayá, “Look at me. Even though I am considered
 25 beautiful, I don’t have your hair.” Yemayá had long hair [ges-
 26 tures down to her waist],¹⁵ and really very beautiful. And so
 27 Yemayá tells her, “Look, so you can be completely happy I
 28 will give you my hair.” And, she gives her hair to Ochún.¹⁶

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30 Part of the impetus for telling me this story was to provide a figu-
 31 rative response to my questions about the relationship between the two
 32 water deities. Cabrera places their relationship in the stories she collected
 33 and wrote as one of sisterhood as well, and, like Abreo González, she
 34 sees Yemayá as the elder sibling that cares for Ochún.¹⁷ Such storytelling
 35 is the rich register by which Afro-Cuban religious instruction is per-
 36 formed. In this rendering of the tale we see modes of reported speech
 37 and indications of themes and tropes important to popular belief in Afro-
 38 Cuban religion. The exchange between the two water goddesses here
 39 indicates a sharing of aesthetics and attributes that connect them not
 40 only in terms of narrative but also through ritual. In folklore, Yemayá’s
 41 long hair and other attributes connect her with the mermaid traditions
 42 found both in Europe (motifs B81 and B81.9.1) and in Africa, with

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the latter finding a symbolic interrelationship between Yemayá/Yemoja’s mermaid form and the mermaid forms of the Mami Wata traditions.¹⁸ By bestowing her hair on Ochún, Yemayá gives a part of her magical power to Ochún (though Yemayá also keeps her long beautiful hair) as a mode of generosity, a way of making a bond between their realms. In Cabrera’s reading of the relationship between the two water deities, Yemayá often acts as the older, wiser, and indulgent sibling of Ochún who is willing to either clean up Ochún’s messes or give her, and by extension her sons and daughters, a magical hand.¹⁹

What the story world of Abreo González’s story offers us, then, is a mythological configuration of how attributes like generosity and beauty might be handled, shared, and understood by the community through the *orichas*’ examples. The story worlds of *patakís* also tell of what *not* to do: what to avoid in terms of mistakes made by the deities.²⁰ This story, like others found in Afro-Cuban religious belief, give us a template for thinking about ritual reciprocity between the two deities through the vernacular concept of *los hijo/as de las dos aguas*. Indeed, Cabrera finds a mythological transformation between the two kinds of water when she describes the *patakí* of how Yemayá turns the salt waters into sweet waters for her sister Ochún.²¹ However, before I unpack those potential exchanges, I would like to discuss how the above story also gives a metaphorical rendering of the way that Yemayá and Ochún are connected—not only through their shared element of water but also through gendered and racial representations of the two in Cuba’s postcolonial context.

I want to focus for a moment on how Abreo González’s story begins with a description of Ochún’s beauty, body, and *mulatez*. Her representation of Ochún is typical of how both practitioners and Cuban popular culture describe the river deity. Kutzinski and Arrizón both write about how Afro-Cuban women’s bodies, especially those of the *mulata*, do the symbolic work of negotiating Cuban identity by embodying race and gender in particular ways.²² Ochún’s location as a *mulata* in Abreo’s story is particularly hybrid because of the range of racial, cultural, and religious associations she symbolizes. As a *mulata*, she is, of course, mixed race. As Ochún, she is both Cuban and Yoruba in terms of culture. As associated with La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, she can also be located on a vernacular Catholic register. It is interesting to note on the last point here that La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, the patron saint of Cuba, is also represented as a mixed-race virgin in church and vernacular iconography.²³ In terms of Ochún’s hybrid subjectivities, I am inclined to see her body in Abreo González’s story as a site that is shifting, as a project that Yemayá helps her reconfigure and recreate.

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1 I am not suggesting that we accept this depiction of Ochún's *mula-*
2 *ta* body uncritically. However, I do want to suggest that this *mulatez* can
3 be a potential source of agency rather than a solely racialized, sexualized,
4 and gendered subjectivity that always does the work of reinforcing colo-
5 nial, racial, and patriarchal hegemonies. In other words, as Arrizón aptly
6 observes about the performance of *mulata* embodiment, "As a hybrid
7 body, which can *perform* whiteness and blackness, the *mulata's* subaltern
8 agency becomes a reinscription of the divided and hyphenated self."²⁴
9 In this formulation of the *mulata*, her body disrupts the stereotypical
10 racial dyadic by reinscribing *mulatez* in a manner that disidentifies the
11 binary categories that seek to make it solely transgressive, to mark it as
12 a racial abjection.²⁵

13 I would also add that Ochún's multiplicity is incorporated by her
14 devotees, where embodying the goddess becomes an act that necessarily
15 queers questions of personhood in terms of another kind of disidentifica-
16 tion. The *mulata* body, and the kind of *mulata* body Ochún represents
17 in Abreo González's story, needs to be re-thought with these consider-
18 ations in mind when it comes to vernacular religious folklore, practice,
19 and discourse. This is because the contexts in which practitioners are
20 negotiating living texts, practices, and discourses are also a shifting ter-
21 rain of hybrid subjectivities and negotiations.

22 In Abreo González's tale, Ochún is indebted to Yemayá for giving
23 her the attributes that perfect her beauty. The long, beautiful hair that
24 Yemayá gives to Ochún is related to both of the deities' manifestations
25 as mermaids, water sirens, and aquatic sprites.²⁶ Here the conversation
26 is extended to the physical attributes of beauty and allure found in the
27 folklore of these kinds of beings from all over the world. According to
28 Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, motifs for both dark-
29 skinned (B81.9.5.2) and fair-skinned (B81.9.5.1) mermaids are found
30 in Indo-European folklore and mythological traditions.²⁷ These contain
31 motifs where mermaids have physical attributes such as large breasts
32 (B81.9.2), long flowing hair (B81.9.0), and "wooly" hair (B81.9.1).²⁸
33 In African debates surrounding the mermaid form of Mami Wata, there
34 is much discussion as to the origins and aesthetic characteristics of this
35 water spirit.²⁹ In all of these instances, female water deities have multiple
36 characteristics that make a systematic classification of their attributes
37 elusive at best.

38 In examining how some women understand their agency within
39 Afro-Cuban vernacular religion, we also necessarily invoke traditions of
40 secrecy and hidden female power inherited from Yoruba religious dis-
41 courses.³⁰ Yet, these traditions of secrecy also resemble queer strategies of
42 evading categorization of knowledge and the self through performances
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that code, mimic, and keep hidden key aspects of recognition. This allows for a privileging of information that is rooted in many different kinds of performance strategies that subvert racial, gendered, and cultural orders that are often part of a colonial legacy, especially in Cuba.³¹ In terms of Cuba and the relationship of secrecy to Afro-Cuban religion and queer identities, the saliency of what is not revealed affirms that, according to José Quiroga, “circuitousness, evasion, and avoidance are modes of praxis and not necessarily forms of denial.”³² That is, as we will see with Cabrera’s texts that deal with Afro-Cuban queer manifestations of *orichas* like Yemayá, the point is not one of secrecy, but of particular ways of performing, in code, the fluidity and ambiguity of gender and sexuality, even within a mythological-religious context.

In terms of vernacular speech and linguistic form, Cabrera’s texts about the ambiguous and separate nature of sexuality and gender among the *orichas* take the form of reported speech, most frequently as *chisme* (gossip). This genre of narrative has often been queered in terms of being thought of as the “talk” of women and gays and by being rendered as a volatile and suspicious category for acquiring information in literature and society.³³ *Chisme*, as Cabrera describes it in relation to the *orichas* in *Yemayá y Ochún*, is also infectious and irresistible to her reader. *Chisme* and gossip are popular and pleasurable ways of imparting vernacular histories for different communities of color because of their porous and sometimes subversive narrative frames.³⁴

Practitioners identify Yemayá and Ochún as having the ability to work together through both oral tradition and ritual praxis. The implication here is that their relationship can serve as a model of cooperation for different *oricha*-worshipping communities not only in Cuba but across the African Diaspora as well.³⁵ Yet I do not want to imply that this idea of a model is one that is fixed or always consistent among practitioners. In other words, the idea of a connection between Yemayá and Ochún should serve as a starting point for considering how social and spiritual agency can be negotiated through the lens of these two deities in their connected aspects. That is, how do we navigate the flow of culture from a specific source to a larger body of multiple manifestations that, like the flow between the rivers and the ocean, has a tendency to feed back upon itself?

The regenerative quality of spiritual ingenuity, innovation, and ritual hybridity through experimentation with forms borrowed from literature, popular culture, the internet, film, and international networks makes Afro-Cuban religiosity a thriving and mutable force in Afro-Atlantic religious traditions today.³⁶ However, within the practice of innovation and borrowing is a discourse of authenticity that mirrors





1 ritual play and asserts the new in traditional practices.³⁷ The relationship
 2 and mutual admiration between Yemayá and Ochún as understood by
 3 adherents is one way to think through the dilemma of locating practice
 4 within this vast terrain of fluidity and multiplicity. People who identify as
 5 *hijo/as de las dos aguas* (children of “both waters”) offer an interesting
 6 palette with which we can see how difference appears where (aquatic)
 7 borderlands meet, yet allow for these very boundaries to be blurred in
 8 ritual and discursive assertions. It is within the zones of contact where
 9 the *hijo/as de las dos aguas* operate, between the sweet and salty waters,
 10 that practitioners perform the crossing of borders in a way that has
 11 implications for how race, gender, and personhood are also mutable in
 12 pervasive, mestiza ways.³⁸

13 Abreo González describes the characteristics of those who share a
 14 ritual responsibility of showing reciprocity between Ochún and Yemayá
 15 in this manner:

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17 But, they [Yemayá and Ochún] always get along very well.
 18 And, for the most part, we daughters of Ochún care greatly
 19 for Yemayá. We have to really care for her, really have to
 20 adore her. Take myself for example, everything that I offer
 21 to Ochún, who is my *mama*—I have to offer to Yemayá. It
 22 is as if she is my *mama*. And that’s the way it is, the two
 23 waters are one in the same. I often have to go to where
 24 the river and the sea meet in order to pray to Ochún and
 25 Yemayá, and that is where I put my offerings. That is where
 26 one can worship them. That is where you can find both fresh
 27 water and salt water.³⁹

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29 Here we see Abreo González explain the relationship she has to both
 30 Yemayá and Ochún through examples of mutual devotion, ritual reci-
 31 procity, and connection to the physical representation of the natural
 32 worlds these deities represent for believers. Her relationship to Yemayá
 33 operates through Ochún, her *mama*, meaning the *oricha* that governs
 34 her head, who has chosen her as a devotee. Though Ochún is her pri-
 35 mary *oricha*, Abreo González finds a second *mama* in Yemayá. Indeed
 36 she feels devotees of Ochún have a special duty to respect, honor, and
 37 give offerings to Yemayá. And, in the example above, this may even
 38 take on the role of making a joint offering. This makes sense since as
 39 Abreo González says, “the two waters are one in the same,”⁴⁰ meaning
 40 that the differentiation between these two *orichas* can become blurred,
 41 combined, and creatively conjoined in ritual, performance, and the con-
 42 struction of material culture honoring them.⁴¹

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In *Yemayá y Ochún*, Cabrera’s reading of the close religious proximity of devotees of both *orichas* acknowledges their play with their personalities, as well as proclivities toward protecting the same devotee in the religious discourse. As Cabrera puts it:

Con los hijos de Yemayá y de Ochún hay que indagar meticolosamente a cual de las dos divinidades pertenecen, porque Yemayá acostumbra robarse los hijos de Ochún, haciéndoles favores. Los acompaña y complace tanto que siembra la confusión . . .

With the children of *Yemayá* and *Ochún*, one has to meticulously investigate which one of the two deities they really belong to, because *Yemayá* has the tendency to try to steal away *Ochún*’s children by doing them favors. She [*Yemayá*] looks after them and pleases them so that it plants a seed of doubt . . .⁴²

Cabrera goes on to say that even the adept *santero/a* may have some problems determining the lineage of a child of two waters. Here, I am interested in how Cabrera’s description of these converging and negotiated boundaries between the water deities serves as a kind of model for her text.

Yemayá y Ochún is certainly a book that combines a range of narrative forms: ethnography, ethnology, reported speech, folktale, *chisme*, and mythology. It is to be expected from Cabrera’s own play on genre that literary critics like José Quiroga and Edna Rodríguez-Mangual have already analyzed Cabrera’s seminal work *El Monte*.⁴³ I want to take Cabrera’s lead here and think about how the boundary play between Yemayá and Ochún for devotees is one that opens up possibilities for engaging religiosity and personhood on multiple levels. For Cabrera, avatars of Ochún, Ochún Akuara or Ochún Ibu manifest between the waters: They “vive entre el mar y el río / live in between the sea and the river.”⁴⁴ Accordingly, Cabrera quotes one of her collaborators, the *santero* Gaytán, as relating that the dualistic avatar of Yemayá, Yemayá Akuara exists in the meeting of the rivers and the sea, where “se encuentra con su hermana Ochún / she meets up with her sister Ochún.”⁴⁵

Thus, the boundary play works in both ways for the two water deities. Adding to this sense of negotiated confluence, as we see above, is the popular belief that Yemayá is willing to confuse, help, and conflate this boundary, acting in a form of play herself. This vernacular logic acts as a kind of coding for a whole aesthetic of ritual play that can be learned, taught, and inherited in a variety of ways. In a sense, these

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1 narrative and ritual interpretations of *Ocha* reflect the complicated nature
2 of a religious culture that is discursively fluid and relies on devotees'
3 own ability to semiotically unpack and repack their religious expressions.

4 The ability to move in between the waters, as Abreo González
5 and others do, is a metaphoric representation of how devotees creatively
6 perform their spiritual selves by using liminal ritual frames.⁴⁶ This cre-
7 ative boundary play can open a space for ceremonial agency, especially
8 for devotees like Abreo González, who perform their shifting and fluid
9 relationships at the very sites that physically represent these spaces, that
10 is, the meeting of the river and the sea. Also, this kind of boundary
11 play and confluence between deities and ancestors within *oricha* worship
12 is not unique to Yemayá and Ochún—nor to Cuba, as we see similar
13 kinds of negotiations in ritual contexts in Nigeria and Brazil.⁴⁷

14 However, Abreo González's story and personal reflections, as well
15 as Cabrera's observations, show other avenues for the expression of
16 agency that move in directions other than ritual and praxis. Narratives,
17 beliefs, and practice all reveal a level of meta-analysis that offers
18 several kinds of discursive agency. The epistemological basis for creat-
19 ing knowledge about Yemayá and Ochún in these contexts allows for
20 a level of naming of various divine subjectivities and the natural and
21 magical worlds that these subjectivities control that encourages a level
22 of play with these very elements. Elsewhere I have written about how
23 the Yoruba word for the act of play, *asere*, as understood by Drewal
24 and Yai in ritual contexts, is fundamental to understanding the ontology
25 of Afro-Caribbean-Latino cultural production and identity that centers
26 around the worldview of *Santería*.⁴⁸ Similarly, Abreo González's and
27 Cabrera's assessments of how they understand the fluidity of the worlds
28 and knowledge that Yemayá and Ochún create are made with the kind
29 of expertise that mimics the very play, flow, and form of these water
30 goddesses' shifting and shared paradigms of being and becoming. That
31 is, they move toward and away from each other in multiple stages
32 of subjectivity that allow for a symbolic dance to be performed along
33 their aquatic borders. Furthermore, this river/sea borderland serves as
34 a site that embodies the very discourses of negotiating ritual and social
35 power for many women practicing Afro-Cuban religions, but especially
36 for those who identify with being one of *los hijo/as de las dos aguas*.

37 Yemayá priestess Mercedes Zamora Albuquerque, like Cabrera and
38 Abreo González, identifies Yemayá and Ochún as being attached to
39 each other in symbiotic ways. Albuquerque feels a special attachment
40 to Ochún in her own devotional practices. This is how she describes
41 the tendency for a connection with Ochún from the perspective of the
42 children of Yemayá:

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Bueno, se considera que Ochún es hermana de Yemayá. Y entonces casi siempre las hijas de Yemayá tenemos tendencia ser *hijas de las dos aguas* . . . Hijas de Yemayá, y hijas de Ochún. Las de Ochún practican en el río. Y las de Yemayá practican en el mar. Pero hay veces que se unen en la diluvia del río en el mar. Por eso se dice, que somos *hijas de los dos aguas*. Pero es porque tenemos tendencias en el campo espiritual y en al campo material con Ochún y con Yemayá.

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Well, Ochún is considered to be Yemayá’s sister. And almost always we daughters of Yemayá have a tendency to be *hijas de las dos aguas* . . . daughters of Yemayá, and daughters of Ochún. The ones that belong to Ochún practice in the rivers. And, the ones that belong to Yemayá practice in the sea. But there are times when they are united as the river flows over into the sea. Because of this we are called *hijas de las dos aguas*. But it is really because we have tendencies [to work] with Ochún and with Yemayá in spiritual and material camps [of the religion].⁴⁹

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Here we see Albuquerque speaking about her conception of the relationship between Yemayá and Ochún that bleeds into the ritual association of *los hijo/as de las dos aguas*. Albuquerque emphasizes the idea that Yemayá and Ochún are sisters and that their daughters, specifically, have a tendency to share a reciprocal relationship with the river and the sea in terms of performing religious work.

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Again, we observe the metaphor of the river flowing into the sea acting as a visual reminder for the metaphysical connection expressed between the two entities for believers. The very idea of *los hijo/as de las dos aguas* offers a meditation on how we can redefine personhood and community through the idea of reciprocity. By focusing on gender here, Mercedes illustrates how women, specifically daughters of Yemayá and Ochún, develop a creative and consistent language to discuss the parameters among deities, practice, and theology within the religion of *Santería*. However, the fluidity of movement found between Yemayá and Ochún in how practitioners play with boundaries bleeds into how distinctions between religious cultures in Cuba are negotiated as well.

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As the sea receives the overflow of the rivers, so too do the daughters of Yemayá, according to Albuquerque, understand this merging as a starting point for developing a rich and layered spiritual life where she can embody a range of subjectivities to express and extend her agency in a variety realms. Her commentary specifically points out how spiritual and

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1 material spheres interact in the relationship between Yemayá and Ochún in
 2 an intersectional way. In so doing, she reveals that the idea of *los hijo/as*
 3 *de las dos aguas* is much more than an emic label used by practitioners to
 4 describe a set of practices and beliefs. Here, the idea of *los hijo/as de las*
 5 *dos aguas* becomes an opening point for understanding the interrelatedness
 6 of different kinds of spiritual identities performed in a range of registers.
 7 Similarly, Cabrera's *Yemayá y Ochún* recodifies, mimics, and extends these
 8 registers in how she writes Afro-Cuban religion with a multitude of voices
 9 and conventions of genre. Like Cabrera, practitioners' registers are also
 10 negotiated within the larger framework of different Afro-Cuban religious
 11 cultures. In the case of how practitioners balance the intersectional tradi-
 12 tions of *Santería*, *Palo*, and *Espiritismo*, there also exists a large amount
 13 of boundary play, ritual innovation, and discursive creativity.⁵⁰

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Embodiment, Gender, and Sexuality

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18 I had several conversations with women and men about how gender is
 19 conceived and lived in Afro-Cuban vernacular religions. These discus-
 20 sions about gender necessarily involved an exploration into the meaning
 21 of embodiment and the construction of the self. Since Afro-Cuban reli-
 22 gions are intersectional, the traditions of *Santería*, *Palo*, and *Espiritismo*
 23 all contain some level of spirit possession that are reflexive of, compete
 24 with, and also refer to each other.⁵¹ The attitudes toward what consti-
 25 tutes a bounded being are fluid.

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In terms of the performance of gender, for example, it is not
 unusual that a person who is gendered one way in society to be gen-
 dered ambiguously or differently in ritual and possession. That is, one's
 body can inhabit several selves that are constructed in a broad range
 of ways in terms of gender, race, culture, and even time period.⁵² It
 is important to note that spiritual beings are also part of the selfhood
 of different practitioners, as noted above for Abreo González, because
 these relationships are thought of as reciprocal. What seems to be clear
 here, then, is that it is the *performance* of an identity in Afro-Cuban
 religion that sets the parameters of *who* or *what* a practitioner is or is
 signifying. In this manner the practitioner can call upon these identities
 as varying parts of the self—and this means that she can shift between
 different registers of embodiment during ritual: male, female, black,
 white, Chinese, nun, gypsy, *oricha*, healer, ancestor, relative.

Not everyone has access to any or all identities, but most people
 have access to several ways of performing their spiritual selves. Again,
 these performances become part of the practitioner's known (or poten-





tial) identities within the community. This kind of fluidity of embodiment mirrors the relationship between Yemayá and Ochún in the places where they meet and overflow into each other: the sea and the rivers. Yet, like the relationship between the two deities, there are complex layers of differentiation that overlap to create a mosaic that constitutes the self in Afro-Cuban religious experiential performances of being.

This cultural phenomenon is not an unusual or surprising site for creating and performing identities when we look at how Latina/o *mestizaje* and difference are embodied through cultural performances that locate race, gender, and sexuality in a range of configurations. Here I am thinking of how queer theorists like José Estaban Muñoz, through his idea of disidentification, and Alicia Arrizón, through her idea of transculturation as performance, have argued for understanding the Latina/o gendered and racialized subject as always in flux and as signifying multiple realities that refer historical configurations of these subjects.⁵³ This seems very close to the performances I have witnessed in the expression of possession pasts and selves in my work with Afro-Cuban religious communities as a whole.

Interestingly, these performances are both bounded and fluid, again like the merging and splitting of the two kinds of waters that make up Yemayá and Ochún. For example, a female priestess whose “head” or main *oricha* is male incorporates this identity into her sense of personhood. She also performs this “male” identity during specified rituals. A *santera*, *palera*, and/or *espiritista* may embody, hear, and communicate other beings through her own thoughts and actions: a doctor, a former nun, a Congo slave. Some of these beings are gendered as male, some as female, and some as ambiguous. All of these characters play an important role in creating the spiritual menagerie necessary to conduct the work that Afro-Cuban vernacular religion performs socially and culturally. That is, this variegated social imaginary creates a template for performing a version of history that comments on colonialism, slavery, and transculturation.⁵⁴ The politics of who becomes whom and why are at the heart of how we understand the relationships among race, spiritual power, and nation-building in contemporary Cuba.⁵⁵ And, the idea of *los hijo/as de las dos aguas* represents a specific manifestation of how this ontological process is performed and discursively understood through the symbology of Yemayá and Ochún.

In looking at Cabrera’s readings of the *orichas* in *Yemayá y Ochún*, *orichas* may also manifest queer sensibilities in terms of both gender and sexuality. In Cabrera’s text, as Quiroga clearly marks for *El monte*, we find talk about the *orichas*’ fluid identities in terms of gender and sexuality. Information that queers deities is often divulged in a polyphonic

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1 manner, through a dialogic interplay that uses rumor and reported
 2 speech to convey these qualities.⁵⁶ This is where Cabrera's text mimics
 3 the discursive mode of vernacular speech and folklore, where the oral
 4 becomes a vehicle for imparting as permissible what is usually unspeak-
 5 able. That is, her talk about the gendering and sexing the *orichas* often
 6 takes the form of hearsay: as unofficial knowledge that could neither
 7 be confirmed nor denied.

8 For example, Cabrera speaks about Yemayá's relationship with
 9 queer avatars of the *orichas*: Obatala, Orula, and Inle.⁵⁷ She describes
 10 Orula as an "*adodi*," a male with a sexual preference for males, who
 11 leaves Yemayá for Ogun.⁵⁸ In speaking about instances of same sex love
 12 between the divinities, she writes, "It [same sex love] is not such a ter-
 13 rible mark of shame for Orúmbila: Obatalá Odua also had love affairs
 14 with another *Adó* [gay male being] and lived with him in the shade of
 15 a cottonwood tree."⁵⁹

16 Cabrera also asserts on the same page, "Yemayá was madly in
 17 love with the androgynous, gorgeous Inle."⁶⁰ It is important to note
 18 Cabrera's positioning of Yemayá in her roles as a protector and a lover
 19 of these *orichas*. Note Yemayá's affinity for friendship for and infatuation
 20 with queerly gendered and sexualized spiritual beings.⁶¹ For Cabrera,
 21 writing as a queer (and lesbian) subject herself, her text gives the charac-
 22 ter of Yemayá access to a kind of power that transforms static notions of
 23 gender and sexed bodies, as well as the kinds of love and affection that
 24 can be expressed through these performances of embodiment. Cabrera,
 25 like a true *hijo/a de las dos aguas*, also positions Ochún as having a
 26 sexual relationship with the androgynous Inle, one that rivals Yemayá's
 27 passion for the fish deity.⁶² In this manner, Cabrera depicts the fluidity
 28 of Yemayá and Ochún as also extending to aspects of their sexuality,
 29 passion, and emotional selves. In these very important senses, then, the
 30 two refuse to be located in fixed, rigid categories in terms of how they
 31 choose to express their intimacy with other beings.

32 Through this rendering of Yemayá (and of Ochún), Cabrera pro-
 33 vides a coded guide for understanding queer entities that is complicated
 34 and layered. She even has Yemayá perform her own queerness when
 35 she writes, "Yemayá liked to hunt, to cut, to wield the machete. In
 36 this *camino* she is *marimacho* and dresses like a man . . . Yemayá is
 37 at times so masculine that she becomes a man."⁶³ Cabrera's use of the
 38 term *marimacho*, tomboy or masculine woman, is significant because
 39 it has been appropriated by Chicana/Latina queer theorists like Gloria
 40 Anzaldúa and Alicia Arrizón to represent a kind of lesbian location that
 41 signals a performance of what we could call a "butch" aesthetic.⁶⁴

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The use of *chisme* and rumor as the tone for Cabrera’s consid- 1
 eration of gender and sexuality among the *orichas*, as in the example 2
 above, illustrates a subversive mode of world making in terms of both 3
 women’s speech and subaltern knowledges that cannot be verified in 4
 conventional, official ways.⁶⁵ These *chismes* about the deities perform an 5
 alternate history, a queer history that wants to resist a heteronormative 6
 and patriarchal domestication of the deities. In the end, we see that 7
 Cabrera situates Yemayá’s gender and sexuality in the realm of perfor- 8
 mance, allowing her to be feminine, masculine, and queer. This queer 9
 positioning of the *orichas* in Cabrera’s text is not limited to this coded 10
 text. Rather, Cabrera gives us clues as how to read the variegated nature 11
 of the performance of gender and sexuality in religious communities that 12
 stem from intersectional beliefs and practices. 13

I want to emphasize that Afro-Cuban religions also have a template 14
 for reconstructing gender and sexuality in a manner that can destabilize 15
machista or patriarchal enforcements of practice.⁶⁶ And the popular and 16
 multifaceted deities of Yemayá and Ochún are the perfect starting points 17
 for investigating fluid renditions of gender and personhood that defy 18
 easy classification. There is a dislocation and relocation of gendered, 19
 racialized, and transgendered subjects in performances that reinscribe the 20
 body through possession. This is especially so for Yemayá and Ochún 21
 because of their many avatars that can be embodied, performed, and 22
 expressed in Afro-Cuban religious contexts. Add to the multiplicity of 23
 Yemayás and Ochúns the vernacular Catholic iconography of La Virgen 24
 de la Caridad del Cobre and La Virgen de Regla, and one gets two 25
 Catholic saints whose iconography of the embodiment of the divine is 26
 one of two women of color.⁶⁷ 27

These cultural performances and images are rooted in the post- 28
 colonial historical context of Cuba in a manner that creates interest- 29
 ing allegories to how queer and gendered subjects are understood to 30
 emerge.⁶⁸ For example, some processes of queer and gendered embodi- 31
 ment as performance as described by Judith Butler and José Estaban 32
 Muñoz highlight the play with signifiers that the performance of posses- 33
 sion suggests.⁶⁹ In addition, these performances are linked to the social 34
 conditions that coordinate how *santeras* manage the power play in the 35
 gendered, racialized, and sexualized identities that they are *expected* 36
 to perform for the spiritual community. Quiroga rightly observes that Afro- 37
 Cuban religions’ intersectionality displays a hermeneutics that combines 38
 coexisting aspects that can be performed in a “simulataneous manner.”⁷⁰ 39
 I would add that the Afro-Cuban religious subject’s ability to disidentify 40
 and perform a multitude of intersecting selves that are ambiguous and 41

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1 hard to locate in a rigid manner makes these traditions apt for queering.
 2 In thinking about how these vernacular sets of practices are woven into
 3 the discourse of how selfhood and the world are understood, we real-
 4 ize that like Yemayá and Ochún meeting where the two waters meet,
 5 contemporary Afro-Cuban religious contexts can meet the global chal-
 6 lenge and lead the call toward recognizing a fluidity of gender, race,
 7 and sexuality found in experience-centered religious traditions.

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10 Conclusion: Reading Vernacular Religious
 11 Agency and Lydia Cabrera's Codes

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13 A Yemayá Olokun, inmensamente, inagotablemente rica, le debe
 14 Ochún, su hermana menor, la amable y pródiga dueña del Río, del
 15 Amor, del Coral y del Ambar, su proverbial riqueza. . . . Es mucho
 16 lo que Ochún debe a Yemayá.

17 The immensely, inexhaustibly rich Yemayá Olokun owes to Ochún,
 18 her younger sister, the kind and prodigious queen of the River, of
 19 Love, of Coral, of Amber, her proverbial richness. . . . It is much
 20 that Ochún owes to Yemayá.

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—Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún*.⁷¹

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24 With Lydia Cabrera nothing is hidden, but then again nothing is
 25 explained.

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—José Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*.⁷²

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29 I want to come full circle in closing this piece on the fluid relationship
 30 between Yemayá and Ochún by thinking about how vernacular logics
 31 in Afro-Cuban religion are expressed by a range of practitioners in a
 32 plethora of genres of expression: personal experience narratives, ritual
 33 praxis, material culture, ethnographic writing, fiction, plastic arts, and
 34 so on. In doing so I also want to call attention to how Cabrera's writ-
 35 ing mimics the agency that Afro-Cuban religious boundary play affords
 36 in its ability to defy categorization and rigidity. Adept practitioners like
 37 Abreo González and Zamora Albuquerque negotiate the fluid discourses
 38 that allow for the porous, and sometime contentious, coexistence of
 39 *Santería*, *Palo*, and *Espiritismo* in their ritual and narrative expressions.⁷³
 40 Similarly, Cabrera creates a textured bricolage in *Yemayá y Ochún* by
 41 playing with the boundaries of textual form. Her use of reported speech,
 42 *chisme*, ethnographic writing, interview excerpts, and storytelling make
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this text, like *El Monte*, a work that mimics the vernacular logics of hybridity found in the traditions she is describing and recoding for her readers.⁷⁴ As Quiroga notes above for Cabrera’s work, she codes her text in a manner that performs the representation of Afro-Cuban religions in layers, in many different voices that create a heteroglossia, a polyphonic text for readers.⁷⁵

Like with rituals of spirit possession, we find that it takes multiple sets of ears to decipher the variegated voices embedded in Cabrera’s *Yemayá y Ochún*. Some hear the nostalgic voice of a prerevolutionary Cuba; others hear the gossip of the gods themselves; and still others hear the loud, converging sound of an animated conversation written in a Cuban vernacular. Yet, in all these instances, whether reading Cabrera’s text or deciphering the message of a mounted Yemayá or Ochún, a bit of translation as a creative process within itself is required. That is, both Cabrera and Afro-Cuban religious discourses invoke a kind of active, participatory listening that reorders our sensibilities toward both ritual and text.

Take as an example of a coded, loaded message the following passage from *Yamayá y Ochún*:

Era increíble, cuando nos marchamos de Cuba el 1960, el número de Iyalochas, babalochas, babalawos, Padres Inkisa, “gangulueros,” espiritistas, ñañigos, todos erróneamente calificados de brujos, que vivían en paz bajo del manto de “Mama Azul,” a la vera del santuario [de La Virgen de Regla].

It was incredible, when we left Cuba in 1960, the number of Iyalochas, babalochas, babalawos, Padres Inkisa, “gangulueros,” espiritistas, ñañigos, all erroneously classified as sorcerers, that lived in peace under the mantle of the “Mama Azul” [Blue Mother], on the outskirts of the sanctuary [of Our Lady of Regla].⁷⁶

This passage requires that readers engage and code switch in a range of linguistic and religious registers.⁷⁷ In it, Cabrera combines aspects of diasporic nostalgia, religious cross-coding between distinct Afro-Cuban religious cultures, and a lightly veiled reference to the syncretism between Yemayá and La Virgen de Regla. The phrasing also suggests a critique of the racist, colonial, and stereotypical gaze that renders all practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions “sorcerers.”

In addition, the image of Yemayá/La Virgen de Regla as the unifying figure of “Mama Azul” is presented as a benefactor to the



1 cacophony of religious practitioners living near her shrine(s). Yet these
 2 images and their phrasing, as layered and mellifluous as they seem, are
 3 also deceptive in certain kinds of coding by Cabrera. For example, the
 4 above “Iyalochas, babalochas, babalawos, Padres Inkisa, ‘gangulueros,’
 5 espiritistas, and ñañigos” that Cabrera separates from “brujos/sorcere-
 6 ers” are also indeed embedded as sources of knowledge for performing
 7 magical acts in other chapters in the text. For example, one particular
 8 chapter of *Yemayá y Ochún*, “*Itaná idi ochiché. Velas, ligámenes y trabajos*
 9 *de Santería / Itaná idi ochiché. Candles, Binding Spells, and Works of*
 10 *Santería*,”⁷⁸ is entirely dedicated to describing in detail how to work
 11 with herbs, stones, powders, and other ingredients that can heal, bind
 12 lovers, harm an enemy, and perform other kinds of conjure.⁷⁹ Thus, the
 13 above quote, when taken as a part of the whole text of *Yemayá y Ochún*,
 14 resonates with the negotiation of uncovering yet also hiding certain
 15 kinds of information, resonances, and connections between the different
 16 sectors of Afro-Cuban religions that Cabrera is seeking to perform, as
 17 Quiroga would agree, in her text.

18 This performativity lies at the heart of understanding how *los hijo/*
 19 *as de las dos aguas* manifest themselves in multiple and varying ways.
 20 In this chapter we heard from a daughter of Ochún and a daughter
 21 of Yemayá, Claudina Abreo Gonzalez and Mercedes Zamora Alburqu-
 22 erque, who approached their ritually symbiotic relationships to Yemayá
 23 and Ochún in a similar fashion. By utilizing the natural imagery of the
 24 sites where the rivers flow into the ocean, both priestesses expressed the
 25 inherent fluidity found in their boundary play in regards to their devo-
 26 tional acts toward the water deities. Also, a proclivity toward another
 27 kind of boundary play alluded to by Cabrera above that combines ele-
 28 ments of *Santería*, *Palo*, and *Espiritismo* moves entities like Yemayá
 29 into different discursive frameworks and realms of praxis. Like Cabrera,
 30 practitioners push the boundaries of differentiation and incorporation
 31 through a performative coding that is then actively reinterpreted and
 32 added to by the religious communities as a whole.

33 A major aspect that Cabrera and practitioners’ codes of perform-
 34 ing Afro-Cuban religions reveals is the fluidity of subjectivity because
 35 of the shifting nature of embodiment and selfhood. As with the many
 36 switches of voice in the text *Yemayá y Ochún*, so too are different
 37 selves, names, titles, and voices expressed by practitioners of Afro-Cuban
 38 religions as they create who they are in religious, cultural, and social
 39 contexts. Indeed, a tendency exists toward multiplicity in constructing
 40 and performing especially gendered and sexualized identities. Yet this
 41 is complicated by the ramifications of Cuba’s postcolonial past in how
 42 embodying history through possession rituals also marks the body in
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specific ways, such as within racial and ethnic parameters that need to be critically assessed. In this regard, representations of Yemayá and Ochún are profoundly marked mythological figures that display these ethnic, racial, and gendered tensions. However, the fluidity attributed to these representations marks a kind of agency that also challenges the stereotypes used to describe them as sexualized women of color. Like Cabrera's text, images of Yemayá and Ochún described by practitioners carry their own codes that can undo, confuse, and deconstruct themselves.

Notes

The fieldwork conducted in Cuba for this piece was made possible by funding from the Harvard Divinity School's Women's Studies in Religion Program. Many thanks to my collaborators in this chapter, Claudina Abreo González and Mercedes Zamora Albuquerque, who generously spoke with me about Yemayá and Ochún during this visit.

1. Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún* (Miami: Colección de Chicherekú, Ediciones Universal 1980), 55. All translations from Spanish to English are my own.

2. José Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 76.

3. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 21–41; Quiroga, *Tropics*, 76–78; Edna M. Rodríguez-Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 59–98.

4. Mei Mei Sanford, "Living Water," in *Osun across the Waters*, ed. Joseph Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 240.

5. Roy Clive Abrahams, *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (London: University of London Press, 1958), 528.

6. J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 247–48.

7. Mary Ann Clark, *Santería: Correcting the Myths and Uncovering the Realities of a Growing Religion* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); Mary Ann Clark, *Where Men Are Wives and Mothers Rule* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005).

8. Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Oyeronke Olademo, *Gender in Yoruba Oral Traditions*, Lagos: Centre for Black and Africa Arts and Civilizations (CBAAC), 2009; Jacob K. Olupona, "Orisa Osun: Sacred Kingship and Civil Religion in Osogbo, Nigeria," in *Osun across the Waters*, ed. Joseph Murphy and Mei Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 47–67; Babatunde Lawal, *The Gelede Spectacle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 42–43, 49, 256; Rachel Elizabeth Harding, "What Part of the River You're In," in *Osun across the Waters*, ed. Joseph Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 165–88; Matory, *Black Atlantic*,

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1 151, 247–48; J. Lorand Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More* (Oxford
2 and New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 43–46; Rodríguez-
3 Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera*, 13, 90–93; Quiroga, *Tropics*, 76, 81; Randy P. Conner
4 and David Hatfield Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions* (Binghamton:
5 Harrington Park, 2004), 108–09; 235–37.

6 9. See Natalia Bolívar, *Los Orishas en Cuba* (Havana: Unión, 1995). The
7 connections among La Virgen de Regla, La Caridad del Cobre, Yemayá, and
8 Ochún in Cuba are particularly felt in the sphere of the island’s public culture
9 on the contiguous Catholic feast days of September 7 for La Virgen de Regla
10 and September 8 for La Caridad del Cobre, where celebrations in honor of the
11 two Catholic saints and the two *orichas* are vigorously and elaborately expressed.
12 For more on these connections see Cabrera’s *Yemayá*, 9–19, 55–69.

13 10. All excerpts of Mercedes Zamora Albuquerque and Claudina Abreo
14 González in this chapter are taken from interviews that took place in November
15 2009. Both women were interviewed in their homes in Havana, Cuba.

16 11. *Iyalocha* can be translated as “mother of the gods.” For more on
17 race, religion, and gender in Havana, see Solimar Otero, “The Ruins of Havana:
18 Representations of Memory, Religion, and Gender,” *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 2
19 (2012): 143–63.

20 12. Claudina Abreo González, Interview with author, Havana, Cuba,
21 2009.

22 13. This is similar to how Yoruba traditional orature also has an oral
23 literary criticism and accepted aesthetic based on quotation. For more on this
24 point see Karin Barber’s essay, “Quotation and the Constitution of Yoruba Oral
25 Texts,” *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 2 (1999): 1–17.

26 14. Alan Dundes, “Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism,” in *The*
27 *Meaning of Folklore*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Logan: Utah State University Press,
28 2007), 80–87.

29 15. Yemayá is associated with mermaids and her long hair in the tale
30 may be related to the folk literature motif B81.9.1, *Mermaid’s hair reaches her*
31 *waist*, found in Stith Thompson’s, *Motif-index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington:
32 Indiana University Press, 1955–58), 370–71.

33 16. Abreo González, interview, Havana, Cuba, 2009.

34 17. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 70, 83.

35 18. Thompson, *Motif-index*, 370–71; Henry John Drewal, ed. *Sacred*
36 *Waters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), xii–xvii, 1–18.

37 19. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 55, 70, 83; Isabel Castellanos, “A River of Many
38 Turns: The Polysemy of Ochún in Afro-Cuban Tradition,” in *Osun across the*
39 *Waters*, ed. Joseph Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana Uni-
40 versity Press, 2001), 27, 41.

41 20. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 117–99.

42 21. *Ibid.*, 83–84.

43 22. Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar’s Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban*
Nationalism (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993) 5, 75, 165–66,
174–79; Alicia Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance*
(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 101–06.





23. For more on the connections between Ochún and *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* see Joseph Murphy, “Yéyé Cachita: Ochún in a Cuban Mirror,” in *Osun across the Waters*, ed. Joseph Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 87–101. 1
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24. Arrizón, *Queering*, 117. 5
25. Jose Estaban Muñoz, *Disidentifications* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 31–33. 6
26. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 79. 7
27. Thompson, *Motif-index*, 371. 8
28. Ibid. 9
29. Drewal, *Mami Wata*, 1–18. 10
30. Barber, *I Could Speak until Tomorrow* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Olajubu, *Women*, 27–30; Olademo, *Gender*, 105–09. 11
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31. Clark, *Santería*, 131–44; Clarke, *Where Men*, xix–xx. 13
32. Quiroga, *Tropics*, 81. 14
33. David Samper, “Cannibalizing Kids: Rumor and Resistance in Latin America,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 1 (2002): 1–32; Paulette Silva Beauregard, “La feminización del héroe moderno y la novela en ‘Lucía Jerez’ y ‘El hombre de hierro,’” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 26, no. 52 (2000): 135–51; Juan Pablo Dabove, “Los pasquines como alegoría de la disolución de la ciudadanía en ‘La mala hora, de Gabriel García Márquez,’” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 26, no. 52 (2000): 269–87; Adam Jaworski and Justine Coupland, “Othering in Gossip: ‘You Go out You Have a Laugh and You Can Pull Yeah Okay but Like . . .’” *Language in Society* 34, no.5 (2005): 667–94; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 76. 15
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34. Laura Alexandra Harris, “Queer Black Feminism: The Pleasure Principle,” *Feminist Review* 4 (1996): 3–30. 25
35. See Harding, “What Part,” 165–88. 26
36. Kamari Maxine Clarke, *Mapping Yorùbá Networks* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 257–78. 27
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37. Beliso De-Jesús, Aisha, “Reimagining the ‘Global’ versus ‘Local’: Religious Cosmopolitanisms and Transnational *Santería*.” Forthcoming. 29
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38. See Micaela Sánchez-Díaz chapter in this volume, “‘Yemaya Blew that Wire Fence Down’: Invoking African Spiritualities in Chicana Cultural Production,” for more on mestiza representations of Yemayá. 31
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39. Abreo González, interview, Havana, Cuba, 2009. 34
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42. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 115. 40
43. Quiroga, *Tropics*, 76–78, 80; Rodríguez-Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera*, 96–104. See also for an example containing Yemayá, Cabrera, *El Monte Igbo* 41
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- 26 51. Raquel Romberg, “‘Today, Changó Is Changó’: How Africanness
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33 *Witchcraft and Welfare* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 205–07.
- 34 53. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 8–11, 21–23; Arrizón, *Queering*, 88–91,
35 95–99, 177–78.
- 36 54. Viarnés, “Cultural Memory,” 129–30, 150–53; Christina Ayorinde,
37 *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution and National Identity* (Tampa and Miami:
38 University Press of Florida, 2004), 40–43, 64–69, 144–45.
- 39 55. For an example of how *Yemayá* becomes a vehicle for similar kinds
40 of negotiations surrounding gender and ritual power in Nigerian contexts see
41 Matory, *Sex*, 243–50, 253–64.
- 42 56. Quiroga, *Tropics*, 85–88; Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*,
43 ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 273, 278–93, 324–25, 399.
- 44 57. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 44–45.
- 45 58. *Ibid.*, 44–45; Rodríguez-Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera*, 91–92.



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