The Casta Paintings: Aesthetic Displacements and Resistance through Colonial Art

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis offers a philosophical and aesthetic analysis of the eighteenth century casta painting genre from colonial Mexico. From the colonial ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) and the casta system, the casta paintings visually encode a racial hierarchy by depicting mixed-race unions – across Indigenous, Black, Spanish, and mixed-race peoples – and their offspring. Through the frameworks of multiple Latin American philosophers, I analyze the visual representations within the casta paintings to understand how these paintings have situated themselves within different colonial logics and lines of social classification. Then, turning toward Latin American aesthetics, I first examine the aesthetic displacements embedded within the genre that shaped and constrained the identities of the colonized. Second, I look towards anti-colonial aesthetics to identify moments of visual resistance within the casta paintings, exploring how colonial art has found lapses within the colonial sensibility and resisted such systems/logics. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to further understanding the historical context of the casta genre while emphasizing the mechanisms of colonial oppression and the possibilities for resistance within colonial art.

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DEDICATION

Para mi familia. May we be a step closer to understanding our histories to understand our present.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION 10

II. CHAPTER 1 – SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION IN THE CASTA PAINTINGS: UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF RACE, LABOR, GENDER, AND TIME 15

The Casta Paintings and Social Classification 16

Social Classification and Race 19

Social Classification and Labor 21

Social Classification and Gender 25

The Casta Paintings and Time 28

Conclusion 31

III. CHAPTER 2 – RACE, GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND TEMPORALITY: AESTHETIC DISPLACEMENTS WITHIN THE CASTA PAINTINGS 34

The Casta Paintings and Aesthetics 35

Race and Temporal Displacements 40

Colonial Logic of Redemption 42

Temporal Lineages 43

Heterosexual and Gendered Displacements 48

Displacement of White Women 50

Displacement of Indigenous Women 53

Displacement of Black Women 57

IV. CHAPTER 3 – AFFIRMATIONS OF THE COLONIZED AND THE VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE: ANTI-COLONIAL AESTHETICS AND RESISTANCE IN THE CASTA PAINTINGS 61
Anti-Colonial Aesthetics and Resistance 62
Affirmations of the Colonized in the Castas 68
Manuel Arellano, *Diseño de mulata* 70
The Virgen de Guadalupe in *Escenas de mestizaje* 73
History of the Virgen de Guadalupe in Colonial Mexico 73
The Virgen de Guadalupe as a Resistant Figure 76
V. CONCLUSION 80
BIBLIOGRAPHY 83

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1. Anonymous, *Las castas,* 18th Century, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Mexico 18

2. Luis de Mena, *Escenas de mestizaje,* ca. 1750, Museo de América, Madrid, Spain 50

3. Miguel Cabrera, I. *De español y de india, mestiza,* 1763, Private Collection 56

4. Andrés de Islas, No. 4, *De español y negre, nace mulata,* 1774. Museo de América, Madrid, Spain..... 59

5. Manuel Arellano, *Diseño de mulata,* 1711, Denver Art Museum, Colorado, United States of America 70

Introduction

During the eighteenth century in colonial Mexico, a series of paintings emerged throughout the region that modern scholars labeled 'casta paintings.' These paintings are attributed to the life, nature, society, and people within the growing colony of New Spain. The main focus within this genre was the different 'types' of people that both existed and could be 'created' through various sexual relations among Indigenous, Black, and Spanish people. To put it simply, the focus of these paintings was on the mixed-race population and their descendants, visually representing their physical, cultural, and phenotypic traits. The common manner in which these paintings are constructed is by visually representing one or all three racial combinations – Indigenous-Spaniard, Black-Spaniard, or Indigenous-Black – across multiple generations. A typical casta painting consisted of either one to sixteen panels, each featuring a mother, father, and the resulting *casta* (or child).[1]

In understanding the visual expressions of these racial combinations and their lineages within the casta genre, it is important to note the ideologies and systems behind it. First is the colonial ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity), which is identified as a Spanish social/legal doctrine that emphasized the purity of blood, ancestry, and faith, through the absence of Indigenous or Black blood.[2] The second notion behind the casta paintings is the *sistema de castas* (casta system), which is a race-based hierarchy that relies on a system of social classification based on Spanish, Indigenous, and Black ancestry. Art historian Ilona Katzew describes, the casta system (in part with *limpieza de sangre*) has three notions: "First, to

[1] The word *casta* can be used synonymously with *raza* (race). However, when the term *casta* was introduced in Spain and Portugal, it had a closer meaning to *linaje* (lineage). For more, see Laura Giraudo's *Casta(s), 'sociedad de castas' e indigenismo: la interpretación del pasado colonial en el siglo XX*.

[2] *Limpieza de sangre* first began through the exclusion of Jewish/Muslim blood, but later transformed into excluding Indigenous and Black blood. See María Martínez's Genealogical Fictions for an in-depth history and tracing of the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.*

guarantee that each race occupy a social niche assigned by nature; second, to offer the possibility of improving one's blood through the right pattern of mixing; third, to inhibit the mixture of Indians and Blacks, which was deemed the more dangerous to the Spanish social order."[3] Therefore, when understanding the visual expressions of race through the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* and the social system of the casta system, we see how the paintings demonstrate the intersection of vision and power within the colonial world.

Many historians and art historians (such as Ilona Katzew, María Martínez, and Rebecca Earl, to name a few) have analyzed the casta paintings as a genre and/or the context in which they arose. However, there has yet to be much philosophical analysis of the casta paintings, especially in the realm of Latin American aesthetics. This project is in part to connect the casta paintings to the broader Latin American philosophical canon, while analyzing the paintings in two ways through Latin American aesthetics. The first is to understand the articulations imposed on the colonized not only through the paintings writ large but also through the roles and positions they encounter within the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.* Second is to find how the colonized have resisted visually within the casta paintings, in how structures and ideologies during the Mexican colonial era have been *resisted.*

Concerning the first, Chapter 1 focuses on understanding the visual markers of social classification within the casta paintings along four lines: race, gender, class, and time. The casta paintings, in their creation, express how power is distributed among people within colonial Mexico. And in using Aníbal Quijano's work, we can understand the multiple lines in which power is distributed within the casta paintings, especially in the naturalization of race, gender, the separation of class, and with the progression of humanity. Alongside Quijano, I utilize the

[3] Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth – Century Mexico*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 69.

works of María Lugones, Santiago Castro-Gómez, and Alejandro Vallega to develop the account of social classification in the casta paintings. Whom respectively gives insight into the notions of gender and colonialism, social capital of whiteness in respect to class and labor, and to an understanding of time and the new historical process developed from colonialism. From my analysis, I not only connect Latin American thinkers and their concepts to the casta paintings, but also contribute to further understanding of how the casta paintings and the visual expression of *limpieza de sangre* are situated in colonial ideology.

Chapter 2 begins viewing the casta paintings through Latin American aesthetics. Specifically, I follow the work of Alejandro Vallega in viewing the casta paintings as dynamic images that can infiltrate the imagination and determine the articulation of the colonized. This chapter is focused on the aesthetic sensibility that is an undercurrent that operates under institutions and systems that shape and articulate one's understanding, identity, and existence. It is through the casta paintings that one can find specific colonial determinations – or displacements – of the colonized. Here, I go over two different aesthetic displacements within various casta paintings. The first is racial/temporal displacements that discuss how the colonized are not only displaced racially but also temporally. In other words, in the casta paintings, there are notions of redemption that operate temporally that emphasize that the colonized have no future in their own right and must assimilate and reproduce with the Spanish to progress with the rest of humanity. The second is heterosexual/gendered displacements that focus on the sexuality and role that white, Indigenous, and Black women play within the castas and *limpieza de sangre.*

In identifying two aesthetic displacements, I am marking a limit within the aesthetic sensibility, but in this limit, there is an opening of possibility. To use the words of Vallega, “images concern the possibility and limits for the articulation of lives that may be understood in

their humanity that is, images affirm and give occasion for the articulation of one's distinct senses of being."[4] Chapter 3 explores the opening of possibilities within the casta painting genre. It is here that I shift to the works of Omar Rivera's anti-colonial aesthetics and notions of resistance. I examine how the casta paintings can exist outside of the colonial sensibility, in finding resistance, and toward a means to (re)configure the way the colonized are visually situated/expressed within them. Or as Vallega articulates, to find how the casta paintings affirm and give new occasions to one's sense of being.

In my analysis of the casta paintings, it is important to note that this is not done to understand how the casta genre may reflect current and modern articulations of the colonized or oppressed. Rather, this project situates itself within the historical analysis of the Mexican colonial era, within the casta system, and in the development/transformation of *limpieza de sangre.* Through a historical analysis, there are two dimensions that occur. On one hand, it allows for an understanding of how the colonized *have been* articulated and expressed, not only through colonial ideology but also visually through colonial art. In this sense, a historical analysis, in my view, allows for a deeper comprehension of the way the colonized have been marginalized. On the other hand, it gives light to how the colonized and the oppressed have resisted, in ways that anti-colonial, decolonial, and/or liberatory thought has manifested, especially in colonial art. From there, it can allow for a better understanding of how oppressive ideology/articulations have been resisted and in ways the colonized continue to exist in the modern/colonial project.

[4] Alejandro Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy: From Identity to Radical Exteriority,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 200.

Overall, this project gives rise to understanding the casta paintings and the ideology behind them (*limpieza de sangre*) through a philosophical and aesthetic manner. In drawing from multiple disciplines – such as history, art history, Latin American philosophy, Latin American aesthetics, and anti-colonial/decolonial theory – I hope to shed light on colonial art and the historical understanding it can provide toward the situatedness of the colonized and the colonizer in the colonial era. Even more broadly, this project seeks to demonstrate ways in which the colonized have been articulated and in ways they have *resisted.*

Chapter 1 – Social Classification in the Casta Paintings: Understanding the Visual Representations of Race, Gender, Class, and Time

The casta paintings visually represent the complex socioracial classifications of Spanish, Indigenous, Black, and mixed-race persons. This socioracial classification reflects the racial, ethnic, and gendered classification that occurs under colonialism, as Aníbal Quijano describes. To him, colonialism brought on racial and ethnic classification of people among the three categories of labor, gender, and race. He states, "In this view, social classes are presented as structures created by the nature of the social relationships; their occupants are the bearers of their determinations, and as such, people's behaviors should reflect those structural determinations."[1] Therefore, when relating the casta paintings to Quijano's social classification, we see the material and visual manifestation of classifying people based on race, gender, class, and how these factors compound into their social standing. More precisely, the casta paintings are an investment of such ideology among the Spanish and Creole elites within the colonial order.

As Omar Rivera explains in his article, "Mestizajes and Resistant Alterities," such classification from the casta paintings manifests and creates the logic of coloniality of power, which "reflects the colonial intent to support a particular distribution of labor along racial lines (which implies the distribution of rights, political power, nobility, humanity, rationality)," while also reflecting the anxieties and arbitrariness of the racial and social mixtures.[2] The socioracial and economic classification of the casta paintings works in a twofold manner. First, the social classification emphasized the hierarchical structure of society in colonial Mexico. Second, it

[1] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification." In *Anibal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power.* Edited by Walter Mignolo, Rita Segato, and Catherine Walsh (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024), 111.
[2] Omar Rivera, "Mestizajes and Resistant Alterities," *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy,* vol. 11, no. 1 (2020): 28.

worked to soothe the anxieties of blurring racial and class lines that were beginning to form in the eighteenth century. The casta paintings have a clear connection and operation in forming coloniality, especially in the context of colonial Mexico. However, how do we understand the casta paintings and their relation to the intricate categories of social classification, and to time, in the context of colonial Mexico?

In this chapter, I expand on how the casta paintings are situated within the larger scope of the colonial logic developed through colonialism. As I described above, the casta paintings reflect the social classification of colonial society. This chapter is to further explore the situatedness of the casta paintings in colonial Mexico through social classification and time. To articulate the casta paintings' situatedness in the colonial world, I first expand on the casta paintings' relation to Aníbal Quijano's social classification within the areas of race, labor, and gender. Then, I turn to their connection to time and temporality to discuss the temporal organization within the casta paintings.

The Casta Paintings and Social Classification

Aníbal Quijano understands the concept of social classification to refer to as "the long-term processes by which people compete for control over the basic spheres of social existence…"[3] In relation to coloniality, social classification is shaped by the distribution of power, which, in the colonial context, centers on the exploitation and domination of colonized peoples. Quijano outlines three lines of social classification that were brought through the colonial world: labor, gender, and race. The classification of labor came with its control over the labor force, including the control over resources and the institution of property. The classification of gender deals with control over sex, pleasure, and descendants. Then, race was

[3] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," 116.

created to distinguish between the colonized and colonizers, intersecting with the lines of labor and gender.[4]

In relation to the *sistema de castas,* each line of social classification is reliant on the idea of the apparatus of whiteness. As Santiago Castro-Gómez describes in his book *Zero-Point Hubris*, the apparatus of whiteness "was not [about] being 'truly' white, […] but rather to stage oneself socially as white and be accepted as such by the most preeminent social strata."[5] In other words, the apparatus of whiteness under the *sistema de castas* emphasizes the claim and assimilation to whiteness as a lifestyle and culture, which in colonial Mexico was furthered by the ideology of *limpieza de sangre*. The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* had the goal of 'cleansing' the bloodlines of Indigenous and Black persons from their lifestyle and culture, to then either force elimination or assimilation into the white Spanish society. "[T]he meaning of blood purity moved farther and farther away from religious practices and became embedded in a visual discourse about the body, and in particular about skin color. […] In Mexico, these theories reinforced the concept of purity of blood's links to 'Spanishness' and 'whiteness,'…"[6] Therefore, when it comes to Quijano's three lines of social classification in the context of colonial Mexico, it functions to articulate the racial, classist, and gendered social hierarchy. More precisely, the social classification that was being produced in colonial Mexico was in line with the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* in its goal of achieving the apparatus of whiteness.

[4] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," 117.
[5] Santiago Castro-Gómez, "Purus Ab Omnia Macula Sanguinis: The Apparatus of Whiteness in New Granada." *In Zero-Point Hubris: Science, Race, and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century Latin America*, translated by George Ciccariello-Maher and Don T. Deere, 51-116. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 54.
[6] María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 248.

composed,From the *sistema de castas,* the casta paintings visually reflect the concept of Quijano's social classification in part with the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.* Specifically, the painting *Las castas* (Figure 1) demonstrates the basic structure of Quijano's social classification, where it outlines racial, classist, and gendered classifications, each with its own unique family



Figure 1: Las castas (Anonymous), 18th Century, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Mexico. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Las_castas,_pintura_an%C3%B3nima_en_el_Museo_Nacional_del_Virreinato_01.jpg

dynamics. As I will articulate in the next sections, the casta paintings demonstrate a visual expression of Quijano's social classification along the three lines of race, labor, and gender, while performing under the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.*

Social Classification and Race

As I stated above, the social classification within the casta paintings and the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* were based on the idea of achieving the apparatus of whiteness. Under Quijano's analysis, the social category of 'race' was naturalized through colonialism. Where "Unlike in any other previous experience of colonialism, the old ideas of superiority of the dominant and the inferiority of the dominated under European colonialism were mutated in a relationship of biologically and structurally superior and inferior."[7] In this section, I am focusing on the racial ideology that the casta paintings provide and establish from the naturalization of race in the colonial world.

Quijano states in "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality" that the process of naturalizing race as a social classification began with the development of social identities. "So, in the first place, new social identities were produced all over the world: 'whites,' 'Indians,' 'Negroes,' 'yellows,' and 'olives,' using physiognomic traits of the peoples as external manifestation of their 'racial' nature."[8] When incorporating the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* with the social classification of race, it is important to acknowledge the history of the ideology. *Limpieza de sangre* began within Spain during the sixteenth century in efforts to distinguish between traditional Christians (Old Christians) and new converts (*conversos*). The goal of *limpieza de sangre* during this time was to protect "[the] 'pure' Christian lineages from converso (understood

[7] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," In *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power.* Edited by Walter Mignolo, Rita Segato, and Catherine Walsh (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024), 76.
[8] Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," 76.

as 'Jewish') blood."[9] In Figure 1, we see a much-evolved ideology of *limpieza de sangre* that began to formulate social identities along the lines of race. Compared to Quijano and the developed notion of *limpieza de sangre,* Figure 1 holds a more complex and diverse set of social identities. *Las castas* identifies sixteen different social identities, outlined as follows: *Español, Castizo, Mestizo, Multato, Morisco, Chino, Salta atras, Lobo, Gibaro, Albarazado, Canbujo, Sanbaigo, Calpamulato, Tente en el Aire, No te entiendo,* and *Torna atras.*

This wide variety of social identities conformed through the hierarchy of the *sistema de castas,* in which the *Español(a), Castizo(a),* and the Creole elite held noble prestige and social power. In fact, all other social identities were deemed as the social Other as their blood was 'tainted' or their phenotype physically othered them. Even some of the terms used in the social identities were to describe their racial classification. Specifically, the term *mestizo,* in its literal meaning, is someone of both Spanish and Indigenous descent. But started as someone of illegitimate birth, as *mestizos* did not belong fully to Indigenous or Spanish communities.[10] It was not till the seventeenth century that *mestizo* began to be associated with its more literal meaning, especially in its relation to the casta paintings. *Mulato* was used to describe the descendants of Spaniards and Africans. Migdalia Arcila-Valenzuela explains that the term was meant to be derogatory as "*Mulato* was a direct reference to the word *mula* (mule) since the offspring of Spaniards and Africans 'was deemed uglier and stranger.'"[11] Then the descendants that are mixed more with Indigenous or Black blood are described as animalistic (*lobo,* meaning wolf*)* or as something incompressible. "The last generational unit of a typical series, which is characterized by the total or near-total absence of Spaniards and by ongoing reproduction

[9] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 28.
[10] Migdalia Arcila-Valenzuela, "Visualizing Taxonomic Reasoning: Casta Paintings and the Hierarchization of Bodily Differences." *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 13, no. 1 (2025): 5.
[11] Arcila-Valenzuela, "Visualizing Taxonomic Reasoning," 5.

between people of African and Indigenous descent, normally links mestizaje to incomprehensibility (as conveyed by terms such as [a tente en el aire] 'hold yourself in mid-air,' [*torna atras*] 'return backwarsds,' 'lobo return backwards,' 'mulatto return backwards,' 'lobo once again,' and [no te entiendo] 'I don't get you,') and in some cases to moral degeneration."[12]

The racial social classification and *limpieza de sangre,* on one hand, aided in the process of naturalizing 'race.' On the other hand, also aided in the naturalization of biological attributes to certain races and race combinations. From the casta paintings*,* the naturalization of race imbues power relations and hierarchies. As I have described above, at times the names of certain racial combinations reflect their 'natural' attributes or incomprehensibility. This is because the casta paintings reflect the social ideology of blood being "a vehicle for transmitting a host of physical, psychological, and moral traits."[13] It is from this standpoint that the casta paintings serve as a visual articulation of the naturalization of race and the effects blood has on one's social standing. The visual and terminological degradation of the colonized in the casta paintings is to emphasize the supremacy and power Spaniards held. Put simply, it is a racialization of power relations. As Katzew expresses it, "According to such a perspective, Blacks, who were thought to embody a regression to an earlier moment of racial development, served as a foil for Spanish superiority. In other words, imagining the 'descent' or degeneration in which humanity could fall was a necessary part of imagining the exaltation to which it could aspire."[14]

Social Classification and Labor

The second form of social classification lies within labor. Quijano describes that, within the capitalist world, it is arranged into the 'colonial center' and 'colonial periphery.' The

[12] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 233.
[13] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 231.
[14] Ilona Katzew "Casta Painting: Identity and Social Stratification in Colonial Mexico," In *New World Orders: Casta Paintings and Colonial Latin America*, Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996, 12.

'colonial center' benefits from the wage labor that dominated and sustained it structurally, "which is to say that the wage relationship was primarily 'white.'"[15] Whereas the 'colonial periphery' is structurally dominated when it comes to the wage relationship. The labor the 'colonial periphery' engaged with in the colonial era was primarily exploitative, as it engaged with forms of enslavement, servitude, small-scale production, and reciprocity.[16] Thus, the social classes that formed under the capitalistic structure were separated by those who were dominant over wage labor (capitalists/colonial center) and then those dominated and dependent on wage labor (middle and lower class/colonial periphery).

In Figure 1, labor and class were classified based on the clothing and the physical labor depicted. The 'colonial center' would be those of high racial status; the *Español(a)* and the *Castizo(a)*, whereas the 'colonial periphery' would be the *Mestizo(a), Multato(a), Morisco(a), Indio(a), Negro(a),* etc. To articulate how the casta paintings demonstrated socioracial classification based on labor, I am using Santiago Castro-Gómez's concept of the symbolic capital of whiteness. He explains that in colonial society, the demonstration of the symbolic capital of whiteness was through wealth and social status expressed through public displays of clothing. "The goal was to regulate not only the form of the garments, but also the material, craftsmanship, and adornments. Nobles were allowed to flaunt expensive jewels and to use luxurious materials like velvet and silk, while these were prohibited for the lower classes."[17]

Las castas differentiate between social classes based on clothing. The 'colonial center' is the families that contain an *Español(a)* and wear 'luxurious' clothing. The 'colonial periphery' is the families of just Indigenous and Black lineages who wear less 'luxurious' clothing, while still

[15] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," 123.
[16] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," 123.
[17] Castro-Gómez, "Purus Ab Omnia Macula Sanguinis," 67.

maintaining some resemblance to the higher class. What distinguishes the 'colonial center' and the 'colonial periphery' from their clothing similarities is footwear. *Las castas* showcases many lower-class families in less luxurious clothing, but furthers their distinction from the upper class by showing some or all members of the family to be barefoot. This is to emphasize that a characteristic of the symbolic capital of whiteness is predicated on the public 'display' of social status and nobility, as "clothing was a mark that identified a person's socio-racial character."[18] The symbolic 'marker' in *Las castas* is not only the less luxurious clothing but the lack of shoes, indicating their social status and distance from the apparatus of whiteness.

The other aspect of the symbolic capital of whiteness lies in physical labor. As Castro-Gómez articulates, "manual labor was seen by the criollo elites as a 'vile' exercise because it was undertaken by Black slaves, Indians on encomiendas, and mestizo peasants (also called 'peons'). The symbolic display of whiteness therefore required that a person considered white occupy 'noble trades' and not 'vile and mechanical trades.'"[19] In *Las castas*, the 'colonial center' experiences the least amount of physical labor, visually demonstrating their dominant social status and symbolic capital of whiteness. When looking at the first six family scenes in Figure 1, there is one *Español(a)* parent who establishes the symbolic capital of whiteness for that family. The symbolic capital of whiteness is not only applied to the *Español(a)* but instead extends to the entire family. Each family member in the first six scenes is shown not engaging with any form of manual labor, emphasizing their relation to whiteness and their position within the 'colonial center.' To use Castro-Gómez's analysis, the first six families within *Las castas* do not engage in the 'vile' exercise of physical labor and instead engage with their 'noble' status in the capitalist

[18] Castro-Gómez, "Purus Ab Omnia Macula Sanguinis," 66.
[19] Castro-Gómez, "Purus Ab Omnia Macula Sanguinis," 68.

society. The only objects the first six families hold are 'symbolic' items to extend their status as the 'colonial center', such as cups, fans, whips, or swords.

Scenes seven to sixteen in *Las castas* represent the 'colonial periphery' as they are the ones that visually perform the most physical labor. These scenes do not exhibit the symbolic capital of whiteness; in fact, it visually demonstrates the 'vile' exercise of physical labor. "[T]he majority of casta sets offer a vision of colonial society, in which members of the lower castas are usually shown at work…"[20] More precisely, looking at scene seven, the *Chino* is seen carrying a basket of food on top of his head. His partner, an *India,* is carrying a water jug and a blanket, and their child is carrying a bowl filled with liquid. Their items and physical labor otherize the family, and cast them as lower or outside of the 'colonial center.'

The ideology of *limpieza de sangre* operated uniquely in its relations to labor, class, and the symbolic capital of whiteness. *Las castas* emphasizes the role of the *Español(a)* to grant the symbolic capital of whiteness and high social status. The *Español(a)* is used as the 'cleanser' and 'repressor' of all aspects of the colonized, or as Quijano explains, "they repressed as much as possible the colonized forms of knowledge production, the models of the production of meaning, their symbolic universe, the model of expression and of objectification and subjectivity."[21]

For example, in scene one, the *India* (mother) and the *Mestizo* (child) are fully dressed in luxurious clothing. The *Español* (father) situates the *India* and their *Mestizo* child in the 'colonial center' on two levels. First, by granting them access to display their symbolic capital of whiteness through their clothing and lack of physical labor.[22] Essentially, the *Español* has

[20] Katzew, "Casta Painting," 24.
[21] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." In *Anibal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power*. Edited by Walter Mignolo, Rita Segato, and Catherine Walsh, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024), 264.
[22] It is important to note that this visual expression within the casta paintings blurred socioracial class lines and aided the 'anxieties' of Spaniards and Creoles. As Katzew states, "The increasing erosion of race as an indicator of

"forced the colonized to learn the dominant culture in any way that would be useful to the reproduction of domination…"[23] The symbolic capital of whiteness and class is dependent on the *Español(a);* if they are not present within the family, then the colonized cannot be in the 'colonial center.' In other words, without the *Español(a),* the 'colonial periphery' will always be condemned to physical labor and publicly display themselves in a lower class.

The second is with fluidity. It is important to understand that the casta paintings at first glance may signify a rigid system, but as one looks at the scenes displayed, there is a sense of fluidity. In *Las castas,* the *Español(a)* has the power to pull the colonized away from their lower class and social classification. Rebecca Earle, in her article, explains that, "Neither in [the] casta paintings nor in colonial society was caste simply an inflexible, permanent attribute; it was nonetheless understood to be an embodied, genealogical condition. Caste was simultaneously genealogical and mutable, not only in practice but also in theory, because it was premised on an understanding of the human body that allowed inherited conditions to change both within an individual's lifetime and across generations."[24] The *Español(a)* in Figure 1 holds the power of fluidity for the colonized, not only to socially elevate their Indigenous or Black partner but to socially elevate their bloodline to progress further. In this regard, despite the 'rigid' visual expression of race and class, the casta paintings functioned to provide fluidity through *limpieza de sangre.*

Social Classification and Gender

socioeconomic class resulted in a greater insecurity about status among the elite. Spanish and creole anxiety over the loss of control of the population and of their privileged status was by no means imaginary." 12.

[23] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," 264.

[24] Rebecca Earle, "The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 3 (2016): 432.

The third form of social classification for Quijano lies within gender, to which he identifies as the formal organization of families and sexual behaviors. This imposition of gendered and familial relations emphasized the need for family unity and integration, where the "axes of the bourgeois family matrix in the Eurocentered world, was the counterpart of the continuing disintegration of kinship unity among the non-white races, who were appropriable and distributable not only like pieces of merchandise but also directly, like animals."[25]

Similar to race, Quijano begins the analysis of gender being naturalized throughout colonialism.[26] María Lugones expands on Quijano's analysis in her article "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," explicitly stating that colonialism brought the naturalization of gender, which included a second inferiorization based on gender. Lugones called this the modern/colonial gender system, which rearranged the understanding of gender and imposed a heterosexual understanding that controlled sex in all aspects.[27] In terms of social classification, the distinction lies within both race and gender. Specifically, Lugones explains that the dichotomous distinction between the colonized and the colonizers starts with the dehumanization of Indigenous and Black peoples. "Under the imposed gender framework, the bourgeois white Europeans were civilized; they were fully human. The hierarchical dichotomy as a mark of the human also became a normative tool to damn the colonized. The behaviors of the colonized and their personalities/souls were judged as bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, and sinful."[28] In other words, Indigenous and Black people were classified as an inversion of their white counterparts. Only the white bourgeois could be

[25] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," 124-125.
[26] The naturalization of gender I discuss here is in line with the idea that colonialism brought the hierarchization of gender. Not the creation of gender. I do not follow María Lugones' analysis that gender did not exist pre-colonialism. See Rita Laura Segato's *Gender and Coloniality: From Low-Intensity Communal Patriarchy to High-Intensity Colonial-Modern Patriarchy.*
[27] María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 203.
[28] María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia,* vol. 25, no.4 (2010): 743.

classified as human or civilized; the Indigenous/Black people were non-human and characterized only by their 'animalistic' qualities. Then, with the addition of gender, Indigenous and Black men are classified as non-human based on their race and classified as males because men are the ones able to dominate. Indigenous and Black women are non-human based on race and then deemed as females because women cannot be colonized.[29] White women in Lugones' analysis are othered but not inferiorized/dehumanized as Indigenous and Black women. Instead, the naturalization of gender in the colonial world favors "the lives of white bourgeois men and women and [constitutes] the modern/colonial meaning of men and women" (this will be expanded upon more in Chapter 2).[30]

To Quijano's analysis, *Las castas* demonstrates the social classification of gender and its hierarchical relations through the naturalization of the nuclear family. For example, the ordering of the families always occurs as follows: the man, the woman, and then the child, reinforcing the idea of the nuclear family. As Katzew describes, "The deployment of the family trope created a sense of unity within hierarchy, and it promoted an image of domesticity that masked racial tensions. At the same time the image of the family served to 'naturalize' the overall social hierarchy portrayed in casta paintings. Since the subordination of woman to man and child to woman were considered natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature."[31] In other words, the casta paintings reinforce the naturalization of the nuclear family, emphasizing the social hierarchy of man to woman to child, perpetuating the desired and acceptable kinship.

[29] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 745.
[30] Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," 206.
[31] Katzew, "Casta Painting," 13.

Under Lugones' analysis, the naturalization of gender situates the white man and woman in a high social status or in the 'colonial center.' As I described in the previous section, without the presence of the *Español(a)* in a family unit, the racialized Other (colonial periphery) is condemned to their lower social status. This signifies the importance of the white bourgeois men and women, as they dictate the meaning of being in the 'colonial center' racially and by gender. To be outside of the 'colonial center' within the aspects of gender and race is to be dehumanized and sexed. As Lugones states, Indigenous and Black women are to be understood as "animals in a sense that went further than the identification of white women with nature, infants, and small animals. They were understood as animals in the deep sense of 'without gender,' sexually marked as female, but without the characteristics of femininity."[32] The 'colonial periphery' under her analysis became an inversion of the white Spanish man and woman, pushing them further from achieving the apparatus or symbolic capital of whiteness.

The Casta Paintings and Time

Beyond social classification, Quijano also understands that colonialism brought a new historical process. To him, this new historical process created a new sense of space/time both materially and subjectively. "It is this element that unleashed the process of the constitution of a new perspective about time and about history. The perception of change brings about a new idea of the future, since it is the only territory of time where the changes can occur."[33] What created this new historical process began with the differentiated *ego* (self/I) of the colonizers. This differentiated *ego* in colonization is what leads to the naturalization of race and gender as I described above, where the colonizer sees themselves as the superior *ego* and holds power above all other beings within the colonial world. As Alejandro Vallega, in his book *Latin American*

[32] Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," 202-203.
[33] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," 270.

Philosophy From Identity to Radical Exteriority, articulates, "With this violent assimilation of culture by exclusion, with the physical destruction of people's existences, the conqueror came to see himself as a power above all other beings. […] This system of exclusion and violence established a superiority [of the *ego cogito*] that led the conqueror to see himself as naturally superior…"[34] In other words, it is from the formation of social classification based on race, labor, and gender in the colonial world that resulted in the colonizer/conqueror establishing themselves as the naturally superior *ego.*

Another demonstration of this superior *ego* of the colonizer over the colonized is shown through the subject-object relation, where the subject (colonizer) is deemed fully rational, and the object (colonized) is deemed naturally irrational. "[T]he 'subject' is a category referring to the isolated individual because it constitutes itself in itself and for itself, in its discourse and in its capacity of reflection. The Cartesian 'cogito, ergo sum' means exactly that. Second, the 'object' is a category referring to an entity not only different from the 'subject' individual but also external to the latter by its nature."[35] Hence, with the colonizers' superior outlook within the colonial world through race, class, and gender, they held a unique position of power and knowledge, resulting in a new temporal perspective in history. More precisely, "the Europeans generated a new temporal perspective of history and relocated the colonized populations, along with their respective histories and cultures, in the past of a historical trajectory whose culmination was Europe."[36]

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[34] Alejandro Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy: From Identity to Radical Exteriority,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 104.
[35] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," In *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power*. Edited by Walter Mignolo, Rita Segato, and Catherine Walsh, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024) 78.
[36] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," 265.

The newly established temporal perspective through the Western *ego cogito* holds the sense of time and temporality of history. This means that the colonized, in learning their history, which also holds their futures, are controlled and dictated by Western nations. "This concept of History is dependent on a specific line of temporality: the past is what has been left behind or what remains to be rewritten by most advanced Western thought of the present; the future belongs to that Western present, as does the destiny of humanity."[37] In other words, the Western sense of History sees time as a singular line of progression. To which, in the context of the colonized, were directed toward a linear progression of time under the direction of the colonizer. This results in a displacement of their histories and their futures as the West is dispossessing their human consciousness and knowledge.

In *Las castas,* the control and sense of time are subliminal. To understand the role of time in the casta paintings, we must look at the family lineages that are depicted. For example, scenes one, two, and three depict a Spanish-Indigenous lineage. It is here that the casta paintings are referencing how a family lineage can go from an Indigenous person to a Spaniard. "In particular, they allow for the possibility that a Spanish-Indian union can on the third generation result in a 'Spaniard' if its descendants continue to reproduce with persons of Iberian descent."[38] On one hand, we see a control of Indigenous lineage in the casta paintings, signifying the overall Western control of time and human consciousness. To use Vallega's analysis, it is the Indigenous past, more specifically their heritage/lineage, that must be forgotten or left behind. This is the foundation of *limpieza de sangre* that is expressed in the casta paintings*,* where the goal is to erase and eliminate the Indigenous lineage/heritage through the acts of reproduction with

[37] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 105.
[38] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 233.

Spaniards. More precisely, to dispossess the colonized "of their own and singular historical identities," specifically their heritage (this will be expanded upon in more detail in Chapter 2).[39]

Then what remains is the Western projection of what an Indigenous lineage is to look like to fit into the new cultural making of humanity. In particular, to *Las castas,* the second generation (scene two) of the Spanish-Indigenous lineage is to have a *Mestizo(a)* and an *Español(a)* pair together to then produce a *Castizo(a).* The third generation (scene three) of the Spanish-Indigenous lineage is projected to have the *Castizo(a)* pair with an *Español(a)* to then produce an *Español(a),* resulting in the completion of the Western projection of humanity. What is emphasized here is the progress of humanity – i.e., the Indigenous lineages – through blood to become less 'primitive' and more 'civilized.' And this idea of progress within the casta paintings comes from the Spanish establishing themselves as the civilization, as the natural superior.

On the other hand, it is important to note that despite the Western projection for the Indigenous and Black lineages, it is possible to 'fall' away from the Western projection of humanity. In other words, the descendants of any particular group can 'fall' away from the Western projection, especially if the family lineage continues to reproduce with Indigenous and Black people. For example, scenes six through sixteen demonstrate how a family lineage, despite the influence of Spanish blood, can regress to 'barbarism.' This regression results in racial classifications such as '*no te entiendo*' and '*torna atrás*,' signifying their disconnection from Spanish blood or the Western projection for humanity. Under the ideology of *limpieza de sangre,* the 'fall' is not something irrevocable; redemption is possible. But that redemptive power is only held in the Spanish, as it is only their Christian blood that holds redemptive power.[40]

Conclusion

[39] Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," 275.
[40] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 235.

This chapter has served to articulate how the casta paintings are situated within the Mexican colonial world. Specifically, I have discussed how casta paintings – in their relation to *limpieza de sangre* – connect to Aníbal Quijano's concept of social classification, along the three lines of race, labor, and gender, and with his articulation of time. It is through Quijano's analysis – and the supporting analysis of María Lugones, Santiago Castro-Gómez, and Alejandro Vallega – that we understand how the casta paintings, in their reflection of the *sistema de castas*, operate by emphasizing the naturalization of race and gender, the separation of class, and the disruption and control of time.

Through his analysis, we understand how the casta paintings, in relation to *limpieza de sangre,* operate by emphasizing the naturalization of race and gender, the separations of class, and the disruption and control of time. More precisely, the casta paintings articulate the naturalization of race not only through visual depictions but also through the terminology to describe the Indigenous, Black, and mixed-race peoples. Then, with the social classification of labor, we see the visual separation of class within the casta paintings. By using Santiago Castro-Gómez's concept of the symbolic capital of whiteness, demonstrates how the casta paintings rely on the 'public' display of fashion and physical labor to signify class. And with the final line of social classification, I describe, through the analysis of María Lugones, how the casta paintings also demonstrate the naturalization of gender. This is through the institution of gendered hierarchy and the nuclear family within the casta paintings, along with the role of white men and women to signify high social status. Finally, I discussed the concept of time as described by Aníbal Quijano and Alejandro Vallega, where colonialism established a new temporal perspective that controlled not only one's history and future, but the projection of humanity. In the next two chapters, I shift toward analyzing the paintings through the lens of Latin American

aesthetics. Specifically, the next chapter will discuss the aesthetic displacements found within the casta genre, especially concerning race, temporality, gender, and sexuality.

Chapter 2 – Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Temporality: Aesthetic Displacements within the Casta Paintings

The paintings that I was seeing for the first time in 1990 satisfied my yearning for the local, but they had a disconcerting effect. How could paintings that were aesthetically pleasing and detailed in their collection of objects typical of the land also frequently deride the very mixed people they celebrated?

– Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting*

Ilona Katzew's statement recognizes the complexities in viewing the casta paintings. They can be admired for their inclusions of various identities and local depictions, but that does not deny the displacing effect they have. Just as Katzew asks, how are we to evaluate paintings that are aesthetically complex, pleasing, intriguing, and detailed of objects from the land while they belittle and otherize the people they visually represent? Furthermore, how are we to conceive of the colonial ideology these paintings promote? These are a few questions I will try to answer over the next two chapters.

Throughout this chapter, I examine the specific aesthetic determinations created under *limpieza de sangre* through various casta paintings. Ultimately, I argue that the casta paintings exude an aesthetic displacement of the colonized, specifically, along gendered, sexual, racial, and temporal lines. To delineate the aesthetic displacement of the casta paintings, I first discuss my use of aesthetics not only in relation to the colonized but in relation to colonial ideology and art. Then, I discuss the specific aesthetic displacements of first racial and temporal displacements that emphasize the notion of redemption, temporal lineages, and ascending to a Spaniardized progression of humanity. Second, the heterosexual and gendered displacements that distinguish the sexuality and role of white, Indigenous, and Black women. At the same time, I relate the

aesthetic displacements of the colonized to the role and positions they encounter in the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.*

The Casta Paintings and Aesthetics

When I use the term 'aesthetic,' I am not in discussion of what makes things beautiful or the appreciation of beauty. Rather, I align with Alejandro Vallega's use of the term; "the term aesthetic refers to the pre-conceptual dimension and in some cases the pre-linguistic, […] and it is about the affective and memorial dimensions, about senses of time and space, about existential orientations and cosmologies that are beyond subjective reason."[1] In other words, the aesthetic dimension is an undercurrent that operates underneath institutional, systemic, and conceptual levels; it is the affective, memorial, and cosmological forces that shape human understanding, identity, and existence. More precisely, the aesthetic dimension or sensibility, as Vallega states, "traverses the various levels of life and the production, reproduction, and development of life."[2] Now the aesthetic dimension does not mark a limit within the aesthetic sensibility within one's preconceptual understanding or knowledge. Rather, there is an aesthetic possibility that cannot be corrupted. It is in this possibility of aesthetic sensibility or experience that "a basic and necessary element for the politics and ethics of liberation" appears – i.e., decolonial aesthetics.[3]

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[1] Alejandro Vallega, *Tiempo y Liberación: Exordio a Pensamientos Liberatorios Vivenciales y Decoloniales,* (Ciudad de México: Akal/Inter Pares, 2021), 196-197. "el término *aisthética* se refiere a las dimensiones pre-conceptuales y hasta en algunos casos pre-lingüísticas, […] y que se trata de dimensiones afectivas y memoriales, de sentidos de tiempo y espacio, de orientaciones existenciales y cosmológicas más allá de la razón subjetiva."
[2] Alejandro Vallega, "An Introduction to Liberatory Decolonial Aesthetic Thought: A South-South Path, from Indigenous and Popular Thought in América and from the Sense of *Xu* in Chinese Painting," In *Decolonizing Ethics: The Critical Theory of Enrique Dussel,* edited by Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021) 149.
[3] Alejandro Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy: From Identity to Radical Exteriority,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 72.

For this chapter, I am interested in the severing or displacement within the aesthetic dimension. Specifically, the colonial mechanisms along gendered, sexual, racial, and temporal lines that have shaped the understanding of the colonized, which have placed them as the Other compared to the 'superior' colonizer. Vallega states that the sensibility that forms experience and human understanding of the colonized has always been under attack by the Western institution, power, knowledge, and colonizing practices. "At this delicate level of aesthetic understanding and oppression, the colonizing mechanisms and structures (the systems of oppression and dismissal of life) operate in various ways, effectively removing, severing, aesthetic experience from the question of the colonization of power and knowledge and one's existential projectional horizon concerning the possibilities of senses of being."[4] In this regard, to understand the mechanisms, ideologies, and structures that displace the colonized from their aesthetic sensibility, it is necessary to look at projections that were produced within the colonial era, in this case, colonial art.

Colonial art can help comprehend the severing of the aesthetic understanding and articulation that the colonized encounter. As Vallega describes, art functions in a twofold manner: on one hand, art is situated "within materialist history and/or transcendental realm only accessible to Western rationality."[5] On the other hand, the inverse, "the romanticist equating of art with the irrational, and thereby the severing of life from art and vice versa."[6] Regardless of which realm one views art, there is a separation/disconnect of the art from the people, in this case, the colonized. This separation and disconnect from art and the people is where colonial art lies. To use Vallega's analysis, colonial art can operate in two different ways: by either

[4] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 73.
[5] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 73.
[6] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 73.

articulating Western rationality and materiality of colonial ideology or articulating the irrational and exotic as something other or disconnected from reality. "As a result, we have lost the possibility of seeing aesthetic experience as the liberating expression of consciousness…" as the power structures and configurations of colonialism have left us isolated, erased, and displaced. "It is not only that the oppressor considers the peripheral lives nothing; the issue is that those in the periphery identify with themselves through the erasure of their existence."[7]

To truly understand the impact and operation of colonial art on impacting the aesthetic sensibility, one must understand how images impact the imagination. Essentially, images, or as Vallega calls them, dynamic images, influence the imagination to construct and determine one's reality and expression of life. "Dynamic images express sense of life, and they are configured by a complex concentration of concrete experiences, histories, lineages, memories, forgetting, loss, anxieties, and incapacities […] Dynamic images concern the possibility and limits for the articulation of lives that may be understood in their humanity that is, images affirm and give occasion for the articulation of one's distinct senses of being."[8] In this sense, images create and open a way to articulate and determine one's sense of understanding and being, as through imagination we configure ourselves beyond the already established conceptual knowledge.

However, in the context of colonialism and colonization, the control of knowledge and power has complicated the relationship between images, imagination, and one's articulation. As Quijano articulates, Latin America is stuck in a mirror – in a Eurocentric perspective – that distorts what it reflects. "[W]hen we look in our Eurocentric mirror, the image that we see is not just composite but also necessarily distorted. Here the tragedy is that we have all been led, knowingly or not, wanting it or not, to see and accept that image as our own and as belonging to

[7] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 71.
[8] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 200.

us alone. In this way, we continue being what we are not."[9] In this regard, from colonization and colonialism, dynamic images are distorted. One's self-articulation is determined by what is given to us, and now the concrete experiences, histories, lineages, etc., are in the perspective of Western consciousness, time, and knowledge. Therefore, dynamic images that articulate and determine one's sense of being are affirmed and oriented through the Eurocentric mirror/image, thus, "distort[ing] the senses of existence of the colonized."[10]

An example Vallega uses to contextualize the displacement of a colonized person through images is Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks.* It is here that Fanon gives a detailed account of his experience as a Black colonized man and attempts to find an articulation of his identity that has not been consumed by Western concepts, media, institutions, ideologies, etc. In the chapter, Fanon realizes that on one hand, the white colonizer has excluded his existence, who had woven him out "of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories."[11] On the other hand, Fanon realizes that his Blackness, his identity as a Black man, was undeniable and constructed in a certain view. In this sense, the Eurocentric image established through colonialism has situated and predetermined Fanon's articulation and existence. As a Black colonized man, he is written out or not accounted for in the Eurocentric image, and if he is present within the image, it is an image that has been colonized. Vallega explains that, "The images he finds have already been colonized by the Eurocentric idea that those who do not know the world in a Western rational manner cannot be civilized, fully human; this puts into question Fanon's affirmation of his blackness through images of the irrational."[12]

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[9] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." In *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power*. Edited by Walter Mignolo, Rita Segato, and Catherine Walsh, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2024), 264.
[10] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 202.
[11] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* translated by Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 91.
[12] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 203.

Fanon's articulation as a Black colonized man is nowhere to be found within the colonized image, within the Eurocentric image. This results in an affective effect on Fanon where the images pursue him and make his Blackness always be felt and undeniable, alluding to a lack of escape. "The proof was there, implacable. My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me."[13] In this sense, the images fix him into a static state as a Black man, where he cannot move freely, trapped within his own predetermination.

Similarly, Alia Al-Saji describes how the images Fanon encounters are 'sticky,' as images stick and attach themselves to him with their imaginaries, reinforcing the colonial past. "Images glue together and constitute a racialized self, while supplementing the circulation of stereotypes in the cultural imaginary."[14] Even Mariana Ortega articulates images to hold an 'affective medium.' Through her analysis of Latina feminisms, images have a real-world effect, which she calls being-in-sorrow. For her, it is the "Cultural, historical, material, and discursive circumstances [that] have inflicted and continue to inflict wounds on bodies of color."[15] As we see through Vallega, Fanon, Al-Saji, and Ortega, colonized images and imaginaries have a way of disorienting, restricting, sticking, and seeping into the minds of the Other, not only to displace them but to affectively affect them. In this light, I believe colonial art does the same; it serves as a foundation for images and imaginaries to come, already beginning the process of displacing, restricting, sticking, and seeping into the colonized, not only in the past but also in the present.

Though some images within Fanon's account are literal, in the sense that he tries to find the articulation of his identity at the movies, images can appear in different forms. Vallega states

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[13] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 96.
[14] Alia Al-Saji, "Glued to the Image: A Critical Phenomenology of Racialization through Works of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77, no. 4 (2019): 479.
[15] Mariana Ortega, *Carnalities: The Art of Living in Latinidad,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2025), 138.

that one's articulation can appear through "painting, music, poetry, popular art, rituals, oral traditions, etc." But as Fanon articulates, any of these images can reflect the 'white' imaginary, once again emphasizing the Eurocentric image in place for the colonized. Even Al-Saji articulates the racial imaginary Fanon describes, as being supported through cultural production in a variety of formats. "This imaginary constellation, this cultural view of the world, is acquired through childhood education, scholarly manuals, language, media, comic books, stories, films, and images."[16] This is why I choose to focus on colonial art, specifically the casta paintings, as they are not only a cultural product of colonial Mexico, but they are images that articulate the identities of the colonized and colonizers. Specifically, the casta paintings give an image of the colony, of race, gender, sexuality, and class, articulating a specific image, determination, and the 'supremacy' of Spaniards. To put simply, on one hand, the casta paintings displace the colonized, rendering them static in their identity within multiple lines, while on the other hand, affirms colonial ideology through the colonizer and *limpieza de sangre.* In the next sections, I analyze how various casta paintings depict the aesthetic displacement of racial/temporal and heterosexual/gendered displacements.

Racial and Temporal Displacements

In the previous chapter, I discussed Vallega's notion of time and temporality within the colonized consciousness or sensibility. It is from the continual system of exclusion, violence, and assimilation against the colonized that situated the colonizers as 'naturally' superior. The result is a curated view within all things – experience, histories, culture, etc. – that develops a specific sense of temporality under colonialism. In this sense, the past, present, and future are oriented under the colonial Western ideology, meaning "the past is what has been left behind or what

[16] Al-Saji, "Glued to the Image," 476.

remains to be rewritten by the most advanced Western thought of the present; the future belongs to that Western present, as does the destiny of humanity. This sense of temporality becomes the horizon for world knowledge."[17] What Vallega articulates is the underlying aesthetic sensibility that is imposed on the colonized consciousness. Specifically, the colonized are subjected to a temporal articulation that flows through a linear progression of time. As Omar Rivera explains, "Vallega focuses, on a linear and sequential temporal sensibility in which the colonized is always placed behind European civilization as underdeveloped and barbaric and on the coloniality of images where the oppressors exhaust the field of representation, including the representativity of oppressed groups, as a way to further structures of coloniality."[18]

In the focus of colonial art, specifically the casta paintings, I want to expose the linear and temporal sensibility that lies within the genre. The casta paintings at face value construct racial identity through the visual process of *mestizaje* (race mixing), but they also construct a temporal sensibility within family lineages. Ultimately, in this section, I argue that the casta paintings not only present racial displacements through *mestizaje* but also exude temporal displacements by insinuating that the Indigenous and Black people need to first forsake their race and lineage, as they have no future in their own right. And it is only through the colonial notion of 'redemption' that the colonized can contribute to the racial progression set out by the colonizers.

Colonial Logic of Redemption

Rivera, in his book, *Delimitations of Latin American Philosophy,* discusses what he calls the 'colonial logic of redemption.' To him, this logic (coming from his analysis of Mariátegui's

[17] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 105.
[18] Omar Rivera, *Delimitations of Latin American Philosophy: Beyond Redemption,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 137. V

Essay "The Problem of the Indian") is a reevaluation of exploitation as redemption and is acquired for Indigenous peoples through their exposure to 'civilization.' Specifically, he states, "In this twisted logic, Indians are both exploited and enculturated, and the creoles take on the moral purpose of redeeming them."[19] In this regard, the colonizers take a high moral status to either eliminate them or offer them a form of redemption. And when considering Spanish colonization of Mexico, there is a similar notion of redemption occurring under the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.*

This notion of redemption within *limpieza de sangre* was first associated with Christianity and maintaining the purity of 'Old Christians.' Under its religious implications, *limpieza de sangre* has two notions of redemption. The first notion lies within religious conversion. Because New Spain recognized Indigenous peoples within the colony, they were then seen as something to be saved. There was the idea that "Indians were destined collectively to become 'New Christians…'" and move away from any 'pagan' association.[20] The second notion of redemption lies within what María Martínez calls "the temporal dimension" of purity.[21] This is where the question of purity and redemption relies on the 'loyalty' of a family lineage, especially in terms of practicing Catholicism. For a family lineage to be deemed 'loyal', it must adhere to Catholicism for at least three generations.[22]

It was not until the racial anxieties of the Spanish and Creole elite began to form that *limpieza de sangre* included the process of *mestizaje,* which transformed the notion of redemption into what we see with the casta paintings. The notion of Christian purity and loyalty

[19] Rivera, *Delimitations,* 78.
[20] Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth – Century Mexico*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 39.
[21] María Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 207.
[22] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 208.

transformed into racial purity and loyalty to the purification of family lineages of Indigenous and Black peoples.

> In a sense, the genre offers a secularized recasting of Christian mythology, not only in that the family images are obviously a product of a Trinitarian imagination (Josseph, Mary, and Jesus; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) but in that the degeneration narrative can be read as a kind of fall from grace, one that always begins with the sexual act. As in Christian thought, 'the fall' is not irrevocable; redemption is possible. The Edenic ideal, embodied in the actual body of the Spanish male, can descend into a state of 'barbaric heathenism' (if his descendants continue to reproduce with native and black people), but it can also be restored. Spanish (Christian) blood has redemptive power.[23]

This notion of redemption now includes a way for Indigenous and Black peoples to be further included within the colony and social life. To save them from their 'barbaric' way, to save them through the Christian faith, to assimilate their future lineages into society. Because "In their inclusion into civilization, through approximation and mixture, their lives are given worth, not having any worth in themselves – a gift that binds them to the superiority and generosity of the Spanish with an infinite debt because it justifies their existence."[24]

Temporal Lineages

From the notion of redemption and the evolution of *limpieza de sangre,* we see that the message of generational 'whitening' or 'staining' continued to carry through within the ideology. As Martínez states, "Despite its message of redemption through faith, this vision was one that betrayed a strong ambivalence toward native blood; after all, it imagined not only Hispanicizing and Christianizing the indigenous population but whitening it, fusing its blood into Spanish lineages until rendering it invisible."[25] Here, *limpieza de sangre* operates on notions of redemption through faith or blood, but what I wish to add is on a temporal level. What I mean by

[23] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 235.
[24] Rivera, *Delimitations,* 77.
[25] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 263.

temporal (or temporality) is an articulation of time through specific systems of power, which in this case is colonization, colonialism, the casta system, and *limpieza de sangre.*

Returning to Figure 1, there is an underlying temporal sensibility or notion operating under the realm of redemption. The articulation of this temporal sensibility within the casta paintings is similar to how Rivera articulates López Albujar's indigenismo: "This is a sensibility that implies the determination of time as a linear progression, as sequential (a new epoch leaves the previous one behind) and as absolute (space being overcome as a differential factor). In such a temporal sensibility, the future is the dominant temporality and it retroactively justifies and compensates for the past."[26] In this sense, the family lineages visually expressed within the casta paintings exude a determined linear progression sequentially and futurally.

Here, sequential means that when a new generation is born, it has left the previous generation behind racially. For example, the *mestizo* in scene one (Figure 1) has left its Indigenous parent in the past and has partially assumed the Spanish parents' blood and culture. What must (or preferably) occur is the continuous linear progression generationally. In the Indigenous-Spaniard lineage, the child of each generation is to further move away from Indigenous, 'barbaric,' or 'animalistic' characteristics, traits, culture, and blood. This is because "these characteristics are ascribed to them not because of their customs or beliefs, but because they are seen as being pathologically attached to them, entrapped in the past. Indians refuse to progress, to jump into the movement of history."[27] Therefore, the only solution for progression or redemption is through 'breeding' them out, purifying the lineage. The sequence continues with the next scene, where the *mestizo* marries and reproduces with an *Española,* resulting in a *castizo*. The *castizo* in this generation leaves behind the *mestizo* as they continue to progress

[26] Rivera, *Delimitations,* 125.
[27] Rivera, *Delimitations,* 126.

racially away from the Indigenous grandparent. Then, in scene three, the *castizo* marries and reproduces with an *Española,* resulting in a Spaniard. In this generation, the linear progression has been completed; the Indigenous parent from three generations ago has been cleansed, forsaken, and redeemed.

The futural aspect within the temporal sensibility, as Rivera explains, is the dominant temporality, but he adds that it is also the way "people attain self-understanding, purpose, and cultural validation…"[28] In this regard, the casta paintings, when articulating lineages, are to be redeemed or purified, ending with the futural goal of becoming the Spaniard. As Martínez says, the goal within *limipeza de sangre* was to have a Hispanized or Christianized Indigenous peoples. In other words, the Indigenous peoples were to become a white or a Spaniardized people. Thus, when including Rivera's analysis, this dominant imagined future orients the casta paintings and *limpieza de sangre*. Because of its dominance, this is the ideology and methodology that Indigenous peoples ought to see themselves through. More precisely, how they attain self-understanding (as impure), purpose (to be disposable), and cultural validation (something to be forsaken).

When looking at the Indigenous-Spaniard lineage in Figure 1, there are two burdens of action for the lineage to progress futurally. The first falls on the Indigenous as they have no future within their own right. This sets the future goal for the lineage to become a Spaniard and have no resemblance or cultural traits to the Indigenous. The Indigenous lineage is to be left behind, as it is considered outside of humanity, outside of progress. The Spaniardized future that is presented within the casta paintings renders the Indigenous static, left in their own temporal standing of the past. All they can do is act in favor of the colonial future, marry and reproduce

[28] Rivera, *Delimitations,* 125.

with a Spaniard, and advance their future lineages further. The second falls on the Spanirad whom ought to reproduce with the Indigenous person to purify and assimilate the lineage. Spanish blood was seen as redemptive, and it was not simply enough to reproduce with an Indigenous person but to actively contribute to the teachings and cultural characteristics of the child. In this sense, it puts a burden of action and decision on the Spanish as they are redemptive agents, which "disempowers the indigenous masses and bolsters the disposition toward them as a static, uncivilized people whose well-being depends on an external force bringing them into Western civilization."[29]

When it comes to the Black-Spaniard lineage, the sequence also operates similarly to follow the linear line of progression over three generations. But the difference in this lineage compared to the Indigenous-Spaniard lineage is within the notion that Black blood is a 'stain' or a 'contaminant.' "As the eighteenth century began, the assumption that black ancestry was incompatible with the status of *limpieza de sangre* was firmly in place and operating in a host of institutions across central Mexico."[30] In this regard, the sequential progression is not one of moving away from the Black heritage but rather always carrying it. Figure 1 does not show the Black lineage being redeemed. At the third generation of the Black-Spaniard lineage, it is a *morisco* married and reproducing with an *Española,* but they do not produce a Spaniard; instead, they produce a *chino.* This signifies the idea that Black blood is a contaminant, something that is always carried throughout all lineages, something that not even Spanish blood can redeem. Fanon makes a similar articulation when discussing his experience as a Black man, that his Blackness is something always carried with him, something viewed through lineages. "There

[29] Rivera, *Delimitations,* 80.
[30] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 223.

were some who wanted to equate me with my ancestors, enslaved and lynched: I decided that I would accept this."[31]

The futural aspect of the Black-Spainard lineage operates differently from the Indigenous-Spainard lineage. The future still dominates the temporal sensibility in this lineage, but rather insinuates that there is no future to ever be obtained for the Black lineage. At the same time, it continues the notion of producing the articulation of self-understanding (as impure), purpose (to be disposable), and cultural validation (something to be forsaken). Figure 1 emphasizes that there is no future goal with or without the Spanish. There is no pathway to redemption or ascension to the Spaniardized future. Instead, it warns that "reproducing with black women [or men] can lead to the loss of status, purity, and identity, to the corruption of his [the Spaniard] 'seeds.'"[32] This implies, on one hand, that there is no absorption or incorporation of Black blood within colonial society, but rather Black blood was deemed a contaminant. On the other hand, implies that any Spanish man (or woman) who reproduces with a Black person is risking their 'pure' bloodline.

Las castas insinuates that the burden of redemption now only falls onto Black people and their descendants, despite the Spanish holding no redemptive power for their lineages. This implies that "[t]he black woman has only one way open to her and one preoccupation – to whiten the race."[33] In this sense, the Black man/woman is the only redemptive agent within this lineage. The moral obligation to 'save' and 'progress' the Black lineage is not forced onto the Spanish. Especially when Black heritage was deemed to always be carried through future generations, and as a contaminant. This notion is present within the last scene of the Black-Spaniard lineage. The

[31] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 92.
[32] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 235.
[33] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 37.

final child, the *chino,* is shown with a darker complexion despite having three generations of Spanish blood (which is ¾ Spanish). In this view, the Black lineage holds no future; there was no way to obtain redemption, and their Blackness will always be at the forefront of their bodily articulation. As Fanon states in articulating his own Blackness, "And there you have it; I did not create a meaning for myself; the meaning was already there, waiting."[34]

Heterosexual and Gendered Displacements

The casta paintings, as dynamic images, produce a unique articulation of identity along heterosexual and gendered lines in the colonial era. Specifically, they present an image of proper kinship, sexuality, and the influence of gender on *limpieza de sangre.* To articulate this aesthetic displacement and image, I will expand on my analysis from Chapter 1 by using María Lugones' colonial/modern gender system. She states that the colonial/modern gender system rearranged the understanding of gender and imposed a heterosexual understanding that controlled sex in all aspects. "Or, alternatively, all control over sex, subjectivity, authority, and labor [that] are articulated around it."[35] And for Lugones, there is not a singular function of the colonial/modern gender system. In fact, it operates in a duality, which she identifies as the 'light' and 'dark sides' of the colonial/modern gender system.

Lugones describes the 'light side' of the colonial/modern gender system as the side that commands the sexuality of white women. Since "Sexual purity and passivity are crucial characteristics of the white bourgeois females who reproduce the class and the colonial and racial standing of bourgeois, white men."[36] In this sense, white women are the means of production for the white class/society; they bear the labor of reproduction, and it is through their sexual control

[34] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 113.
[35] María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 191.
[36] Lugones, "Heterosexualism", 206.

that white women are deemed as the servants of the white bourgeois man. The 'light' side of the colonial/modern gender system emphasizes that white women are not the white man's complement, but they are still civilized and fully human. As Lugones states, "Under the imposed gender framework, the bourgeois white Europeans were civilized; they were fully human."[37] It is here that we see the image of the hierarchical dichotomy begin to form because it is through the marking of white women that shapes the determination of the colonized with the 'dark side.'

The 'dark side' of the colonial/modern gender system is described as violent and objectifying to the colonized. This begins with the colonized being judged in comparison to their white 'civilized' and 'human' counterparts. The comparison and judgment result in the colonized becoming the inversion of white men and women. Lugones states that "From this point of view, colonized people became males and females. Males became not-human-as-not-men, and colonized females became not-human-as-not-women."[38] Thus, the image that forms for colonized women in the hierarchical dichotomy is being reduced to animalistic, non-human, and uncivilized characteristics. Ultimately, colonized women are deemed an empty category as "no women are colonized; no colonized females are women."[39]

Through the casta paintings, specifically *Escenas de Mestizaje* by Luis de Mena (Figure 2), *De español y de india, mestiza* (Figure 3) by Miguel Cabrera, and *De español y negra, nace mulata* by Andrés de Islas (Figure 4), we will see the sexual and gendered determinations of white, Indigenous, and Black women visually represented. It is through Lugones' analysis that sexual and gendered determinations can be properly understood, especially in the gendered implications of *limpieza de sangre.*

[37] María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia,* vol. 25, no.4 (2010): 743.
[38] Lugones, "Towards," 744.
[39] Lugones, "Towards," 745.

Displacement of White Women

When looking at Figure 2, it shows a specific determination and articulation of the role of white women, especially in the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.* For example, with the



Figure 2: Luis de Mena. Escenas de Mestizaje. 1750. Museo de América, Madrid
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Casta_Painting_by_Luis_de_Mena.jpg

Indigenous-Spaniard lineage, each family is moderated by a white Spanish woman. The first scene in this lineage depicts a Spanish woman and an Indigenous man, where there is a division

of 'civility' between the two parents. On one hand, the Spanish woman is shown dressed in typical Spanish clothing, depicting her on the side of 'civility.' Or to use Castro-Gómez's articulation from the previous Chapter, her clothing showcases her association with the symbolic capital of whiteness. On the other hand, the Indigenous man is depicted as 'uncivilized' as he is shown wearing only a loincloth and a headdress, and is holding a bow in his hands. When it comes to their son, the *mestizo,* he is neither civilized nor uncivilized. The child is dressed in typical Spanish clothing but still maintains some cultural and phenotypical aspects from his Indigenous heritage by wielding a bow and having a darker complexion. In the second scene in this family lineage, there is a union between a *mestizo* and an Spaniard*,* resulting in a *castizo* who now holds no 'uncivilized' characteristics or cultural relations. Then, in the final scene of this lineage, there is a *castiza* and a Spaniard*,* which results in a Spaniard*,* fully cleaning the bloodline of all Indigenous heritage.

The white woman in Mena's painting is being used to showcase the importance of Spanish women in the process of *limpieza de sangre* and passing on Spanish culture. To Lugones' analysis, we begin to see similar articulations of the 'light' side of the colonial/modern gender system. As explained by art historian Sarah Cline, "By paring him [the mestizo] with an *español,* Mena can be seen to be asserting the importance of Spanish women to the process of whitening their offspring in both race and culture, a process that culminates in the restoration of racial purity…"[40] Here, the connection to Lugones' analysis becomes more evident, as white bourgeois women, in this case white Spanish women, are ordered through their sexuality, specifically in their capabilities to reproduce the white class/society. As shown in the first scene of the Spaniard-Indigenous lineage, the Spanish woman is shown as civil, embodying 'proper'

[40] Sarah Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas: The Power of a Singular Colonial Mexican Painting." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos,* vol. 31, no. 2 (2015): 229.

cultural and societal traits, while the Indigenous man is shown as 'barbarous' or 'uncivilized.' In this regard, the white Spanish woman, from her sexuality, can overcome or eliminate 'barbarous' and unwanted cultural traits of the Indigenous man in their *mestizo* child. As Cline states, "The emphasis on the Indianness of the mestizo may be a way to highlight difference and draw on the power of the Spanish woman to overcome it."[41]

Through Mena's painting (Figure 2) and Lugones' analysis, we see the colonial determination beginning to form. As Lugones states, the purpose of the white woman is not only her sexual passivity or purity but also her connection to subjectivity and humanness. She states, "Only the civilized are men or women. Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species – as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild."[42] The control of racial, societal, and cultural production relied on the heterosexuality of white women, as they were the only ones who could purify and cleanse family lineages. "Through their linkages to lower status casta men, the Spanish women are actively participating in the creation of Mexico's Christian and multiracial society."[43] Thus, when it comes to the colonial determination of women, it is that only white women are seen as the builders of the white society. They are needed to 'dominate' any and all animalistic traits of Indigenous peoples, to dilute the blood and pass on 'proper' cultural traits. Ultimately, the colonial articulation is that white Spanish women control the progression and civility of humanity, meaning Indigenous and Black women are *otherized* and seen as opposition.

Displacement of Indigenous Women

[41] Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas," 229.
[42] Lugones, "Towards," 743.
[43] Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas," 235.

The second articulation and determination that is presented in Figure 2 is through the visual expression of Indigenous women. In Mena's painting, the Indigenous-Mestiza lineage is to express how a family lineage, starting with the *mestiza,* can regress to a full Indigenous person. Scene six of Figure 2 presents the *mestiza* in proper Spaniard clothing, signifying the little amount of Spanish culture she holds. The Indigenous man is presented in open sandals, sparse clothing, and is carrying two fish on a string. Their child, the *lobo,* is barefoot and shirtless, depicting how the regression towards 'Indigenous' or 'animalistic' characteristics is dependent on the moderator of the family. In this case, it is the mother. Figure 2 depicts that any woman who was not a white Spanish woman was passing on 'unfavorable' or 'uncivilized' traits. This is where Lugones' analysis of the 'dark side' of the colonial/modern gender system begins to shape because, "Historically, the characterization of white European women as fragile and sexually passive opposed them to nonwhite, colonized women, including female slaves, who were characterized along a gamut of sexual aggression and perversion, and as strong enough to do any sort of labor."[44]

The *mestiza* in the Indigenous-Mestiza lineage is showcasing that, despite her half Spanish blood, she alone is not enough to carry on or to pass on Spanish cultural traits, especially when her partner is an Indigenous man. This is due to the fact that the female body was seen as a space of contamination. Martínez explains that imagery of contamination with *limpieza de sangre* focuses and puts the female body at the center of it.[45] The contamination that occurs is, on one hand, with the blood itself that the woman holds, which, in this case, is the blood of the *mestiza* holding Indigenous roots or lineage. On the other hand, the contamination can also lie with her breast milk as it holds the same amount of power as blood itself. "Because of its

[44] Lugones, "Heterosexualism," 203.
[45] María Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 55.

association with blood (the vehicle through which natural traits were supposedly transmitted to children), breast milk in fact became one of the main metaphors of cultural and biological contagion – a clear sign that women's bodies became the symbolic territories in which communal boundaries were drawn."[46] In this regard, it does not matter through which revenue the *mestiza* transfers – through blood and/or breast milk - the 'unwanted' and 'animalistic' traits to her child. She, in herself, is incapable of transferring anything but Indigenous characteristics.

Other casta paintings, such as *De español y de india, mestiza* (Figure 3), by Miguel Cabrera, center the Spanish white man and pair him with an Indigenous woman, resulting in their *mestiza* daughter. In the painting, the man's face is not revealed, but his posture and gaze show that he is focused on the Indigenous woman, who returns her gaze to the man. The Indigenous woman and *mestiza* daughter are dressed in Spanish clothing and stand before an array of textiles and fabrics. Unlike Mena's painting (Figure 2), Cabrera uses the white Spanish man to assert the determination of patriarchal and sexual control over the Indigenous woman. Martínez states that Cabrera positions "the figures in relation to each other and their body language create an idealized patriarchal order, one based on Aristotelian formulations of family and polity in which children are subordinate to adults and women to men and in which the authority of the father is linked to that of the king."[47] By looking at the gazes of the Indigenous woman and the *mestiza* daughter, both are toward the Spanish man. They are both attentive and conform to the Spanish man's authority. Even without the face of the Spanish man shown, his power over the Indigenous woman and *mestiza* child is present, rendering them subordinate. "Indeed, it is he who through the whole visual rhetoric of the painting – the three figures' body language, the deployment of

[46] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 55-56. Also see Rebecca Earle's "The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism."
[47] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 237.

the male gaze, and the spatial arrangement of humans and objects – is rendered as in command not only of the wealth and products of New Spain, but in the sexuality and reproduction of the native female, his most valued possession."[48]

Another aspect of Figure 3 is the participation in social life, more precisely, the fluidity in social life. Rivera, in his reading of Lugones, articulates that she understands "the 'human'



Figure 3: Miguel Cabrera, De español y de india, mestiza. 1763. Private Collection. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castas_01mestiza_max.jpg

[48] Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* 237.

[to] coincide with the social, and that the colonized or 'non-human' are not seen as embodying or participating in the social organization of life."[49] But as we see in Figure 3, the Indigenous woman is participating in the social life. She participates in two ways. The first is through her sexuality and reproduction; the Indigenous woman had given birth to the *mestiza.* Second, she participates by adopting all forms of Spanish culture, practices, and hierarchical positioning, which is also positioned onto the daughter. And despite the assertion Lugones makes that colonized females are an empty category and do not have gender, Rivera asserts that the 'human' and 'non-human' are fluid. "[T]he demarcation of the 'human' from the 'non-human' is fluid, contextual, in need to be obsessively marked and re-marked."[50] In the casta paintings, as shown by Figures 3 and 1, Indigenous women can participate in the social life and contribute to some form of reproduction of the 'human.' In other words, the Indigenous women are only in participation in the social sphere if they reproduce in the dilution of their bloodlines, in erasing their cultural practices, and in submitting to the white bourgeoisie man.

The last two scenes of Mena's painting (Figure 2) depict how the *mestiza* or the Indigenous woman does not participate in the social life or production of the 'human.' This occurs due to the lack of the white Spanish male presence. To use Rivera's articulation, the *mestiza* has been demarked as 'non-human' as she is paired and reproducing with an Indigenous man. The *mestiza's* bloodline falls away from the social life, from the markation of progressing toward the 'human.' Instead, the *mestiza's* child, the *lobo,* then pairs with an Indigenous woman, resulting in another Indigenous person, signifying that "They are to be used, abused, dispensed with" and reveal "lives that are socially and biologically worthless and unintelligible."[51]

[49] Omar Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics and Anticolonial Resistance: A Cosmology of Unsociable Bodies,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 106.
[50] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 107.
[51] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 106.

Displacements of Black Women

When it comes to the articulation of Black women, Figure 2 takes a different approach compared to their Indigenous women counterparts. Scene four of Mena's painting depicts the Spaniard-Black lineage, which begins with a Black woman married to a Spanish man. In the painting, Mena places the Black woman in Spanish clothing, sitting on the floor as she looks up to her Spanish husband, who is cleaning and cooking. Their *mulatto* child is off to the side, witnessing what is characterized as a contradictory social and gendered norm. Cline describes this scene as "[to] be read as the black woman's lack of proper submission to the white man – her superior in gender and race – and her rather improper assertion of control over him. Delegating cooking to others is the prerogative of elite women in most societies. Here the *negra* is in a position of power not only by bringing her *español* sexual partner into her sphere, but also by having him do her work."[52]

The Black woman within the casta paintings is perceived as the opposite of the Indigenous woman. Compared to the Indigenous woman, the Black woman is seen to break all gendered, hierarchical, and kinship practices. Rather than submitting to the white Spanish man, the Black woman asserts her 'dominance' over the man, marking him as the subordinate one in the relationship.[53] The fourth scene within Figure 2 demonstrates that when Black women are the ones to moderate the family – as in bear, rear, and nurse children – they disrupt the proper family dynamics and cannot be trusted in lightening their Black lineage. This results in two implications.

[52] Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas," 231.
[53] Lugones does not make a distinction between Indigenous and Black women within her analysis of the 'dark side' of the colonial/modern gender system. It is important to make the distinction between anti-indigeneity and anti-Blackness within the colonial era. The casta paintings make this distinction on their visual representations of Indigenous and Black women, meaning they cannot be grouped as functioning the same under the 'dark side' of the colonial/modern gender system.

The first implication is that Black women are articulated and pre-determined as socially contradictory, as they only promote 'incorporative' social and gendered norms. As seen in scene four, the child of the Black woman and Spanish man is off to the side, witnessing the 'improper' family dynamics. "Unlike most children in casta paintings who are placed physically close to their parents, suggesting family harmony, this child stands apart from his parents and neither adult focuses on him. Both parents have their backs to him, merely ignoring or actively rejecting him. The son distances himself from his father who is performing feminized work as a cook."[54] In this regard, for a white Spanish man to marry and reproduce with a Black woman, he is not only condemned to be subordinate, but he is also condemning his child to live and learn from an unharmonious and improper social life.

The only way to correct these 'incorporative' social and gendered norms produced and sustained by Black women, according to Mena, is through the white woman. As we see in scene five, the *mulatto* child from the previous scene is now married to a white Spanish woman, who then together produces a *morisca.* Here, Mena is implying that despite the disharmony produced by Black women, it can be corrected in the following generations, but only by a white Spanish woman. As Cline explains, "the Spanish woman physically unites the family, putting her right hand on her partner's left shoulder, and holding their daughter's right hand with her left," resulting in the proper family harmony.[55]

[54] Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas," 231.
[55] Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas," 232.

The second implication is the static articulation and representation of the Black woman. Lugones explains that within the 'dark side' of the colonial/modern gender system, Black women were seen as sexually aggressive, violent, and placed outside of the scope of white femininity.[56] As we have seen thus far, Indigenous women are represented as having fluidity within the social



Figure 4: Andrés de Islas, De español y negra, nace mulata. 1774. Museo de América, Madrid

[56] Lugones, "Heterosexualism," 204.

life or in their relation to femininity. Whereas Black women are explicitly visualized as violent or nonconforming. *De español y negra, nace mulata* (Figure 4) by Andrés de Islas showcases the violent characteristics associated with Black women. In Figure 4, the painting depicts a physical altercation between a Black woman and her spouse, a Spanish man. She is holding a cooking utensil above her head and looks to be ready to strike the Spanish man. The man is holding her other arm as he looks fearful of the Black woman's aggression. Between them is their child, the *mulata,* who is shown crying and begging the mother to stop her aggression.

The static articulation that occurs with Figure 4 is associating Black women as strong, aggressive, violent, or coded as male. Martínez states that, "These paintings tend to feature Spaniards serving Black or mulatto women or as the victims of female aggression…" and to warn Spanish men of the consequences of reproducing with a Black woman. This implies, on one hand, that there is no absorption or incorporation of Black blood within colonial society, but rather Black blood was deemed a contaminant. On the other hand, implies that any Spanish man to reproduce with a Black woman risks being demasculinized. To use Rivera's analysis from before, the Black woman within the casta paintings is at times seen as incapable of fluidity or participating in social life. Especially, when the "Casta paintings might therefore be seen as reflecting this broader urge both to segregate black bodies as inherently different from white bodies and to insist on the intransigent, immutable nature of blackness."[57] In this regard, it does not matter who the Black woman's partner is because she is socially static, socially stuck, to exude the determinations set upon her, both sexually aggressive and socially impure.

[57] Rebecca Earle, "The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 3 (2016): 448.

Chapter 3 – Affirmations of the Colonized and the Virgen de Guadalupe: Anti-Colonial Aesthetics and Resistance in the Casta Paintings

Through art, s/he is able to reread, reinterpret, re-envision, and reconstruct her/his culture's present, as well as its past

– Gloria Anzaldúa, *Luz en lo oscuro*

In the previous chapter, I focused on the displacements within the aesthetic dimension, specifically, in viewing the casta paintings as dynamic images. From the genre, we see colonial mechanisms or projections – racial, temporal, sexual, and gendered – that mark a limit on the aesthetic sensibility. Yet it is in this field of aesthetic sensibility, configured by dynamic images, that decolonial aesthetics lie. As Omar Rivera states in his reading of Alejandro Vallega's aesthetic framework, he states: "The aesthetic plane Vallega has brought us into is 'a field of struggle' where the possibility of liberation is at stake."[1] Vallega's decolonial aesthetics is engaged in the sensibility that situates the determinations or projections and in exposing their limits. It is through exposing the limits of dynamic images that one's "consciousness must reconfigure itself in the light of what it comes to see, having been exposed to its role in the configuration of the image."[2]

For this chapter, I am working through the aesthetic dimension to (re)conceptualize the sensibility that the casta paintings exist through.[3] In other words, I aim to explore how the casta paintings can exist outside of the colonial sensibility in which they were created. This chapter is

[1] Omar Rivera, "Reading Alejandro Vallega Toward a Decolonial Aesthetics," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy,* vol. 9, no. 2 (2017): 170.
[2] Alejandro Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy: From Identity to Radical Exteriority,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 216.
[3] I choose to express this exposing/opening of possibility as '(re)conceptualize.' The prefix 're' is optional in the word 'conceptualize' because these concepts, notions, and articulations may have already been rearticulated by the reader. Or perhaps one's concepts have yet to be challenged. The parentheses around the prefix leave an opening for the reader to choose how they engage with this chapter.

not to serve as a (re)configuration of the casta paintings in a contemporary sense, but rather in the historical sense. As I stated in the last chapter, in order to give light to the articulations and determinations in the contemporary sense, we must understand from when/where they originated. The same must also be done when considering resistances, anti-colonial, or decolonial thought. As Lugones states, "instead of thinking of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledge, relations, and economies, I want to think of the process as continually resisted, and being resisted today."[4] This chapter focuses on what has been *resisted* and understanding those historical notions of resistance, especially in the case of colonial art.

Because this project is grounded in historical analysis, the aesthetic level at which the casta paintings are to be (re)configured must be informed by an anti-colonial lens. From this anti-colonial lens, we will see that the casta paintings give rise to Indigenous and Black affirmations, not only through physical representations but also through religious iconography. Therefore, to fully articulate how the casta paintings can exist outside of the colonial aesthetic sensibility, I first discuss the anti-colonial aesthetic framework under which I work. Then, I discuss the specific anti-colonial and resistive representations: first, through affirmations of Indigenous and Black peoples, and second, through the religious presence of the Virgen de Guadalupe.

Anti-colonial Aesthetics and Resistance

When I look toward the term 'anti-colonial,' I am not engaged with political movements or actions that aim to dismantle or oppose colonial rule. Rather, I look to Omar Rivera's notion of 'anti-colonial resistance' as "not an action intended to negate oppressions," but as something that demands reconsiderations of social identities within colonial institutions by focusing on the

[4] María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia,* vol. 25, no. 4 (2010): 748.

tensions and frictions produced and maintained in subjects.[5] Similar to Vallega's aesthetic framework, Rivera's notion of anti-colonial resistance is an undercurrent that operates underneath institutions, systemic, and conceptual levels. At the same time, Rivera emphasizes the affective, existential, and cosmological levels that shape human understanding, identity, and existence. As he states, he explores "resistance [as] arising from an immersion in affective and other physical registers attuned to the cosmos or *pacha,* rather than in physicalities disciplined and intelligible within colonially managed societies."[6]

For this chapter, I am interested in looking at the anti-colonial resistance that operates within the casta painting genre. Previously, I looked at the severing/displacements the casta genre can hold within the aesthetic dimension, but now, as Vallega states, we are "left with the possibility of not only looking for a new configuration of images but finding leeway for an open time-space out of which one may give articulation to other forms of knowledge, with a sense of lived, embodied thought…"[7] This is the realm I aim to (re)conceptualize the casta painting genre through. Thus far, we have seen the limits the casta paintings have imposed, but now it is time to see the other possibilities they may hold for the articulation of the colonized. As I stated above, I am not interested in (re)configuring the casta paintings through a contemporary sense, but rather look to how resistances, specifically, anti-colonial resistance, have formed within the casta genre. In this regard, understanding how we have *resisted* through and in art from the colonial era may give way to other possibilities or horizons to continue to *resist* in the present.

Colonial art can articulate resistance even from its production for colonial powers or through colonial ideology. Rivera articulates that "Artworks can reveal these unsociable

[5] Omar Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics and Anticolonial Resistance: A Cosmology of Unsociable Bodies,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 31 & 107.
[6] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 2.
[7] Vallega, *Latin American Philosophy,* 217.

physicalities of resistance, but only through the suspension of conceptual and social modern/colonial framings of what counts as art and the experience of art."[8] Rivera calls for one to move away from the colonial institution that dictates what art is and how the aesthetic experience is configured. Especially, when "It corresponds to the construction of a global class through the colonial suppression of artforms that do not fit within the purview of technique, mastery, and the museum industry, and the dehumanization of the people who make, ritualize, and celebrate such artworks in their houses, communities, and other marginalized cultural and social environments."[9] This chapter does not focus on the specific institutions that colonial art is held under, but rather, to use Rivera's notion, I aim to move away from how art functions. Specifically, for the case of colonial art, it can operate in a twofold manner: by either articulating Western rationality and materiality of colonial ideology or by articulating the irrational and exotic as something other and separate from reality.[10] Thus, to move away from these colonial framings of art, we must (re)configure colonial art. It is by uncovering the tensions underlying colonial art that anti-colonial resistance can be revealed.

Before looking into how resistance can take shape within colonial art, it is important to understand what resistance means and why I choose this manner of (re)configuration of colonial art. Above, I had stated Rivera's use of the term 'resistance' as the tension or friction that arises from the modern/colonial project. In his book, *Andean Aesthetics and Anticolonial Resistance,* he makes it clear the distinction between liberation (decolonial) and resistance, and why he aligns with the latter. For Rivera, liberation (coming from Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation) implies a systemic transformation of the social, political, and economic structures,

[8] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 31.
[9] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 40.
[10] See Chapter 2.

including the way oppression infiltrates the self. More precisely, liberation implies "A liberated 'world' where the demands of the oppressed are addressed is not derivative, however, of such structures and their internalization; it is not their development nor does it emerge from their oppositional negation. […] It is not progress, or a continuous social project, but involves a leap, a lapse in historical trajectories."[11]

His book is not about transforming institutions and systemic structures through the means of liberation, but rather Rivera focuses on "attending to physical inhabitations of socialities with colonial lineages, centering on racial and gendered socialities."[12] From the focus of such socialities, Rivera discusses the resistance that are inhabited from them. And because resistance is distinct from liberation, it means it is non-socializable, non-progressive, non-redemptive. It does not create a leap within the historical trajectory of the modern/colonial project; instead, it is a lapse in the hold of oppressive systems. Specifically, Rivera states, "By 'resistance' I mean the force of this lapse manifest as a release from the insidious affective, cognitive, memorial, postural, and perceptual hold of oppressive systems. Resistance is the formation of dispositions (like those of unsociable bodies, including their affects, memory, and capacities to 'bear witness') disinvested from the modern/colonial project to administer socialities constructed as 'human.'"[13]

An example Rivera uses to contextualize and frame resistance is through María Lugones' article, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism."[14] It is through his reading of Lugones that he understands the "oppressed as resistant, regardless of the support of the socializations implied by

[11] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 161.
[12] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 193 (endnote 3).
[13] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 161-162.
[14] Another example Rivera uses to contextualize and frame resistance is through Alejando Vallega's notion of radical exteriority. Due to space, I did not include the analysis and use of radical exteriority in light of anti-colonial aesthetics and resistance. See "Conclusion" of *Andean Aesthetics and Anticolonial Resistance.*

critical consciousness-raising and initiations."[15] Resisting in a decolonial feminist framework is seen as an active relation in everyday practices where the oppressed are resisting even without the intent or will. Specifically, this relation lies in the tension and the difference of subjectification and active subjectivity. According to Lugones, "Resistance is the tension between subjectification (the forming/informing of the subject) and active subjectification, that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing/resisting relation being an active one, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject."[16] Subjectification is the way the modern/colonial project enforces the social status and constitution of the subject (of the 'human'). In the case of colonial Mexico, subjectification is the enforcement of *limpieza de sangre* and the constitution of pure and impure, human and non-human, sociable and unsociable.

Active subjectivity is the minimal sense of agency afforded under multiple forms of oppression and institutions. It is in these forms of oppression that one's active subject exists, and resistance can form. As Lugones states, "The oppressed cannot exercise agency since they either enact a subordinate or a resistant intentionality. The subservient nature of the intentions disqualify the oppressed from agency in the first case. Lack of institutional backing disqualifies the resister from having agency. […] To make clear the possibility of resistance and its conditions, I introduce the concept of 'active subjectivity.' Though resisters are not agents, they are active subjects."[17] In this sense, within colonial Mexico, active subjectivity is where the oppressed, under this system and ideology of *limpieza de sangre,* still maintain some sense of being an active subject. This could be through participation in the notion of redemption, in the Spanish social life, or through resistant formations.

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[15] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 108.
[16] Lugones, "Toward," 367.
[17] María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions,* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2003): 221.

For Lugones, resisting is not an action, intent, or decision, but rather a natural response of the oppressed. Lugones' oppressing/resisting notion is not to be understood as from oppression the response is resisting. Instead, as Vallega states, the oppressing/resisting notion does not face one another. "This is because this is not a process of reaction against an action, as if the resistance were always initiated and caused by the actions of the oppressor."[18] Even Rivera states a similar notion when it comes to understanding Lugones' oppressing/resisting framework. He states, "Resistance, in this sense, is not willed but propitiatory; it is not someone's mission."[19] In this regard, resistance is something that occurs when the oppressed exist and are entrapped by the modern/colonial project. For colonial Mexico, resistance can simply be the continual existence of Indigenous and Black peoples during the beginning stages of the colonial project.

In focusing on anti-colonial aesthetics and resistance, one can see and acknowledge what is often ignored or not accounted for. Specifically, by engaging with anti-colonial aesthetics, there are two implications. The first is that one can see the lapses or leeways in oppressive colonial systems, which in this case are the visual representations of the casta system and *limpieza de sangre.* Second, disrupting the notion that the colonized/oppressed must wait for redemption or transformation, that they are static until liberation unfolds. To put it simply, this in part pushes the notion that there is no liberation without resistance. When applying this notion to colonial artworks, it is to say that they are not either colonial or liberatory, but rather hold a thirdness. This thirdness, like the decolonial feminist framework, is to see the tensions and frictions that lie visually in the colonial project. As Rivera and Hajovsky say, "In this sense, an artwork can be perceived simultaneously as composed of two contrasting elements and as being

[18] Alejandro Vallega, "The Aisthetic – Cosmological Dimension of María Lugone's Decolonial Feminisms," *Critical Philosophy of Race,* vol. 8, no. 1-2 (2020): 74.
[19] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 110.

a mesh of them, yielding a thirdness that in-stills juxtaposed elements that dynamically blur together. In this thirdness, an artwork can be and not be indigenous, can be and not be colonial—it can be both and it can be neither."[20] In other words, through art, in this case the casta paintings, to find resistances is to find the tensions, the colonized, and the thirdness that is held. It is to understand the ingrained juxtaposition or ambiguousness of art, which then gives light to the lapses of the colonial hold. More specifically, recognizing that colonial art and the colonial sensibilities that lie within them have been *resisted.* In the following sections, I provide two examples of resistance in the casta paintings to pursue anti-colonial aesthetics and expose the thirdness that lies within them.

Affirmations of the Colonized in the Castas

When searching for anti-colonial resistance in colonial art, it is important to understand that resistance may not be present in every colonial artwork. As Lugones states, the active subjectivity of a subject within oppressive systems and institutions can be either subordinate or a resister. In terms of the casta genre, this is also the approach one must take. We cannot assume every artist within the vast casta genre only operates as a resister, but this does not deny that resistance can exist within this genre of colonial art. This is where one must also account for the hold colonialism can take within subjects. As Rivera states, to be unaware of resistance in art is to be connected to colonialism.[21] Being unaware means the intention or sight of the artwork belongs to a colonial endeavor. This notion can be understood as a colonizing sight.

The colonizing sight, as Jeanette Peterson states, is the colonial idea that describes how images were considered the origin of understanding or action. Peterson states that during the

[20] Omar Rivera & Patrick Hajovsky, "Visual Epistemologies of Resistance: Imaging Virgins and Saints in Contemporary Cusco," *Revista de Estudios Globales y Arte Contemporáeno,* vol. 7, no. 1 (2020): 239.
[21] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 151.

colonial era, "The didactic function of images was thought to transform not only the minds and souls of their chargers, but also their social behaviors and moral values. In other words, acts of seeing were intended to elicit certain cognitive, spiritual, and visionary responses as well as bodily performance. From the European perspective, vision was claimed to be a colonizing tool…"[22] Colonial images contain visual cues that are supposed to direct the viewer to obtain a certain understanding or viewpoint of reality. In the case of the casta genre, such visual cues were set up to support the casta system and *limpieza de sangre.* It is these cues that are the easiest to obtain and understand. But as Peterson continues in her book, the sight or visual understanding rests largely on what she calls the subjectivity of seeing. Her concept implies that the eye is not neutral, that how one perceives images is through their localizations, social practices, and environment. "While images are rarely as idiosyncratic or as personalized as vocalized words, how they are interpreted is dependent in large measure on how the spectator constructs their meaning, on the subjectivity of seeing."[23] In this sense, colonial images can be interpreted and hold different meanings based on the viewer. But, according to Rivera's analysis, any viewer can fall victim to the colonial endeavor in artworks. There has to be intentionality in seeking the tensions and frictions that lie in colonial art. For the viewer to be aware of the thirdness within colonial art is to see the resistance that lies underneath the colonial endeavor.

Manuel Arellano, *Diseño de mulata*

The earliest known set of casta paintings comes from the Arellano family, specifically Manuel Arellano. Figure 6, *Diseño de mulata* (1711)*,* is considered one of the four paintings to

[22] Jeanette Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe: From Black Modonna to Queen of the Americas,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 9-10.
[23] Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe,* 11.

be identified in the original series painted by the Arellano family.[24] Manuel Arellano's painting (Figure 5) exclusively focuses on one figure, a *mulata* woman, compared to the previous figures I referenced, which depict a scene of one single family or multiple families. Figure 5 depicts a



Figure 5: Manuel Arellano, Diseño de mulata. 1711. Denver Art Museum. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dice%C3%B1o_de_Mulata_(1711)_Arellano.jpg

[24] Ilona Katzew and María Martinez state that Arellano's original set of paintings were attributed to being the prototype of the casta genre and the familial setup. See Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth – Century Mexico* and María Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico.*

mulata woman (descendant of a Spanish and Black parents), standing on her own, dressed in adorned clothing, wearing pearls around her neck and wrist, while showing off a lavish headpiece.

To begin thinking of resistance within Arellano's painting, one must think of the self-image being produced. According to Ilona Katzew, the "early casta paintings, particularly those dating from the first quarter of the eighteenth century, manifest a concern with the construction of a distinct self-image."[25] The self-image within the early eighteenth century was related to the image of the colony in Mexico. It focused on the perception and representations of the colony, life, including its subjects, and the wealth of New Spain. The focus was not originally to emphasize the notion of *limpieza de sangre* but instead to "emphasize the opulence of the colony."[26]

In Arellano's painting (Figure 5), he is focused on the self-image of the *mulata* and nothing else. She takes up the entire portrait, showing her luxury clothing and jewelry; she is not shown being overshadowed by other figures that promote kinship and patriarchal values, nor does she participate in scenes of domestic violence.[27] Instead, she simply represents the image of herself, the *mulata.* As Katzew suggests, Arellano pays careful attention to the attire of the mulatto woman and, by doing so, Arellano not only underscores the colony's wealth but "also reveals the artist's wish to bring out the importance of the figures."[28] In this sense, Arellano asserts and affirms the existence of the *mulata* within the colony through her self-image.

[25] Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth – Century Mexico*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 69.
[26] Katzew, *Casta Painting,* 70.
[27] See Chapter 2.
[28] Katzew, *Casta Painting,* 70.

The affirmation of the *mulata* through her self-image can be considered as operating in Lugones' concept of oppressing/resisting discussed earlier, especially in the notions of subjectification/active subjectivity. Figure 5 lies in the tension and friction of subjectification and active subjectivity. On the first hand, the mulatto woman is still within the colonial world; herself and her image are still subjected to the colonial project/sight and ideologies. Mulatto woman did not have a high status within the colonial society. In fact, "Being identified as black or a descendant from blacks in the *sistema de castas* was tantamount to being a social pariah."[29] On the other hand, there is a sense of minimal agency occurring with the mulatto woman; she is shown curating her own self-image, separate from other colonial intentions, ideologies, and values. In this sense, "The active subject reads in the fragility of sense, at every step conscious of recognition or lack of it, searching for buck up, aware of the lack of institutional back up at every turn. The possibility of being found ineligible lurks in many interactions."[30]

To find resistance that lies within Figure 5 is to look beyond the colonial sight, in finding the thirdness. In continuing the use of a decolonial feminist framework, the resistance that forms within art is an aesthetic intervention. Rivera calls Lugones' decolonial feminism an aesthetic intervention that makes visible anti-colonial resistance. "This is an intervention in the perception of socialities, visibility in particular, in order to disrupt an 'inspective gaze' informed by colonialism and racialization, and driven by suspicion about the humanity of the oppressed."[31] The resistance of Figure 5 lies in moving beyond the colonizing sight. This means seeing the mulatto woman as herself, not a product or in play of colonial blood purity ideology. And to use Rivera's analysis, in seeing the mulatto woman as her own self-image, as an affirmation of Black

[29] Katzew, *Casta Painting,* 46.
[30] Lugones, *Pilgrimages,* 219.
[31] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 111.

existence and Black lineages, is to move beyond the colonial project and the colonizing sight of the artwork. In other words, the tension and resistance that occurs disrupts the informed notions of the casta system and *limpieza de sangre.* As Vallega articulates, "While those conquering exercises his/her/their violence, the Americas go on living, living in/through their gerundive livingdying. The destruction and the coloniality of power that seeks to exclude those being colonized is challenged, resisted, and transformed from the outset by the living ways of those being under siege, persecuted, oppressed."[32] In Figure 5, we are moving beyond the image that has been sustained by colonial systems of power and knowledge that have distorted, suppressed, and ignored the colonized. Instead, we find affirmation, resistance, and continued existence despite the violence and exclusion toward the colonized.

The Virgen de Guadalupe in *Escenas de mestizaje*

Luis de Mena's painting (Figure 2) is considered a unique work within the broader casta painting genre. Mena, as we have seen, follows the usual conventions of the casta painting genre by having multiple family and racial groupings. Yet, the most unique feature within his painting deals with the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Overt religious iconography is not something that is included in the casta paintings, hence such an inclusion of the Virgen de Guadalupe does not go unnoticed. As art historian Sarah Cline states, "the central mystery of Mena's casta painting is its religious element, the Virgin of Guadalupe, so sharply at odds with the secular essence of the genre […] Mena's painting is likely considered a colonial curiosity and exemplar of the exotic by earlier generations of Spanish viewers."[33] Despite the juxtaposition of the Virgen de Guadalupe and the essence of the casta genre, there is still resistance to be understood. For

[32] Vallega, "The Aestetic – Cosmological," 74.
[33] Sarah Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas: The Power of a Singular Colonial Mexican Painting," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos,* vol. 31, no. 2 (2015): 223 & 246

Figure 2, I look toward the presence of the Virgen de Guadalupe as a resistance. Before understanding the Virgen de Guadalupe as a resistant figure in the casta genre, it is important to understand her history as a figure.

The History of the Virgen de Guadalupe in Colonial Mexico

The Virgen de Guadalupe's first apparition and origin is dated to December 8th, 1531, on the hill of Tepeyaca (now Tepeyac). She appeared to the newly converted Christian Indigenous man, Juan Diego, and, using Nahuatl, she asked that a church in Tepeyac be erected in her honor. It had taken three times for Juan Diego to convince the Archbishop Juan de Zamárraga that he saw the apparition of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Upon his third try, roses fell out of the cloak Juan Diego was holding, and on the cloth was the imprinted icon of the Virgen de Guadalupe.[34] At face value, the Virgen de Guadalupe, in her origin, is seen as a complex figure, shaped by both Indigenous and colonial circumstances. As William Taylor states, she is seen as a figure that embodies and combines "the Indian past with the Spanish present to make something new, a proto-Mexican Indian Madonna who will gradually be accepted as well by American Spaniards and *mestizos* as their own…"[35] Topeyac Hill was already a sacred place for Indigenous peoples as it was a dedicated shrine site to the mother of gods (Our Grandmother), Toci. But due to the idoloclasm (the destruction of idols) that was taking place within colonial Mexico to promote the evangelization of Mexican Indigenous peoples, the shrine site of Toci then became a shrine site for Tonatzin (Our Mother).[36] Then by the 1550s, a shrine had been built in name for the Virgen de Guadalupe in Tepeyac Hill for a few decades. Yet again, continuing the evangelization efforts

[34] William Taylor, "The Virgen de Guadalupe in New Spain," 9; Serge Gruzinski, "Images and Cultural Mestizaje in Colonial Mexico," *Poetics Today,* vol. 16, no. 1 (1995): 59; María Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 252; Jeanette Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe,* 1.
[35] Taylor, "The Virgen de Guadalupe in New Spain," 9-10
[36] Gruzinski, "Images and Cultural," 60.

by assimilating Indigenous idols into Christianized versions. "[T]he prelate's aim was not to bring the different cultures into closer alignment with each other, but to foster and facilitate the homogenization of colonial populations via divine intercessors chosen by the Church and to attract the Indians to the rite of the Catholic liturgy practice in the new cathedrals and parish churches."[37] It was at this time that more Spaniards, especially creoles, had been coming to the shrine to worship the new image of the Guadalupe.

It was not till the seventeenth century that a campaign formed to legitimize the Virgen de Guadalupe as the primary icon of the Virgin Mary. This campaign was backed by the first publication account of the apparition of Guadalupe by Miguel Sánchez, who was in favor of establishing the historicity of the Virgen de Guadalupe.[38] It was during this time that the Virgen de Guadalupe was questioned on her 'authenticity' as the 'American Virgin.' "In order to prove that Guadalupe was an authentically American Virgin, her appearance to poor, humble, and virtuous natives was emphasized as well as her use of the Nahuatl language."[39] This push and idea of the 'American Virgin' was to further legitimize the Virgen de Guadalupe as a figure not only to the Indigenous peoples of Mexico but also to the Spanish and Creoles. Her figure was not to align with one group or the other but rather to stand for both – i.e., the Indigenous peoples and the colonial society. As Taylor states, the Virgen de Guadalupe did not play favorites as "She was mother and mediator for all..."[40] It was not till the eighteenth century that the collective society – both Indigenous, Spanish, and Creoles – began to worship the Guadalupe. During the early 1700s, an epidemic had taken the lives of 40,000 people in Mexico City. But it was said

[37] Gruzinski, "Images and Cultural," 60.
[38] Jeanette Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?" *Art Journal,* vol. 51, no. 3 (1992): 42.
[39] Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe," 42.
[40] Taylor, "The Virgen de Guadalupe in New Spain," 19-20.

that the Virgen de Guadalupe had intervened for 'her people' and from her intervention the plague had run its course.[41] This intervention of the Virgen de Guadalupe resulted in the cathedral chapter electing "the Virgin of Guadalupe as its principal protectress…"[42] Then, in 1746, the Virgen de Guadalupe was installed as the patroness of the entire colony of Mexico, uniting the 'peoples of New Spain' as one unity and society under colonial rule. Then, only four years later, in 1750, Luis de Mena painted *Escenas de Mestizaje.*

The Virgen de Guadalupe as a Resistant Figure

If we look back at Luis de Mena's painting (Figure 2), at the top center of the painting is the Virgen de Guadalupe. She is showered in a golden light, tilting her head down to the *castas* (races or lineages) below, with her hands in a prayer. To the left of her, there is a scene related to her cult in which the basilica in Tepeyac is shown. Then, just below the basilica are Indigenous dancers and drummers. To the right of the Virgen de Guadalupe, a scene at the Mexican canal is shown, resembling an ordinary time outside.

The Virgen de Guadalupe in Figure 2 can be understood as a restive figure in two ways. The first is by the Virgen de Guadalupe, emphasizing the co-existence of all races: Spanish, Black, Indigenous, and mixed-race peoples. At face value, the Virgen de Guadalupe is looking over all of the *castas,* looking over her people, the Mexican people. Cline states that the Virgen de Guadalupe within Mena's painting continues the narrative of 'not playing favorites,' 'divine presence,' or 'continuous intervention.' "[Mena's] work can be read as showing Guadalupe's divine presence and continuous intervention in Mexico, the sacred source of Mexico's earthly fecundity, peace, and order […] [as a] potent mediator for Mexico's mixed-race population."[43]

[41] Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe," 43.
[42] Peterson, "The Virgen of Guadalupe," 44.
[43] Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas," 242.

Here, the presence of the Virgen de Guadalupe encompasses the lives of all as one people, unifying them under one central figure. In this regard, the Guadalupe and the entirety of the *castas* are in tension, but it is within this tension that resistance lies. Together under this tension, the Guadalupe affirms the multiple lineages, even if they do not all merge together. Each in their own sphere can exist; there is no hierarchy, no redemption, just the leeway to find resistance. To borrow Rivera's words, "He offers in his artworks, rather than redemption from racial and gendered oppression, a space of both renewal and destruction, destabilizing the insidiousness of the difference between the human and non-human that undergirds social oppression."[44]

The second way she is resistant is by not being an icon only for the Spanish. It is important to remember that Guadalupe is not simply a colonial figure. During the colonial era, despite the indoctrination of the Virgen de Guadalupe, there was often interchange of her name. As Peterson states, "The Indigenous constituency strategically deployed the name Tonantzin to retain a hold on their own beliefs, a process in which language played a crucial role."[45] This is an action of resisting, of finding leeway of the colonial pressures to worship catholic idols. Instead of submitting to new idols, the Indigenous found ways to adopt or "reinventing older traditions and beliefs in the 'Nahuatized Christianity' of the early colonial period."[46] Therefore, when looking at the Virgen de Guadalupe in Figure 2, it is important to see the thirdness that lies within her figure. She is not a figure that only appeals to the Spanish, but rather also calls to the Indigenous, but through a different name. It affirms the notion that despite colonialism, violence, and oppressive ideologies, the Indigenous peoples and their beliefs can continue, can be reinvigorated. To use Rivera's words, the thirdness in the Virgen de Guadalupe's figure lies in

[44] Rivera, *Andean Aesthetics,* 191.
[45] Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe,* 101.
[46] Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe,* 101.

the lapse/release of an oppressive hold. Essentially, it affirms the idea that "There was never a total destruction of América*n* consciousness as there was never a *conquista* of all of América."[47]

Through a (re)configuration of the Virgen de Guadalupe as a resistant figure in the casta paintings, we see the affirmation of all lives within colonial Mexico, as well as the continued presence of Indigenous idols. This is through anti-colonial aesthetics and resistance in which a thirdness is exposed. By thirdness, I mean an in-between; in terms of the Virgen de Guadalupe, it is not a resolution of her figure or a new identity, but rather it is a way of being in-between the colonial and anti-colonial. Just as contemporary art, colonial art can be viewed in a restive light through the space of "perceiving something from two different angles [that] creates a split in awareness that can lead to the ability to control perception, to balance contemporary [and colonial] society's worldview with the nonordinary worldview, and to move between them to a space the simultaneously exists and does not exist."[48] In the presence of the Virgen de Guadalupe, she does not have to be colonial or decolonial. Instead, she can be a thirdness – "a thirdness that eludes the dichotomy of past and present."[49] Even by recalling her origin story – she presents herself to a poor Indigenous man, speaking his native language, Nahualt – she is not a figure that speaks and situates herself to the Spanish, but rather to the oppressed. The Virgen de Guadalupe defies the colonial determinations set upon her. And with her presence in the casta genre, she can also defy the aesthetic determinations, whether that be racially, temporally, sexually, or by gendered implications that are affirmed by *limpieza de sangre* or the casta system.

[47] Vallega, "The Aisthetic – Cosmological," 75.
[48] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Luz en lo oscuro* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 28.
[49] Rivera & Hajovsky, "Visual Epistemologies of Resistance," 242.

Now, simply looking upon Mena's painting is not enough to enact or expose the third aesthetic realm, to see the anti-colonial resistance. Rather, as Anzaldúa describes, one must be intentional, must see past the Western impositions onto art, to see beyond the colonizing sight. See in between the cracks and (re)configure the meaning of Mena's painting is to see its hidden ambiguity. Because without seeing the thirdness of Mena's painting is to then "regurgitate its white version to the 'natives,'" to regurgitate the painting's determinations in the present.[50]

[50] Anzaldúa, *Luz,* 48.

Conclusion

This project is an effort to demonstrate that the casta paintings are not simply a static visual product of the Mexican colonial past, but rather, they hold philosophical insights into how the colonial logic of *limpieza de sangre* operated visually. It is here that, in understanding the paintings' focus on mixed-race populations and their descendants, we can connect the visual representations of the physical, cultural, and phenotypic traits to Latin American philosophy and Latin American aesthetics. Furthermore, I situated this project through a historical analysis of the Mexican colonial era. Specifically, this project situated itself through the casta system and in the development/transformation of *limpieza de sangre,* which results in two dimensions of analysis. The first emphasizes how the casta genre and ideology have *articulated* the colonized. The second gave light to how the colonized and the oppressed have *resisted* throughout the casta genre. In this regard, a historical analysis not only gives insight into how the paintings project the image of the colony, race, gender, sexuality, and class, but also finds the other realms of possibility that exist within the genre.

Looking back to Chapter 1, it focused on connecting the casta paintings – in how they are situated within the Mexican colonial era – to the broader Latin American philosophical canon. Through their visual markers and articulations of race, gender, class, and time, I connected the paintings to Aníbal Quijano's social classification. It is through Quijano's analysis – and the supporting analysis of María Lugones, Santiago Castro-Gómez, and Alejandro Vallega – that we understand how the casta paintings, in their reflection of the *sistema de castas*, operate by emphasizing the naturalization of race and gender, the separation of class, and the disruption and control of time.

Chapter 2 signified the shift toward Latin American aesthetics, specifically examining how the casta painting functions as a dynamic image. In using Alejandro Vallega's analysis of dynamic images and aesthetics, we see that the casta paintings can uphold determinations within the aesthetic sensibility, in which they articulate the colonized in a certain light, but also can infiltrate their imagination. In this regard, I argued that there are two determinations and articulations of the colonized within the casta paintings: 1) racial/temporal displacements and 2) heterosexual/gendered displacements.

Under the racial/temporal displacement, there are two notions occurring. The first one is the colonial logic of redemption, which emphasizes the redemption of the Indigenous and the incapability of redemption for Black people. The second notion is what I call temporal lineages. This means that the lineages that are visually expressed within the castas operate by insinuating that the colonized have no future within their own right. In this sense, they ought to function under the future of the colonizer, toward progression, toward a Spaniardized future – i.e., toward the progress of humanity. Through the second displacement, heterosexual/gendered displacements, I argued that white, Indigenous, and Black women each operate differently within the Spanish social world. White women were seen as the carriers and developers of the white social world, whereas Indigenous women could only participate in the social world if they were participating in the dilution of their bloodlines, in erasing their cultural practices, and in submitting to the white Spanish man. As for Black women, they were seen as static, incapable of social incorporation, as they defied all social norms.

The final chapter shifts toward anti-colonial aesthetics to find the other possibilities that can arise within the casta paintings. In using Omar Rivera's analysis of anti-colonial aesthetics and resistance, we find two ways in which resistance is formed within the casta genre. The first

is through affirmations of the colonized, in which I use Manuel Arellano's painting of the mulatto woman. Through the self-image of the mulatto woman, we find the tension and resistance that lies despite the paintings being produced during the colonial era and through the ideology of *limpieza de sangre.* The second example is with the presence of the Virgen de Guadalupe in Luis de Mena's painting. Here we see two manners of resistance operating: 1) the affirmation of all lives – Spanish, Indigenous, Black, and mixed-race people – in the colony and 2) through a lapse of idolatry as the Indigenous found ways to practice/worship their idols through the Virgen de Guadalupe.

Overall, this project gives way to understanding the casta paintings and the ideologies behind them through a philosophical and aesthetic manner. I hope that through this project, I have emphasized the importance of analyzing colonial art and how an historical analysis can provide an understanding of how the colonizer has *articulated* the colonized and in ways they have *resisted.* Even though there is still much work to be done on the casta paintings and colonial artwork in general, I hope this project can provide a framework through which we can analyze colonial art. To put it simply, may we continue to find new realms of possibility within colonial artwork, to then give rise to new articulations and resistance.

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