

## INTRODUCTION

The *Habla de Negros* Palimpsest: Theorizing *Habla de Negros*

I begin with a personal anecdote from spring 1999 on the Guadalquivir River in the Arenal district of Seville, Spain, the famous riverfront promenade and slave port heavily trafficked by Portuguese financiers and merchants involved in the auctioning and trading of black African slaves during the reign of Felipe II.<sup>1</sup> On that warm spring day—whose air was perfumed with jasmine and orange blossoms—I was purchasing a snack at a local ice cream shop. Upon exiting the confectionary, a frail elderly lady gently grabbed my shoulder and carefully stated in her *andaluz* Spanish accent while smacking the flesh of her forearm, “aunque no parezca, yo sí tengo sangre negra como tú; mis bisabuelos y tatarabuelos eran negros con sangre negra” (even though it doesn’t appear so, I, in fact, have black blood just like you; my great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents were black; of black blood [lineage]). Pointing outward in a circular motion toward the Avenida de la Constitución through the Arco del Pórtigo (currently the intersection of Paseo de Cristina and Paseo de las Delicias), as if she were a seasoned tour guide, the woman, whose name I never got that day, continued her quasi-autobiographical narrative by sharing with me that “muchos negros y sus descendientes vivían por toda esta zona aquí por el río Guadalquivir” (many blacks and their descendants lived all over this neighborhood here along the Guadalquivir River).<sup>2</sup> Ever since that day, the brief exchange with that kind

*sevillana* stranger has changed the way I see, study, and talk about Seville, the Arenal, and early modern Spain at large. Her captivating comments and bodily movements empowered me to see what is *not* readily available for the eyes to detect regarding Peninsular Spanish ancestry, history, and space, acknowledging the marginalized and overlooked presence of black sub-Saharan Africans living in Iberia since their forcible *and* nonforcible arrival by medieval Islamic occupation forces from the Sudan and Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup>

This anecdote underscores the diasporic arrival and dispersal of black African cultural practices and languages across the Iberian Peninsula beginning in sixteenth-century Seville via Portugal. To put it another way, my anonymous guide's description of the Arenal—its wharves, public squares, and marketplaces—cannot be separated from this book's close examination of African diasporic culture as it manifests in *habla de negros* speech forms. In the sixteenth century, slaves from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the circum-Mediterranean world made up a sizeable constellation and conspicuous part of the population of Seville (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> The city's cosmopolitan atmosphere, global economic glory, and, at other times, rampant structural corruption earned it the ignominious epithet of the "Great Babylon." For example, literary works such as Lope de Vega's play *Servir a señor discreto* (1610/1615) and Luis Vélez de Guevara's prose work *El Diablo Cojuelo* (1641) refer to Seville as the "Gran Babilonia de España." The short-skit interlude *Los mirones* (attributed to Cervantes, 1623) casts Seville as the ancient Assyrian "Nínive," another kind of Babylon, whose infinite black population's Africanized Castilian rumbled in the streets of the Santa María de la Blanca neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> As a metaphorical Tower of Babel (a site used in the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible to explain the origin of different languages), Seville speaks to the plausibility of *habla de negros* language having flourished.<sup>6</sup> When historicizing the demography of Seville's sub-Saharan African population under the reign of Felipe II (1556–1598), I see a clear correlation between Seville's black population and the texts studied in this book that feature this community. (Luis Quiñones de Benavente, Lope de Rueda, Lope de Vega, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Rodrigo de Reinosa, and Simón Aguado are among the authors who set their works in Seville with black protagonists.) The city of Seville and the kingdom at large had a voluminous black population that reached a height of 11 percent. In a one-year period, between 1569 and 1570, 1,100 slaves were sold annually, of whom more than



FIG. 1. Alonso Sánchez Coello, *Vista de Sevilla*, 1576–1600. Oil on canvas, 150 x 300 cm. Museo de América, Madrid, inv. no. 00016.

85 percent were purchased by neighboring cities across Andalusia.<sup>7</sup> Primarily dominated by Portuguese merchants and traffickers of black bodies (aided in turn by intermediary slave traders and buyers from the various kingdoms of Castile), Seville's black African population was ethnically diverse, originating from Angola and the Congo Basin, the Cape Verde Islands, the Kingdom of Dahomey, the Senegambia and its Rivers of Guinea, as well as Mozambique and neighboring Portuguese outposts in East Africa and Goa.<sup>8</sup> The overwhelming presence of blacks and their descendants in Seville gave way to the city's alias as the *tablero de ajedrez*, or chessboard table. For example, Lope's *Servir a señor discreto* references the black-and-white chessboard demographic of the metropolis, while the merchant Alonso Carrillo observes how "Sevilla parecía [como] los trebejos de ajedrez, tanto prietos como blancos" (Seville looked like chess pieces, black as well as white). Luis de Peraza in his sixteenth-century *Historia de Sevilla* renames the city's Barrio Santa Cruz district as the Varrío del Atambor because it was the place where black Africans—enslaved and free—gathered on Sundays to play music and sing.<sup>9</sup> Seville's ethnically diverse population of sub-Saharan Africans recurs in the dramatic and poetic materials examined in this book. Even the Spanish historical drama TV series *La Peste* (Alberto Rodríguez and Rafael Cobos, 2018) recognizes this history and its diasporic imprint on the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>10</sup> I would also propose that Renaissance Seville—as well as other cities of early modern Spain whose prominence ebbs and flows—serves as a source of

inspiration for early modern Spanish writers to capture and explore habla de negros speech forms in their works. This is what I call the habla de negros palimpsest, an oeuvre of cultural and linguistic Castilian Blackness that has been effaced and then modified, or overwritten, by subsequent authors.

### **The Habla de Negros Palimpsest: Its Genre, Its Corpus**

*Staging Habla de Negros: Radical Performances of the African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain* centers African diasporic cultural studies in Spanish literature. It intends to explicate the need for a critical analysis of white appropriations of black African voices in Spanish literary and dramatic texts from the 1500s through the 1700s, when the composition and performance of Africanized Castilian—commonly referred to as habla de negros—were in vogue. The use of Black speech in Spanish literature goes part and parcel with its racialized construction of black Africans in early modern Spain. As linguist John Lipski has argued in numerous studies, “black Spanish must be understood as a linguistic fabrication used as a comic device [that] is a purely literary language.”<sup>11</sup> Comic in its objective, with a bountiful representation of purely comical-burlesque aesthetic and dramatic possibilities,<sup>12</sup> Lipski’s reading of Africanized Castilian further maintains that its authors portray black characters as “buffoons, mindless dancers, or simple victims of fate” whose habla de negros speech operates as an “exaggerated travesty.”<sup>13</sup> André Belo summarizes the scholarly interest in and conclusion of Africanized Castilian (and Portuguese) as follows: “Scholars helped maintain the symbolic violence that was inherent in the use of such a speech: it was a language made by white authors, destined to be heard and/or read by a public dominated by white people, and with an intention of mockery expressing a strong social and racial prejudice.”<sup>14</sup>

This book posits an alternative interpretation of habla de negros speech events that disrupts the aforementioned critical reception bestowed on literary appropriations of Africanized Castilian. While acknowledging the compelling research conducted by previous scholars, I aim to revise the dominant discourse they have established. My goal here is to highlight the agentive subject positions of habla de negros speakers and to examine their voices as viable discourses. To be clear, this book is a political project. Over the course of its three chapters, I set into motion a new scholarly precedent

and trend that will place at the forefront a paradigm shift for scholars of Iberian studies, Latin American studies, and African diasporic studies. Although some scholars will contend that it is impossible for any white author of *habla de negros* materials to engage in nonracist characterizations of their black literary creations, the close readings performed throughout this book will suggest otherwise. Regardless of the ideologies espoused by these authors, I argue that their texts do, in fact, render legible the voices and experiences of black Africans in fundamental ways that demand our attention. Rodrigo de Reinosa's "Gelofe, Mandinga"—a poem directed specifically at the black population of Seville—highlights West African aesthetics and culinary practices. In Lope de Rueda's *Eufemia* and *Los engañados*, the black women who populate these dramatic works' intercalated *pasos* sass and subvert their white interlocutors' racist and misogynist epithets. At the turn of the seventeenth century, in 1602, Simón Aguado's *Entremés de los negros* stages the agentive voices of Dominga and Gaspar, who challenge their white masters by interrogating the institution of slavery and its infringement on the marrying of black slaves. Aguado's play is also a foundational work in early modern Spanish theater studies, for it lays the groundwork for other Spanish authors such as Francisco Avellaneda (*Entremés de los negros*, 1622) and Francisco de Quevedo ("Boda de negros," 1643) to explore the theme of black weddings, nuptials, and sub-Saharan African musical traditions and dance in Spain.<sup>15</sup> And even more fascinating are the ways in which practitioners of *habla de negros* link the language to African dances and music, which I do not treat entirely as a mockery nor an attempt to hypersexualize and denigrate blacks. Rather, when Spanish dramaturgs incorporate black dances and musical traditions—the *guineo*, *gurumbé*, *zarabanda*, and *zarambeque*, to name just a few—into their plays, a new aesthetic and exploration of African diasporic culture comes alive.

Just as much as the critique and deconstruction of "white" literary constructions of *habla de negros* are undoubtedly valid, my scholarly endeavor in this book is not centered around nor fixated on repeating a scholarly narrative that has tendentiously emphasized the way in which white Spanish poets and playwrights have excoriated Blackness through their putative antiblack stereotyping via *habla de negros* speech forms. I agree fully with my colleagues that many, if not all, of the extant *habla de negros* literary works depict black Africans in an artificially hackneyed manner. There is no

dispute in their assessment. In this book, however, I seek to shed light on the recurring—*not* exceptional—instantiations where *habla de negros* texts showcase their black characters acting and speaking with agency and destabilizing the category of Whiteness—culturally, linguistically, and in terms of power relations—altogether. Similar to the scholarly interventions made by race studies scholars in early modern British literary and cultural studies (most notably in Shakespeare studies),<sup>16</sup> my hope is to change how we think about and teach *habla de negros* texts and the representations of the black body that shape them. Ultimately, this book will revolutionize theoretical conceptualizations and figurations of Blackness in a larger hemispheric Hispanophone purview.

In this book, I channel Black speech through the Bakhtinian paradigms of the carnivalesque and heteroglossia. I turn to these concepts in order to demonstrate how *habla de negros* texts empower the unwritten speech of their black African speakers. While not always evident in every single *habla de negros* work, this book aims to highlight the way in which practitioners of Africanized Castilian utilize their black characters to simultaneously reify and contest prevailing stereotypes while also speaking with an inherent expressive power, or heteroglossia, that situates them as subversive, thinking black subjects. If this book illuminates the variety of ways in which Africanized Castilian animates black Africans' agency, empowers their resistance, and highlights their African cultural retentions in early modern Spain, it also calls for a specifically Black and gendered performance theory approach that challenges, revises, and radically reimagines the presence of black Africans' bodily, sartorial, and linguistic Blackness in early modern Spain. My aim herein is to complicate the very apparent antiblack racist stereotyping in which *habla de negros* texts potentially engage. In three separate case studies, I analyze representations of a motley crew of speakers of *habla de negros* who illustrate the embodied materiality of Blackness in Castilian dramatic texts. As I show in the next chapter, for example, the black mouth who laughs, sings, and shouts in *habla de negros* combats the violent desire of white supremacy. In this book, laughter, singing, and Black speech are conjoined as tropes of African diasporic cultural presence and resistance. To that effect, the *habla de negros* speech forms analyzed herein show blacks speaking with an inherent expressive power that positions them as responsive—rather than merely *reactive*—agents.

The critical analytic and central term stipulated in the book's subtitle—"radical performances"—anchors my ideation of how early modern Spanish dramatic representations of *habla de negros* speech channel Black performance. Throughout this book, I argue that Black performance theory is a valid framework for reading early modern Spanish cultural and literary renderings of black Africans. What interests me here are the various ways in which *habla de negros* speech acts allow black expression and black sensibilities to emerge whether there are black bodies present or not. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez's intellectually arresting and stimulating volume *Black Performance Theory*, for example, uncovers a history of black performance that assists me in assembling a body of thought to theorize *habla de negros* language in this book. Zora Neale Hurston's prescient essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1934) immediately comes to mind. Working from her fieldwork observations, Hurston theorizes Negro performance of the American South of the early twentieth century in provocative and unabashed style.<sup>17</sup> Describing Hurston's essay, DeFrantz and Gonzalez highlight the anthropologist's proclamation of Negro talk to be "dramatic" and embodying a characteristic willingness to use "action words"—words that paint pictures—as a stabilizing point of entry to understanding the expressive aesthetics of black language and gesture.<sup>18</sup> For the intents and purposes of this study, I do not treat Hurston's ethnographic findings of black language of the American South as mutually exclusive from Africanized Castilian spoken in early modern Spain and its representation in dramatic texts from that time period.

Each chapter in this book attests to Hurston's most notable quality of Negro Expression: the "will to adorn." Via the will to adorn, I see *habla de negros* language—as is the case in Hurston's study of African American Vernacular English of the American South—pushing forward toward an unprecedented space of expressiveness. Taking cues from Hurston, we can conclude that black expressive performance—in this context, *habla de negros*—springs from the need to communicate beyond the limited events of words alone. In addition to black linguistic expression, Hurston's "Characteristics of Negro Expression" highlights dancing, dialect, folklore, and imitation—salient themes I explore in the chapters ahead to animate the highly expressive and performative quality of *habla de negros* texts. Inspired by Hurston's Negro Expression theory, my close readings in this book allow

black performance to be in dialogue simultaneously with itself, the world around it, and the lives of black people.<sup>19</sup>

The radical frame forged in this book underscores Fred Moten's charge stated in his *In the Break: Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* that "the history of blackness is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist."<sup>20</sup> My research is motivated by Moten's theoretical premise that Blackness is "a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity."<sup>21</sup> The "radical" allows me to not only theorize the significance of *habla de negros* language but, more importantly, to arrive at a wider framework with which to *theorize* literary representations of black Africans in early modern Spanish texts. I employ the concept of "radical" to unabashedly account for this book's methodology and theoretical framework: it privileges and utilizes Africana critical thought, black feminist theory, and critical race theory to analyze and discuss textual representations of black Africans in addition to equally valid and necessary conventional Western approaches, such as those informed by philology. As a scholar whose work is deeply rooted in early modern Iberian studies *and* Africana studies, I enlist the strategies, methodologies, and insights of Africana studies in the service of Early Modern studies—and vice versa. In one sense, this book aims to mobilize corrective interventions to commonly held notions in Early Modern studies and Africana studies, and, in another sense, the project theorizes a synthetic methodology for the Early Modern/Africana studies discursive divide. Following Moten, and echoing Audre Lorde, I conclude by emphasizing my commitment to language and to the power of language in that I am reclaiming—via the prisms of agency, subjectivity, the radical, and black performance—black language that has been made to work against images of blacks and their Blackness in early modern Spain.<sup>22</sup>

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The *habla de negros* literary corpus is vast. Over a span of two centuries, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth, more than thirty Spanish writers composed poems and staged plays featuring characters who spoke in *habla de negros*. In late Baroque and Enlightenment Spain, more than a dozen anonymous works circulated throughout Granada, Huesca, Lucena, and Madrid. In "Para saber todas las ciencias y artes mecánicas y liberales en



un día,” a chapter from *Libro de todas las cosas* (1631), Quevedo fashions an axiom indicating to his readers how to write (and talk) like a black African: “Si escribes comedias y eres poeta, sabrás guineo en volviendo las *r*, *l*, y al contrario: como Francisco, *Flancico*; primo, *plimo*” (If you are a playwright and a poet, you’ll know to use guineo by interchanging *r*’s and *l*’s, and vice versa.<sup>23</sup> Such as Francisco, *Flancico*; primo, *plimo*). The satirist’s audience understood the word “guineo” to mean habla de negros speech as well as the popular dance performed at royal feasts and on Catholic feast days. Quevedo’s maxim typifies Bantu linguistic influences on early Portuguese and Castilian bozal speech, which involved the change of /r/ > [l]. There are many examples of this shift in early literary imitations of Africanized Portuguese and Castilian, as well as the Portuguese-based creole languages of São Tomé, Príncipe, and Annobón, in which the Bantu contribution was significant.<sup>24</sup> Interchange of /l/ and /r/ in the syllabic onset occurred sporadically in Ibero-Romance, although the shift of /l/ to [r] was much more frequent. In contemporary Andalusian Spanish, the same process occasionally occurs, but never with the frequency found in habla de negros texts.<sup>25</sup> As suggested and popularized by Quevedo’s formula (*Francisco* > *Flancico*; *primo* > *plimo*), some stereotyping was involved. However, habla de negros texts should be interpreted not as indicating only the shift of /l/ > [r] among black Africans but also the fact that the opposite change, /l/ > [r], was unremarkable in rustic non-African Castilian.

The habla de negros palimpsest and its literary corpus to which I refer cannot be understood without taking into account the importance of genre—that is, the types of literary works characterized by a particular style, form, and purpose.<sup>26</sup> In prose fiction, narrativized constructions of habla de negros appear in Francisco Delicado’s *La Lozana andaluza* (1528), Feliciano de Silva’s *Segunda comedia de Celestina* (1534), Gaspar Gómez de Toledo’s *Tercera parte de la tragicomedia de Celestina* (1536), Cervantes’s exemplary novel *El celoso extremeño* (1613), and Mariana de Carabjal’s eighteenth-century novel *La industria vence desmanes*. The most salient literary representations of habla de negros speech forms, however, were composed in poetry and staged in theater. To illustrate the multitude of these materials—borrowing from but also adding to Lipski’s “Appendix to Chapter 3: Afro-Hispanic Texts from Spain” in *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language* (2005)<sup>27</sup>—I organize them alphabetically by author:

### Poetry:

1. Anonymous: "Romancerillo" (Valencia, 1590), "Gurumbé" (1670), "Aquí za" (Huesca, 1661), "Hagámole plaça" (Huesca, 1661), "Desde Angola benimo" (Madrid, 1676), "¿Flasico? Ziol" (Madrid, 1676), "Tumbalá" (1670), "Ah mi siolo Juanico" (Lucena, 1694), "Con el zon zonezito del zarabuyi (Madrid, 1696), "A Belén han venido" (n.d.), and "Zarambeque" (n.d.).
2. Alonso de Blas y Sandoval: "Aquellos negros que dieron" (1694), "Qué gente, plima?" (1699), and "Azí Flaziquiya" (1701).
3. Ana Caro de Mallén: "Loa sacramental que se representó en las fiestas del Corpus de Sevilla" (1639).
4. Fr. Jesús Casano: "Los negros de manicongo vienes a la Noche Buena" (1709).
5. Francisco García Montero Solano: "¡Ah Flansiquiya!" (1673).
6. Luis de Góngora: "A la 'Jerusalem conquistada' de Lope de Vega" (1609), "En la fiesta de la adoración de los reyes" (1609), "En la fiesta del Santísimo Sacramento" (1609), and "A lo mismo [al nacimiento de Cristo nuestro señor]" (1615).
7. Antonio Navarro: "Los narcisos de Guinea" (1701).
8. Esteban Redondo: "Apalte la gente branca" (1783) and "Los negrillos esta noche" (1783).
9. Rodrigo de Reinosa: "Gelofe, Mandinga" and "Mangana, Mangana" (1501; 1516–20?).
10. Alonso Torices: "Negro de Navidad" (1680).

### Theater:

1. Simón Aguado: *Entremés de los negros* (Seville, 1602).
2. Anonymous: *Auto de Tamar* (second half of the sixteenth century), *Égloga al Santísimo Sacramento sobre la figura de Melquisedec* (second half of the sixteenth century), *Entremés de los negros de Santo Tomé* (1609), and *La negra lectora* (1723).
3. Francisco Avellaneda: *Entremés de los negros* (1622).
4. Francisco Bernardo de Quirós: *El regidor* (Seville, 1674).
5. Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *La casa de los linajes*, *La pandera*, *La rabia* (Primera parte), *Las carnestolendas*, *La Sibila del Oriente y gran reina de Sabá* (1650–70), and *La negra* (attributed, Madrid, 1691–1708).

6. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: *Los mirones* (Seville, 1623?).
7. Andrés de Claramonte: *El valiente negro en Flandes* (1640).
8. Jaime de Güete: *Comedia intitulada tesorina* (first half of the sixteenth century).
9. Antonio Mira de Amescua: *El negro del mejor amo* (1653).
10. Luis de Miranda: *Comedia Pródiga* (Seville, 1554).
11. Agustín Moreto: *La fiesta de palacio* (1658).
12. Juan Pastor: *Farsa de Lucrecia* (mid-sixteenth century).
13. Luis Quiñones de Benavente: *El borracho*, *El negrito hablador*, y *sin color anda la niña*, and *Entremés famoso: Los sacristanes burlados* (1640s).
14. Lope de Rueda: *Comedia de Eufemia*, *Comedia de Los engañados*, *Comedia de Tymbria*, and *El coloquio de Gila* (1538–66).
15. Diego Sánchez de Badajoz: *Farsa de la hechicera*, *Farsa de la ventera*, *Farsa del moysen*, and *Farsa teologal* (1525–47).
16. Martín de Santander: *Comedia Rosabella* (1550).
17. Antonio de Solís: *Entremés del niño cavallero* (1658).
18. Lope de Vega: *El amante agradecido*, *El capellán de la virgen*, *El mayor rey de los reyes*, *El negro del mejor amo*, *santo negro Rosambuco*, *Segundo entremés de los negros de Santo Tomé*, *La limpieza no manchada*, *La siega*, *Madre de la mejor*, and *Vitoria de la honra* (1602–18).
19. Luis Vélez de Guevara: *El negro del seraphín* (1643).
20. Gil Vicente: *Cortes de Júpiter* (1521) and *Floresta de engaños* (1536).
21. Diego Ximénez de Enciso: *Juan Latino* (Madrid, 1652).

In his *Proemio e carta al condestable de Portugal* (Prologue and Letter to the Constable of Portugal), written at the threshold of the Renaissance, Íñigo López de Mendoza, the marqués de Santillana (1398–1458), placed poetry at the epicenter of human affairs: “Las plazas, las lonjas, las fiestas, los conbites opulentos sin ella así como sordos e en silencio se fallan. ¿E qué son o quáles aquellas cosas adonde—oso dezir—esa arte así como necesaria no intervenga e no sirva?” (Public squares, marketplaces, festivals, opulent feasts are as if deaf and silent without it. What are those affairs in which—I dare to say—this art does not intervene as if by necessity?).<sup>28</sup> In this book, I treat poetic constructions of Africanized Castilian as a human affair in the sense outlined by the marqués de Santillana. Habla de negros poetry gives voice

to the culture that Renaissance Castilian poets such as Santillana, and those after him during the Baroque period, elevated and rendered. Poetic uses of *habla de negros* speech forms were so common because of the diversity of Renaissance poetic forms, genres, subjects, and other material factors. When written down, *habla de negros* poems circulated in manuscript anthologies whose varied formats and contents reflect heterogeneous tastes, goals, and audiences.<sup>29</sup> When printed, the medium of the press transformed verse into commodities of varied commercial and cultural status: from the popular, ephemeral *pliegos sueltos* (chapbooks) to the collected works of an individual nobleman.<sup>30</sup> Most notable examples originate in the Portuguese editor and poet Garcia de Resende's *Cancioneiro geral* (1516) and the chapbooks in verse by Rodrigo de Reinosa (1516–20?) that first depicted the Africanized Castilian spoken by enslaved West Africans, which I discuss more fully in chapter 2.

Circulated in chapbooks and heterogeneous collections such as the *Cancioneiro geral*, a majority of *habla de negros* speech varieties appeared frequently in *villancicos*. The *villancico* can be characterized in the following three ways: (1) by its musical character, (2) by its popular origin and appropriation in part by learned poets, and (3) by its restriction to religious settings.<sup>31</sup> I surmise that poets preferred the *villancico* form over others, not only to express burlesque Blackness via *habla de negros* speech forms but also to highlight the constitution of “popular” lyric altogether. By “popular,” I am referring to the folkloric and musical aspects of lyric that open up a space for poets to define and to derive meaning out of the linguistic and somatic Blackness forged through poetic representations of Africanized Castilian. Such meanings range from, but are not limited to, dynamic “African”-inspired medleys and rhythms to the reliance on a common stock of symbols such as hair, lips, and skin color. These musicalized rhythms and tunes operated as if they were variations on a theme—an illustration of poets’ ability to reinvent and riff on “African” sounds such as, for example, “Zambambé,” “Zambambú,” and “Zanguanga” in the anonymous “Villancico cantado en el real convento de la Encarnación de Madrid en los matines de navidad” (Madrid, 1689). In his recent study titled “El villancico de negro y su pertinente abordaje sociológico y literario,” Octavio Páez Granados reveals that the *villancico* poetic tradition and popular lyric opened up a space for black authorship and the creation of *habla de negros* poetry’s aforementioned African

sounds. Citing the hypotheses of José Labrador Herraiz and Ralph DiFranco in their essay “Villancicos de negros y otros testimonios al caso en manuscritos del Siglo de Oro,” we learn that many *habla de negros villancicos* might have been composed by blacks and mulatos who were literate and received formal education while working alongside clergymen and military officials, bankers and merchants, noblemen and noblewomen, monks and nuns, and painters and poets.<sup>32</sup>

*Habla de negros* speech events epitomize the Spanish Baroque. As Mary Malcolm Gaylord remarks, “Everywhere in Baroque verse contradictory impulses pull simultaneously in opposite directions.”<sup>33</sup> If Africanized Castilian is a visceral deformation of “perfect” Castilian, then I turn this interpretation on its head by signaling the way in which poets (and playwrights) of the Spanish Baroque complicate our present-day understanding of Castilian Blackness. Seventeenth-century depictions of *habla de negros* are inflected by a taste for exaggeration, disproportion, violent contrasts, and paradox. And as such, what manifests in Baroque portrayals of this Black speech is a fascination with a perceived ugliness, deformity, and monstrosity that competes with the lure of hyperbolic beauty and grace. In my theorization of *habla de negros*, I maintain that its poetic and theatrical constructions demonstrate Spanish writers’ ability to portray cultural and linguistic Blackness as a hyperbolic trope of nature’s excess. Hyperbolism best characterizes *habla de negros* because it is a language that represents extraordinary things, experiences, and events. As they skillfully manipulate the literary traditions in which they have been trained by employing literary *habla de negros* in their own works, Renaissance and Baroque Spanish writers reinvent the art of exaggeration.

Nonliterary examples of Africanized Castilian have also been preserved in Madrid’s National Historic Archive under the bureaucratic genre of Inquisition records. Produced by monks, notaries, priests, and scribes (men trained in the writing of bureaucratic or ecclesiastic forms and discourses), this genre recorded and transformed black African voices. At the beginning of the seventeenth century in Granada, an Inquisition testimony given by a black female slave who, speaking in Africanized Castilian, blackmailed her *judeo-conversa* owner: “si tu hacer yr a mí a la inquisición, yo diré que tu açotar Christo” (If you report me to the Inquisition, I’ll tell them you whip Christ).<sup>34</sup> The language of sorcery and witchcraft—*hechicerías* and *brujería*—also offers insight into the racially gendered framing of language in

Inquisition dossiers. While not exact examples of *habla de negros*, the bureaucratic (mis)reading of Maghrebi and Morisco women's voices is noteworthy and deserves more scholarly attention. Triply marked by their ethnicity, gender, and speech, scribes often annotated paratextually, on the margins of their parchment, these women's accents and dialects under the guise of "sin dejarse entender" (unable to be understood), "sin menear los labios" (mumbling), or "entre dientes" (muttering).<sup>35</sup> Other descriptions of Castilian Muslim women's voices fall under the category of "en lengua árabe" (in Arabic), reciting the "*ḥamdululey*," or invoking the Prophet Muhammad in their language. When inquisitorial scribes speak of this invocation of Muhammad, or the "*ḥamdululey*," they are referring to the Arabic phrase that praises and gives thanks to God: *al-ḥamdu lillāh* or *alḥamdulillāh* (in Arabic, الحمد لله). In addition, in conversational Arabic, when one is asked "How are you?," a common reply is "al-ḥamdu lillāh." To that end, while these examples are not *habla de negros* phrases (nor do I wish to elide them as if they were), they do allow us to imagine those contexts in which Black speech might have been documented by Inquisition scribes. The archive of the Inquisition, and its documentation and prosecution of African-descended and Iberian Muslim women's language, shows how these women molded their voices and stories in response to their audience and circumstances.

### **The African Diaspora in Early Modern Iberia: What Is Africa to Me?**

If the first argument of this book is to highlight the agentive subject positions of *habla de negros* speakers in literature, then the second argument of this book claims that black populations of early modern Spain actively participated in the formation of a so-called Black Experience that thrived *outside* of Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States. Historian James H. Sweet's pioneering book *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* has been instrumental to my theoretical framing of the African diaspora in relation to early modern Iberia. What I find compelling about his work in *Recreating Africa* is its strength in stressing the centrality of the African past in African diasporic studies. Like Sweet, I also argue that resistance among African slaves did not always manifest itself in the ways in which scholars have typically understood their

bondage and subordination.<sup>36</sup> And by no means do I fetishize black people's agency and resistance to oppression. Historically, in early modern Iberia (as well as in the variety of texts I examine throughout this book), black Africans and their descendants frequently addressed the institution of slavery and its attendant uncertainties and pressures with the most potent weapons at their disposal—not muscle and might but the materiality of clothing, food, hair, makeup, religion and spirituality, and song and dance. These performative embodiments of black expression are deeply embedded in *habla de negros* speech, and I treat them as evidence for Africans addressing their condition.

Following Sweet's work, I even dare to say that African diasporic cultural survivals and life began in Europe, specifically the Iberian Peninsula, at the start of the initial phases of the Portuguese slave trade from 1441 to 1521.<sup>37</sup> I am referring to a diasporic identity formation three hundred years before its typical chronology and on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. *Habla de negros* speech forms spoken by black literary characters ultimately exemplify the dispersal of sub-Saharan African linguistic retentions in early modern Spanish texts. In addition to Sweet, my critical stance here is indebted to several historians who have catapulted strong theoretical statements that depart from the broader debate over the emergence of a "creolized" Atlantic world.<sup>38</sup> According to Paul E. Lovejoy, a new generation of diaspora scholars whom he calls the "revisionist" school shifts the focus of African diaspora studies away from the explicit study of creolization and toward an emphasis on placing Africans and their descendants at the center of their own histories. I urge readers of this book to include Iberia in their narratives and cartographies of the African diaspora. And as Sweet explains: "Africa arrived in the various destinations of the colonial world in all of its social and cultural richness, informing the institutions that Africans created and providing them with a prism through which to interpret and understand their condition as slaves and as freed peoples."<sup>39</sup> I would extend Sweet's assertion here to understand the "colonial world" as including the Iberian context that anteceded the emergence of transatlantic colonial structures. Part of my work on this project is to uncover the various ways in which white literary appropriations, mediation, and reconstructions of *habla de negros* speech end up, in fact, privileging black African aesthetics, culture, and racial identifications in early modern Spanish literature and society. To avoid static, homogenized notions of an essential "Africa," *habla de negros* texts make Africa the starting point

for the study of Africans in the diaspora, especially during the era of the slave trade. In tracing the trajectory of slaves from Africa to the diaspora, scholars should ultimately chart the processes of social, cultural, and political change from specific African ethnic homelands to slave communities in the colonial Americas and Europe. Ultimately, as a revisionist project, this book does not submit to an ideological scholarly leaning that reduces black literary characters to insignificant stereotypical, monolithic entities.<sup>40</sup> Following Lovejoy's "revisionist" school, my aim is to provide present-day readers with a more holistic portrayal of black Africans and their descendants in Spain. By placing early modern Iberia in conversation with discourses on African diasporic studies, my hope is that readers will appreciate how black Africans and their descendants not only developed but, more importantly, *created* black diasporic communities in early modern Spain.

In the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen asked: "What is Africa to me?" The diasporic origin of Cullen's question, posed in the name of racially discriminated and socioeconomically disenfranchised blacks in the United States, grounds the diasporic focus of this book. Africa to me—as I invoke Alexandre Dumas's romantic yet contested maxim "Africa begins at the Pyrenees"—begins in Iberia.<sup>41</sup> As a black person of African descent, Alexandre Dumas, père, I surmise, acknowledged this historical fact. My conceptualization and vision of an "African" Spain consists of dark-skinned sub-Saharan Africans who also brought their memories of sub-Saharan Africa with them—memories rooted in cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions and survivals. To be clear, I am not linking the categories of black "Africanness" and "Spanishness" to the Black Legend's propaganda. "Africa," to me, *cannot* be separated from our theoretical conceptualizations and practical (con)figurations of early modern Iberia. To recognize this, we must recall the history of al-Andalus (Islamic Iberia). During the Umayyad dynasty under the Caliphate of Córdoba, for example, black Africans lived and worked as royal bodyguards, emissaries, envoys, and slaves.<sup>42</sup> Since the Almoravid dynasty's trade routes and expansion in the eleventh century, black Africans actively participated in the Almoravid trans-Sahara trade of Akan gold shipments and animals entering the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>43</sup> In the thirteenth century, after Fernando III of Castile's Reconquest of Seville in 1248, Christians first came to possess black slaves, which continued well into the era of the Catholic Monarchs. The presence of black Africans in



medieval Islamic Iberia—enslaved and free—offers an alternative narrative that offsets the assumption that the visibility of black lives in early modern Spain began with the Portuguese-initiated Atlantic slave trade. As John Lipski has shown, this complex network of the trading of black bodies and sub-Saharan African materials has a rich cultural and intellectual history that manifests, I argue, in literary representations of *habla de negros*.<sup>44</sup> When examining the corpus of *habla de negros* texts, ancient African city-states are named, thereby displaying authors' knowledge of sub-Saharan African kingdoms. For instance, Timbuktu (in *habla de negros* "Tumbucutu" or "Tambucutú") appears in Simón Aguado's *Entremés de los negros* (1602) and Lope de Vega's *Limpieza no manchada* (1618). An anonymous Nativity carol from Huesca, Spain, circa 1661, uses the word "Malia" to reference the kingdom of Mali.<sup>45</sup> The land of Angola is highlighted in two anonymous texts: a villancico titled "Desde Angola benimo" (Madrid, 1676) and the short-skit play *La negra lectora* (1723). The same ways in which Spain, in its popular perceptions and scholarly conceptions, has been in Saidian terms Orientalized as Europe's exotic Other, this book offers new readings of black historical and literary figures' Blackness that have long been marginalized and studied in opposition to the cultural and literary representations of Iberian Jews and Muslims in medieval and early modern Spain.<sup>46</sup>

I am also indebted to the courageous and rigorous work produced by anthropologist Stephan Palmié. Borrowing from his 2008 collection *Africas of the Americas*, the tentative goal of my book also "indicates the potential of historical and literary approaches that deliberately question the assumption that the 'Africanness' of places, people, and practices represents an objective quality whose presence or absence could be empirically based."<sup>47</sup> In this book, I advocate instead for a systematic focus on the diverse (and sometimes contradictory) ways in which conceptions of "Africa" and "Africanity" are socially deployed in the construction, reflexive validations, or at times critique or rejection of contextually specific modes of identification, forms of practice, collective visions of morally salient pasts, or futures to which the actors we will encounter throughout this book aspire.<sup>48</sup> "To do so," as Palmié notes, ". . . allows us to circumvent an all-too-common tendency which, in the words of Wilson Moses, reduces the 'designation African' to a range of biogenetic meanings associated with 'the idea of "blackness" as it has been institutionalized in the history, customs, and legal

traditions of the United States' and thereby unwittingly implicates us in the reproduction of essentially racist forms of discriminatory knowledge."<sup>49</sup> Rather, I offer new critical readings about early modern Spanish constructions of black Africans and their Blackness that address "Africa" and "Africinity" as theoretical problems and *not* ontological givens. This approach will therefore pressure, in the most productive and self-interrogating ways, my readers to ask how and to what extent these terms have variously come to take on ethically, morally, and politically salient meanings not only in the African diaspora but also among individuals and groups located on the African continent itself.<sup>50</sup>

### **Buffoonery Disavowed: Theorizing Habla de Negros**

Buffoonery disavowed implies that within *habla de negros* speech acts exist modes of dissidence, resistance, and self-reflection. Literary depictions of *habla de negros* need to be theorized because there has been a lack of analysis due to racialized value systems of artistic expression. My subject position as a black scholar born in the United States who has lived in Spain and also identifies both as a Hispanist *and* an African studies scholar shapes the way I sense the representation of black lives and voices in early modern Spanish texts. To that end, I turn to critical race theory as a strategy to diffuse meaning and value into the cultural production, embodied materiality, and the playful performativity of Castilian *habla de negros*.

The madman's speech! I align the implications embedded in such critical receptions of *habla de negros* language with Michel Foucault's description of how historiography, institutions, and society at large devalue the madman's language and voice. In Foucault's lecture "The Discourse of Language" (1971), he explains that "from the depths of the Middle Ages, a man was mad if his speech could not be said to form part of the common discourse of man. His words were considered [null] and void, without truth or significance, worthless as evidence, inadmissible in the authentication of acts or contracts[.] Whatever the madman said, it was taken for mere noise; he was credited with words only in a symbolic sense, in the theatre, in which he stepped forward, unarmed and reconciled, playing his role: that of masked truth."<sup>51</sup> In addition to the rendering of Africanized Castilian as

artifice and fabrication, the ideological forces behind the cultural and literary criticism of *habla de negros* in Spanish texts treat the representation of *habla de negros* speakers as mad. And if the language of black Africans, fabricated or not, is indeed a reflection of the madman's verbal antics, I then, in this book, dare to turn the marginalization of the madman's speech on its head in relation to early modern Spanish *habla de negros*, suggesting it embodies a dialectical and performative masked truth that has the potential to disavow antiblack racism and stereotyping.

All groups of people, not only those "of color," are classed, gendered, raced, and (hyper)sexualized based on *how* they do and do not speak. I submit to the fact that there exist social orders that assign prestige and disrepute to nonstandard(ized) accents, lexicon, and speech forms. Analyzing the role of Arabic in Castilian vernacular, the language that the humanist Antonio de Nebrija sought to codify as the handmaiden of empire in his 1492 *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, Barbara Fuchs calls us to challenge the notion of literary maurophilia in local vernacular.<sup>52</sup> "The social issues of language," as Pierre Bourdieu persuasively argues in *Language and Symbolic Power*, "owe their specifically social value to the fact that they tend to be organized in systems of differences . . . which reproduce, in the symbolic order of differential deviations, the system of social differences."<sup>53</sup> The literary use of *habla de negros* speech teaches us this. As John Beusterien insightfully remarks, "Despite the tendency to systematize Castilian, [poets] and dramatists created a [black language] filled with inconsistencies and flux."<sup>54</sup> *Habla de negros* language is the exact site where the terms of economy, language, and race allow us to disassemble a Eurocentric project that theorizes nonwhite Others in depreciating ways. Bourdieu's insights concerning language are rendered evident when we acknowledge that ethnic groups including diverse black Africans, but also Roma people, Basques, Iberian Muslims, Amerindians, and others, are routinely racially marked and marginalized by reference to their forms of "talk(ing)."<sup>55</sup>

In response to persistent critical lacunae in the work of linguists and literary critics, in this book I situate Africanized Castilian as a linguistic site shaped by accents, grammar, and cultural expression that give voice to the historical experiences of diasporic Africans living in Spain. *Habla de negros* texts provide numerous illustrative examples that indicate black characters positioning themselves as agents who subversively contest the oppressive

lot in which they exist, thereby allowing them as black subjects, through their Africanized language, to *have* language, a language that is both symptom and sign of their lived experience. This study seeks to empower subjects whose voices have been rendered nonsensical and characterized as incomprehensible “jumbled baby-babble” or “crude infantile mumble.” To this end, Giorgio Agamben’s *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience* (1978), on language in relation to animals, humans, and infancy, proves useful. Agamben deploys the term “infancy” in his early work to describe an interim state between our pure state of grace in language, echoing that of the animal, and our acquisition of a voice.<sup>56</sup> An Agambenian reading of linguistic, literary, and philological critical ideations of black literary characters’ *habla de negros* speech as “animallike” and “infantile” will reveal how—when exploring the idea of Africanized Castilian as a type of “animalized” and “infantilized” distortion of Castilian—animals are not, in fact, denied language and, on the contrary, are always and totally imbued with language.<sup>57</sup> My point here is to highlight the subjectivity of *habla de negros* speakers. “Animals do not enter language,” argues Agamben; “they are already inside it.”<sup>58</sup> Agamben notes that “if language is truly man’s nature . . . then man’s nature is split at its source, for infancy brings it discontinuity and the difference between language and discourse.”<sup>59</sup> Both the Castilian authors of *habla de negros* texts and the black Africans who speak it in their works destabilize present-day readers’ assumptions about the cultural and literary constitution of black African racial difference in the early modern world. Thus, if “the historicity of the human being has its basis in this difference and discontinuity,”<sup>60</sup> then the white appropriations of Blackness I analyze in this book—which undoubtedly have the potential to dehumanize blacks in violent ways—demonstrate the slippery polymorphousness of racist depictions of blacks in early modern Castilian literature and cultural productions. And because race and voice are elusive and culturally charged and contextual, it is the polymorphous, slippery quality of Black Spanish that I contend will illuminate textual articulations of agency, resistance, and subversiveness in black African cultural expression and modes of speech in early modern Spain. In this book, I aim to demonstrate how the numerous ways in which blacks in early modern Spain speak with a Black language that challenges abjection and diffuses the supposed “power” invested in Western racist antiblack anxieties, stereotypes, and subjective insecurities

on which Frantz Fanon comments in “The Negro and Psychopathology” in *Black Skin, White Masks*.<sup>61</sup>

Borrowed from the language of economics, Bourdieu uses the terms “market,” “capital,” and “profit” to describe fields and properties that are not “economic” in the strictest sense of the word. For Bourdieu, “capital” encompasses not only “economic capital” in a limited way (i.e., material wealth in the form of money, stocks and shares, and property) but also “cultural capital” (i.e., knowledge, skills, and other cultural acquisitions) and “symbolic capital” (i.e., accumulated prestige or honor).<sup>62</sup> To be clear, for Bourdieu the field of cultural production operates on an antieconomic logic. As a *prise-de-position*, the rejection of the economic is viewed as part of a strategy to amass symbolic capital in the literary field. In the case of early modern Spanish poetry in particular, there is a huge tension between the commercial and the need to reject the commercial. So, in truth, very few people actually published their lyric verses—Lope de Vega, for example, is probably the best example with his *Rimas*, *Rimas sacras*, *Rimas de Tomé de Burguillos*, and so forth—whereas much of the lyric of Góngora and Quevedo circulated in manuscript form. An aristocratic prudence could be at work too, for the noble class is founded explicitly on the rejection of their own labor. Aristocratic otium is what makes lyric possible. In other words, there was an active discourse in the period that viewed theater as directly commercial in an economic sense—a huge tension apparent in Lope’s 1609 academic treatise *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*—versus lyric poetry, which was overtly anticommercial, restricted mostly to manuscript circulation.<sup>63</sup> Lope’s success as a dramatist is, in the first instance, of economic significance.<sup>64</sup>

I use the term “capital” to capture the ways in which Castilian *habla de negros* became a mass-produced commodity in early modern Spanish literature. As an example, let us consider Góngora’s poetic battle with Lope de Vega in the sonnet “A la ‘Jerusalem Conquistada’ que compuso Lope de Vega” (1609):

Vimo, señora Lopa, su Epopeya,  
e por Diosa, aunque sá mucho legante,  
que no hay negra poeta que se pante,  
e si se panta, no sá negra eya.  
Corpo de san Tomé con tanta Reya.

¿No hubo (cagayera fusse o fante)  
 morenica gelofa, que en Levante  
 as Musas obrigasse aun a peeya?  
 ¿Turo fu Garcerán? ¿Turo fu Osorio?  
 Mentira branca certa prima mía  
 do Rey de Congo canta don Gorgorio,  
 la hecha si, vos turo argentería,  
 la negrita será turo abalorio,  
 corvo na pruma, cisne na harmonia.<sup>65</sup>

[Ms. Lope: we saw your Epopee, and, for the love of God, even though it's elegant, there's no black woman poet whom it scares (and if it does frighten her, she's no black lady at all). You've got the body of St. Thomas, but you're more of a Queen (woman). Little black Wolof chick (supposed Knight you were, or maybe a Fante knave): were there no Muses in the *Levante* to laud you? Not even a bitch? Was it all Garcerán? Was it all Osorio? Don Gregorio sings about the King of the Kongo's liar white cousin. And if she is a liar—ornate and pompous as you are—the little black chick will remain a trinket: a black-feathered crow; white as a swan like Harmonia.]

Góngora's fourteen-line sonnet trashes Lope's *Jerusalén conquistada*—subtitled as “Epopeya clásica”—composed in twenty cantos in the *octavas reales* meter. Lope's self-proclaimed “Classic Epic” is a text that was itself written in direct imitation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Lope's imitation of Tasso thus establishes him within the humanist tradition in terms of the text's content and chosen mode of composition. But as David Quint and others have noted, Lope was a latecomer to the historical position of the Italian Renaissance. Thus, his (bad) imitation of Tasso reveals Lope's rumination on a kind of historical loss and displacement. To that end, Lope's reputation as a writer derives not so much from works in the high style of epic such as the *Jerusalén conquistada* but rather from his extraordinary output as a playwright.<sup>66</sup>

Long-standing rivals, Góngora, in the aforementioned sonnet, monopolizes *habla de negros* language (Africanized Castilian superimposed with Portuguese *lusismos*, coupled with a quick reference to Fante, an Akan dialect and ethnic group of Ghana) and constructs his image of the black female

body (paralleled with Harmonia's bereft white female body and cursed necklace) to benefit him as a superior practitioner of *habla de negros*. Góngora deploys these tropes of embodied and linguistic Blackness to berate and effeminize his nemesis Lope de Vega. In this context, *habla de negros* takes on a paradoxical meaning of Bourdieu's "symbolic capital." The paradox is that literary *habla de negros* accrues a material wealth in the work of Spanish Baroque writers. Even though the poetic battle between Góngora and Lope indeed mocks and capitalizes on *habla de negros* speech, the very exercise of Góngora's poetic might and deliberate use of Africanized Castilian ultimately transforms it, thus revealing that a concurrent "economic" interest exists in the literary portrayal of black African voices. Just as black bodies are indicative of a genealogy and history of African-based slavery (one that is closely connected to an assortment of economic appraisals, systems, and values), Bourdieu's "economic" value and capital of literary *habla de negros* parallels that of the economic constitution of (enslaved) black bodies.<sup>67</sup> And just as black bodies are for sale, the *language* uttered from their mouths is also *sold* in poetry and plays.

The ligature between race, language, and the "economic" constitutions of *habla de negros* allows the speech form to operate as a site of tension in which Castilian writers try to maintain, and at other times alter and mask, their cultural and symbolic capitals. *Habla de negros* practitioners sustain a rhetoric of cultural capital—knowledge, skills, and language acquisition—that renders black Africans culturally bankrupt because of the so-called deformed language they are made to speak. Bourdieu argues that "the individual [writers] who participate in these struggles will have differing aims—some will seek to preserve the status quo, others to change it—and differing changes of winning or losing, depending on where they are located in the structured space of positions."<sup>68</sup> This means that Castilian authors of *habla de negros* confront a dilemma—or, as Bourdieu puts it, a "struggle"—as to *how* to portray the Africanized language spoken by blacks. One such struggle appears in Pedro Calderón de la Barca's play *La Sibla del Oriente y gran reina de Sabá* (1634–36), where only one black character speaks in *habla de negros* and the rest of the cast (primarily black women) speak in a "standard" Castilian. In the play *Servir a señor discreto* (1610/1615), Lope de Vega illustrates the struggle between debasing *habla de negros* language through mockery and ultimately elevating it. Elvira, a code-switching *mulata indiana* from the Spanish

American West Indies, for example, chooses carefully when (and when not) to speak in *habla de negros* in the presence of both blacks and whites.

Another aspect of Bourdieu's "economics" metaphor that I employ in my theorization of *habla de negros* is his corollary motifs of "game," "playing," "winning," and "value." I turn to them in an attempt to make sense of how early modern Spanish writers imagine Africanized Castilian. For instance, *habla de negros* speech forms sometimes appear randomly in poetry and drama. I read this so-called randomness as analogous to playing a game. Bourdieu asserts that "all participants must believe in the game they are playing, and in the value of what is at stake in the struggles they are waging."<sup>69</sup> The participants here are Spanish practitioners of *habla de negros*. Their game is *writing* and *plotting* how, when, and where *habla de negros* speech forms and words will appear and under what circumstances. Africanized Castilian held a prominent place and esteemed popularity among court poets and playwrights, as well as in historical documents that have preserved this language as an archived antechamber of African diasporic culture and language. *Habla de negros* language was, in fact, alive and breathing on ships docked at trading ports in the Rivers of Guinea of the Senegambia region and cosmopolitan Renaissance urban centers such as Lisbon and Seville. And I argue that Bourdieu's theoretical framing of "game," "playing," and "winning"—demonstrated most notably in Góngora and Lope's poetic battles—offers a critical optic for reimagining how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish writers represented *habla de negros* in this context where the stakes were high.

To theorize further the impact *habla de negros* had on early modern Spanish society, I suggest we also avail ourselves of the concept of "cool" or "Black coolness." My concept of Black coolness can be conceptualized as a European attraction to and fascination with the alterity of *habla de negros*, its musicality, and the accompanying dance movements and sounds that embody it. My thinking behind Black coolness can also be analogized to the global popularity of hip-hop culture and music. Linguist and hip-hop scholar Marcyliena Morgan states that "[hip-hop] is the preferred music for 67% of Black and 55% of all non-White youth and is steadily becoming a staple of rock performances and recordings."<sup>70</sup> In an analysis of twenty billion tracks, the music streaming company Spotify announced, in an article published by *Complex* on 14 July 2015, that hip-hop is the most listened to genre in the



world.<sup>71</sup> Writing on “cool hip-hop blackness” from a sociological perspective, American studies scholar Michael Jeffries, in *Thug Life: Race, Gender, and the Meaning of Hip-Hop*, remarks on how “the dominant narrative of cultural appropriation and absorption of hip-hop into the mainstream avows that white people, and specifically white men, enjoy a voyeuristic relationship with irreverent and spectacularly cool hip-hop blackness.”<sup>72</sup> To be clear, the trans-temporal connection I am tracing here between the notoriety of hip-hop culture in non-African-descended communities and the prolific circulation and production of *habla de negros* in print culture and on stage is the idea that the proliferation of *habla de negros* occupied a “mainstream” status in early modern Spain. And as a result, the speech form’s widespread exposure captured the attention of dozens of writers of varying levels of success as well as their audiences. And it is for this reason I ultimately position Africanized Castilian as “cool” in the eyes of its nonblack consumers and spectators, thus creating an aesthetic and literary culture for the image of *habla de negros* to be “in vogue” during sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain.

As a “cool” cultural and linguistic phenomenon, Africanized Castilian overlaps with Bourdieu’s terms “value” and linguistic *habitus*—“the set of dispositions that generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are ‘regular’ without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any ‘rule.’”<sup>73</sup> The linguistic *habitus* characterizes the literary production—and the “cool” appeal—of *habla de negros* language, for the linguistic utterances it constitutes is always produced out of the context and market of the institutions of literature, slavery, and theater. While I do not deny whatsoever that the appropriation of *habla de negros* by elite (white) male writers such as Góngora and Lope de Vega operated as an effort to dominate this speech form and absorb it into their own poetic enterprises, I, however, propose that the Castilian literary and cultural absorption of *habla de negros* endows this language with a “value,” or “linguistic capital,” representative of the ways in which black Africans “incorrectly” spoke Castilian and appear in the early modern Spanish literary canon. Further, I also encourage the comparative study of *habla de negros* with other marginalized communities’ language varieties such as the rustic Leonese *sayagués* (commonly used in the theatrical works of Lucas Fernández and Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, as well as in Sancho Panza’s proverbial speech acts in *Don Quixote de la Mancha*),<sup>74</sup> the language of Roma people (as evidenced in Cervantes’s exemplary novel *La*

*Gitanilla* and Nativity carols performed at La Capilla Real de Granada),<sup>75</sup> and the varieties of Morisco speech forms and *aljamiado-morisco* narrative texts.<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, by acquiring and reproducing these forms of literary and cultural capital, Africanized Castilian challenges and complicates the perception of antiblack discrimination and the infantilized racist buffoonery many critics have insisted on privileging.

The next chapter looks at sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theatrical representations of *habla de negros* language on early Spanish stages. At the center of this case study is the contention that *habla de negros* speech cannot be separated from the act and practice of blackface performance. In the analysis of lesser-known works written by playwrights such as Francisco Bernardo de Quirós, Luis Quiñones de Benavente, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, and Simón Aguado (among others), I argue that black skin *acts* in conjunction with the excessively deformed Black corporeality of the bozal's black mouth and the register of the sonic highlighted by "African" dances, lyrics, and songs. The overarching goal therein is to provide readers with a clearer sense of and feel for the performance history—costuming, director's logs, makeup, stage directions, and wardrobe—of *habla de negros* dramatic works, which will then serve to orient the theatrical performativity of African diasporic language and black bodies in early modern Spain. As we shall see throughout this book, the dances, musicality, and sounds that are directly linked to racial impersonation on early Spanish stages go part and parcel with the performance of *habla de negros* language.