

RECLAIMING THE SACRED: AFRO-LATINA NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA, MEMORY,
AND DIGITAL RESISTANCE IN ANA MARIA GONÇALVES AND DAHLMA LLANOS-

FIGUEROA

by

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(Under the Direction of Lesley Feracho)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how Afro-Latina narratives use historiographic metafiction and digital tools to reconstruct silenced histories, reclaim spiritual epistemologies, and affirm transnational Afro-diasporic identity. Focusing on *Um defeito de cor* (2006) by Ana Maria Gonçalves and *Daughters of the Stone* (2009) by Dahlma Llanos Figueroa, the study examines how Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Puerto Rican women protagonists activate memory, matrilineal archives, and sacred geographies to confront cultural trauma. Drawing on theories by Linda Hutcheon, Gloria Anzaldúa, Lillian Comas-Díaz, Beatriz Nascimento, and Christina Sharpe, it situates these novels as counter-archives and acts of narrative healing. The project also analyzes digital interventions by Afro-Latinx poet-activists Marianela Medrano-Marra and Mónica Carrillo, demonstrating how Afro-digital marronage and sacred digital practices challenge technological colonialism. Through interdisciplinary analysis, this dissertation contributes to Latinx Studies, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Brazilian literature, Black feminism, and digital humanities by showing how story- textual and digital- functions as a site of resistance, healing, and spiritual continuity.

INDEX WORDS: *Um defeito de cor*, Ana Maria Gonçalves, *Daughters of the Stone*; Dahlma Llanos Figueroa, Afro-Latinx literature, Afro-Brazilian narratives, Afro-Puerto Rican narratives, Gloria Anzaldúa, Historiographic metafiction, Narrative healing, Matrilineal memory, Spiritual continuity, Sacred geographies, Digital humanities, Digital storytelling, Digital resistance, Technological decolonization, Quilombagem, Transnational identity.

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DEDICATION

For the women who shaped my soul-

To my abuelas: Tila, Audelia, Guadalupe, and Yolanda-

keepers of memory, guardians of cuentos e historias,

whose quiet strength and open hearts

taught me the magic of words,

the medicine in stories,

and the beauty of loving oneself.

To my tías, primas, sobrinas, and amigas-

whose laughter, wisdom, and resilience

spilled freely around the kitchen table,

teaching me that joy is a form of resistance,

and that community is where survival becomes celebration.

And most of all, to my mother, Magda-

who laid down her own dreams like stepping stones,

so I could cross into mine.

Mamá, your sacrifices were seeds.

I bloom because of you.

Because of you, we can all begin to heal.

Lastly, to my Afro-Latina sisters-

Thank you for allowing this mestiza, to dialogue with you.

It is because I acknowledge the harm
that the mestiza can have,
and has had on your work,
that I dedicate this to you.

This is my offering-
in reverence, in accountability, in love.

And finally, to the ancestors whose names we do not know:

To those buried beneath Baldwin Hall- enslaved, erased, yet still present.

To the Muscogee (Creek) peoples, whose land we now occupy-
may this work honor your memory,
your sovereignty,
your ongoing resistance.

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When I began this journey in the fall of 2016, I was fresh from my first teaching position- an experience marked not only by my readiness to lead a classroom but by my unpreparedness to navigate a professional world not built for me. Though I possessed the intellect to succeed, I lacked the language, the mentorship, and the cultural fluency to move with ease through spaces that saw me as a checkbox, not a scholar. My resistance was met with silence. My questions, with dismissal. I was red-flagged- not for failure, but for daring to speak, to burn too brightly. My first supervisor once told me I would never amount to anything. That memory became my ember.

So I left- not to flee, but to rise. I set out to prove him wrong and, in truth, to prove to myself that I belonged. Years later, I sit here finalizing this dissertation, the product of a rigorous academic journey. And yet, I must ask: at what cost? The institution that gave me a platform also bore witness to my pain. I was harassed and dismissed. I suffered in silence. By the time I found the courage to report, it was “too late.” What followed were months, months which became years, marked by panic attacks, depression, and eventually, a cancer diagnosis. I do not believe these were disconnected events. They were my body’s symptoms, a desperate attempt to shield me from a system that had turned abusive. This dissertation is not just scholarship- it is survival. It is testimony.

Cancer, brutal and unsparing, did what nothing else could: it shattered the illusion that I had to fight alone. It was the women in the waiting rooms, the nurses who smiled despite their own fatigue, the family and friends who held my hand- who reminded me that healing is a collective act. My fire did not extinguish. It transformed. It became warmth, not rage. It became light, not a flare. And in that transformation, I found clarity.

This dissertation is not a triumph of academia alone. It is the fruit of community. To those who did not fear my fire but fed it- to those who saw not destruction, but warmth and light, perhaps shelter- I thank you. You reminded me that my worth was never for this system to determine. It was born from love, from struggle, and from legacy.

A special thank you to Dr. Lesley Feracho, my academic mother, whose wisdom shelters and whose brilliance continues to inspire me. To Dr. Sharina Maillo-Pozo, who saw in me “a diamond in the rough” and allowed time and tenderness to do their work. To Dr. Cecília Rodrigues, who welcomed me when I did not yet know a word of Portuguese, offering me the freedom to learn, to falter, and now, to flourish- dissertating in the very language I once feared.

This journey began with the guidance and inspiration of Dr. Elena Adell, who changed the course of my life as an undergraduate. She turned me from a math major into a lover of literature. After my first class with her, I fell so deeply in love with poetry that I could no longer return to numbers. When I later began exploring graduate school, it was Elena who introduced me to the University of Georgia- her alma mater. I am honored to have followed in her footsteps. Thank you, Elena, for believing in me.

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To my father- gracias, Papá, for instilling in me the dream of a doctorate and for always wearing your UGA gear with pride. I carry your faith in me like armor. To my sisters- this is for you too. Thank you for being proud, for being present, for being mine.

And to my fellow scholars, past, present, and future: I will leave these halls now, for in truth, I do not find them so different from where I started. But I will wait for you- in the barrio, in my home. And if one day you are ready to listen, I will be there to show you that the chola embedded in the scholar is not one to hide or to fear. She is one to honor- especially now, when the academy's rituals have grown too stiff to keep pace with the movements of our people.

And finally, I offer this work in acknowledgment of the land and lives it rests upon. The University of Georgia stands on the ancestral homeland of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation- peoples forcibly removed but never erased. Beneath Baldwin Hall, African Americans once enslaved and now forgotten in institutional memory lie buried without proper reckoning. May this dissertation serve, in part, as an act of remembrance. May it stand as witness to the Black and Indigenous lives who shaped this place long before we arrived- and who still call on us to carry their memory forward.¹

¹ For a detailed overview of the remains of enslaved African Americans unearthed at Baldwin Hall and the controversy surrounding their reinterment, see "Everything You Need to Know About the Baldwin Hall Controversy," *The Red & Black*, 15 Aug. 2019. For further context on the University of Georgia's occupation of Muscogee (Creek) land and the legacy of Native dispossession, see Mariana Matos et al., "Academic Spaces and Indigenous Places: Native American Dispossession and the University of Georgia," Center for Integrative Conservation Research, Dec. 2023.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION-
FRAMING AFRO-LATINIDAD: HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION, SPIRITUAL
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I. Narrative Lineages and Historical Landscapes: Situating Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa in Afro-Latinx Literary History

This dissertation explores how *Um defeito de cor* (2006) by Ana Maria Gonçalves and *Daughters of the Stone* (2009) by Dahlma Llanos Figueroa employ historiographic metafiction, matrilineal memory, and digital storytelling to recover suppressed histories and affirm Afro-Latinx cultural and spiritual resilience. These novels are part of a growing body of contemporary Afro-Latinx literature that insists on the narrative centrality of Black women's voices in reshaping national and diasporic memory. By weaving together fictionalized testimony, sacred cosmology, and embodied memory, both texts disrupt linear historiography and claim space for counter-archives animated by ancestral presence. To understand how their novels intervene in historical discourse, it is essential to briefly trace the authors' intellectual formation and how their work emerges from both personal and collective memory.

Ana Maria Gonçalves is a Brazilian novelist, translator, and public intellectual whose body of work deeply engages the legacies of slavery, racial violence, and Afro-Brazilian identity. Born in Ibiá, Minas Gerais, in 1970, Gonçalves began her career as a journalist before transitioning into fiction. Her literary debut, *Ao lado e à margem do que sentes por mim*, published in 2002, explores themes of love, loss, and social marginalization through a contemporary lens. However, it was her

second novel, *Um defeito de cor* (2006), that catapulted her to national and international recognition. This expansive work reclaims Afro-Brazilian memory by intertwining personal testimony, historical narrative, and spiritual epistemology through the voice of Kehinde, a Yoruba girl kidnapped in West Africa and sold into slavery in nineteenth-century Bahia.

Spanning over 900 pages, *Um defeito de cor* reconstructs Kehinde's journey from captivity to self-liberation, from spiritual devastation to renewal, in a richly layered epistolary format. Kehinde, in her old age and near death, she dictates a letter to her long-lost son from Lagos, Nigeria, tracing her life across the Atlantic and through the violent geography of slavery. This letter functions not only as a narrative frame but as a sacred testimony and political intervention- a self-authored archive of survival. The recipient of her letter is never named, yet the novel strongly suggests that he may be the historical abolitionist Luís Gama, a poet, journalist, and lawyer who was one of Brazil's most prominent Black abolitionist figures in the 1800s. Gonçalves never confirms this explicitly, but through subtle intertextual and historical references- including Kehinde's baptismal name, Luísa Mahin, which echoes the historical figure believed to be Gama's mother- the novel invites the reader to consider its protagonist as a reimagined mother of Brazil's abolitionist legacy (Nascimento, Eliza 136; Gomes 99).

Gonçalves engages readers immediately in *Um defeito de cor* through a compelling Prologue that functions as both a metafictional hook and a spiritual invocation. The novel opens not with Kehinde's voice, but with that of a fictional editor- an unnamed narrator who claims to have discovered a bundle of old papers and letters in Bahia. These documents, we are told, once belonged to "[...] uma escrava muito especial [...]"², and the narrator explains that she has compiled, corrected, and reorganized them into the text that follows (7). This framing device gives

² "[...] a very special slave [...]" (My translation)

the illusion that Kehinde's story is a recovered manuscript, a lost testimony resurrected by chance, or what Gonçalves has referred to in interviews as "serendipity." She recounts how parts of the novel came to her through dreams, visions, and a sense of being led by ancestral forces: "There were several moments in which the book wrote itself, through dreams, through encounters, through serendipity. It felt like I was being led" ("*Um Defeito de Cor*- MAR"). The Prologue thus blurs the boundary between fact and fiction, positioning Kehinde not merely as a narrator but as a medium of ancestral truth. It is a literary trick that imitates the documentary impulse of historical slave narratives while simultaneously exposing the silences and gaps in colonial archives. More than a narrative flourish, the Prologue functions as a rite of remembrance- an invocation that signals to the reader that what follows is a sacred archive. In doing so, Gonçalves constructs a historiographic metafiction that foregrounds Kehinde's story as both historically grounded and spiritually infused, drawing attention to how the act of storytelling itself becomes a form of resistance and reclamation.

Kehinde's life unfolds across multiple geographies- Dahomey, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and Lagos- enabling Gonçalves to explore the transatlantic dimensions of slavery and Afro-diasporic identity. Through Kehinde's voice, the novel bears witness to systemic violence: enslavement, sexual violation, the fragmentation of family, forced religious conversion, and the commodification of Black life. And yet, *Um defeito de cor* is also a story of sacred continuity and radical survival. Kehinde becomes a mother, a businesswoman, a spiritual devotee of Candomblé, and an independent woman who refuses to disappear within the archives of colonial history. Her identity evolves across a series of forced and chosen names- from Kehinde to Luísa- each inscribing a new layer of trauma, resilience, and historical resistance. The significance of her birth name, Kehinde, further underscores the novel's spiritual and cultural depth. In Yoruba cosmology, Kehinde is the second-born of twins but is believed to be the elder- an inversion of linear logic that

mirrors the novel’s nonlinear temporality and matrilineal authority. This cosmological motif resonates throughout the novel’s structure and reinforces its larger Afro-diasporic epistemology, where time, identity, and history are cyclical, recursive, and spiritually encoded.

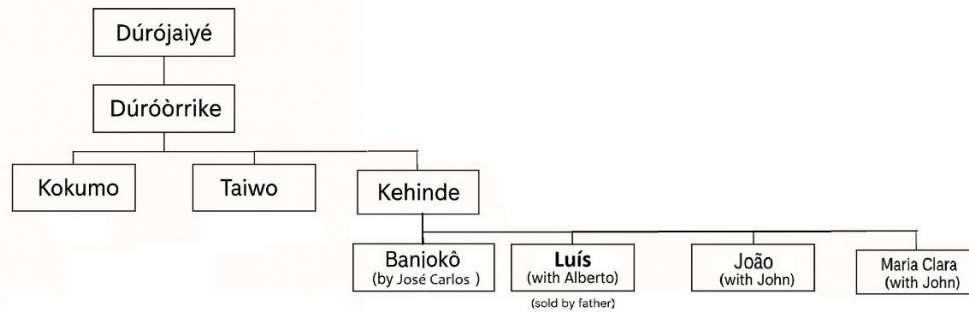


Fig. 1. Kehinde’s Matrilineal Lineage

The reception of *Um defeito de cor* underscores its enduring cultural significance. The novel was awarded the Casa de las Américas Prize in 2007 and has remained a critical touchstone in Afro-Brazilian literature. Its resonance expanded again in 2023 when it was selected as the central theme of Rio’s famed Mangueira samba school for Carnaval- a tribute that brought Kehinde’s story into public spectacle and popular memory (“*Um Defeito de Cor* Becomes a Carnaval Samba Plot”). The same year, the Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) launched a major exhibit dedicated to the novel, featuring immersive, multimedia interpretations of Kehinde’s journey through soundscapes, visual installations, and community storytelling practices (“*Um Defeito de Cor* - MAR”). These adaptations affirm Gonçalves’s narrative as a foundational Afro-Brazilian text that bridges literature, memory, and cultural praxis.

Dahlma Llanos Figueroa, born in Puerto Rico and raised in the South Bronx, is an Afro-Puerto Rican writer and educator whose work centers Black women’s lived experiences, intergenerational memory, and the enduring legacies of slavery and colonialism. Her debut novel *Daughters of the Stone* was published in 2009 after more than a decade of archival research, oral history interviews, and community engagement. The novel was a finalist for the PEN/Robert

Bingham Fellowship for Writers and has been widely adopted in university curricula across Latinx, African American, and Women's and Gender Studies fields. In interviews, Llanos Figueroa emphasizes that the novel was written to give voice to "[...] the women in my family who never had the chance to tell their own stories" ("Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation"). *Daughters of the Stone* spans five generations of Afro-Puerto Rican women, beginning with Fela, an enslaved African brought to Puerto Rico in the nineteenth century, and culminating in Carisa, a contemporary artist living in New York. Through these women, the novel traces a lineage shaped by trauma, resistance, spirituality, and survival, with a sacred stone passed matrilineally serving as the conduit for memory and ancestral knowledge.

Much like Kehinde, Fela's story begins with rupture but becomes a spiritual cartography of resilience, memory, and matrilineal survival. The novel opens with Fela, a Yoruba girl who survives the Middle Passage and arrives in Puerto Rico in bondage. Though violently uprooted and renamed, her spiritual knowledge and connection to the orishas remain intact, forming the foundation of a matrilineal legacy. Fela gives birth to Mati, the daughter of a white slaveowner, and entrusts her with both a sacred stone and spiritual teachings. Mati, in turn, passes this inheritance to her daughter Concha, who, despite internalizing the colonial Catholicism imposed upon her, carries forward the trauma and resilience of her foremothers. Concha's daughter, Elena, distances herself from her past, marked by silence and shame, yet unconsciously transmits intergenerational wounds. Finally, Carisa, the fifth-generation descendant, begins to recover the broken threads of her ancestry through dreams, art, and storytelling, ultimately reactivating the memory encoded in the sacred stone. This generational arc powerfully embodies what Saidiya Hartman and Christina Sharpe describe as the "afterlives of slavery"- the persistent psychic, social, and cultural reverberations of enslavement across time and geography (Sharpe 5).

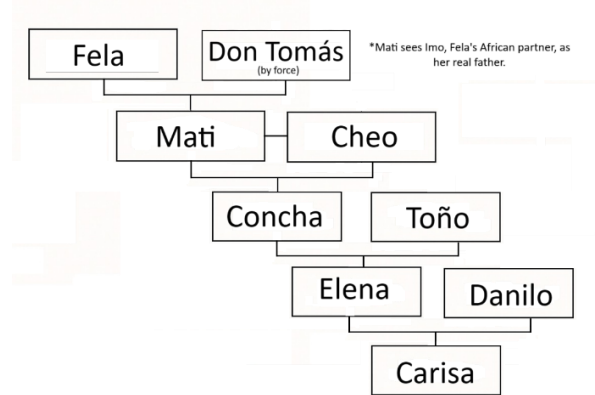


Fig. 2 Fela's Matrilineal Lineage

Set against the layered backdrop of Spanish colonial rule, Catholic indoctrination, racial hierarchy, and U.S. imperial expansion, *Daughters of the Stone* reclaims the silenced histories of Afro-Puerto Rican women. Llanos Figueroa constructs what can be understood as a literary counter-archive, one that challenges the dominant historical record by grounding the narrative in Yoruba cosmology, Afro-Caribbean spiritual practice, and women's labor. Like Gonçalves, she blurs the lines between memory and myth, history and prophecy, deploying a blend of magical realism, spiritual invocation, and historical realism. In doing so, Llanos Figueroa reimagines the history of Puerto Rico not as a monolithic colonial narrative, but as one deeply shaped by the presence, pain, and power of Black women.

The historical and cultural contexts in which these novels are situated further deepen their significance. Brazil and Puerto Rico, while distinct in their colonial histories, share legacies of African enslavement, racial stratification, and cultural syncretism. Brazil, which received the largest number of enslaved Africans during the transatlantic slave trade, formally abolished slavery in 1888- later than any other country in the Americas. The nation's post-abolition period was marked by state-sponsored ideologies of "racial democracy" and whitening (*branqueamento*), which sought to erase Afro-Brazilian contributions and identities in favor of a mythologized mixed-race national unity. Scholars like Lélia Gonzalez and Beatriz Nascimento have challenged

these narratives by recovering the epistemological and political contributions of Afro-Brazilian communities, particularly women, to Brazil's cultural fabric.

In contrast, Puerto Rico's colonial trajectory has been shaped by its transition from Spanish to U.S. imperial rule following the Spanish-American War of 1898. While slavery was abolished on the island in 1873, racial hierarchies persisted through cultural ideologies like *blanqueamiento* and *trigueñidad*, which promoted whitening and ambiguous racial categories that obscured Black identity. As Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores argue, Afro-Puerto Rican identity has often been rendered invisible within national discourses of Latinidad that privilege mestizaje and Hispanic heritage over African roots (Román and Flores 5). *Daughters of the Stone* intervenes directly in this discourse, offering a counternarrative grounded in Afro-Caribbean spirituality, matrilineality, and historical endurance. It is within these layered colonial histories- marked by erasure and misrepresentation- that Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa position their protagonists as counter-historians, mediums, and memory-keepers

Both Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa resist these national mythologies by centering Afro-diasporic memory and spiritual inheritance as keys to cultural survival. Their novels reframe the experience of enslavement not solely through violence and rupture, but through continuity, resistance, and the sacred. Kehinde's journey back to Africa and Fela's dreams that bridge time and generations function as narrative technologies that defy Western linearity and historical amnesia. Their stories are not merely about survival- they are about the reclamation of knowledge, the reconstitution of community, and the reanimation of spiritual geographies that colonialism sought to destroy.



Together, these novels provide vital insights into the sociohistorical contexts of Brazil and Puerto Rico. They demonstrate how colonial regimes systematically erased Black women's voices and how literature can serve as a corrective- illuminating the absences and silences within official archives. By reconstructing the lived experiences of Afro-descendant women, Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa reclaim narrative space for Afro-Latinx memory, agency, and epistemic sovereignty. Their fiction does more than revisit the past; it dignifies obscured lives and restores ancestral narratives that dominant histories have long suppressed, offering layered accounts of cultural endurance and transformation across time and geography. To better understand how these works intervene in dominant historical frameworks and weave history with spirituality as forms of resistance, the following section introduces the critical vocabulary and conceptual scaffolding that shape this dissertation's interpretive approach.

Other Afro-Latina and Afro-Caribbean texts that employ similar strategies of historiographic metafiction include *The Farming of Bones* (1998) by Edwidge Danticat, which uses fictional testimony to bear witness to the 1937 Dominican-Haitian massacre; *Malambo* (2004) by Lucía Charún-Illescas, which reconstructs the lives of enslaved and free Black communities in colonial Lima; and *Nuestra Señora de la Noche* (2006) by Mayra Santos-Febres, which reimagines Puerto Rican history through the life of Isabel Luberza Oppenheimer, a Black woman who rose to

prominence as a brothel madam in mid-twentieth-century Ponce, offering a complex portrait of race, gender, and nationalist tension. These novels, like *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, resist dominant historical narratives by centering Black protagonists, matrilineal memory, and affective historiography. What distinguishes Gonçalves's and Llanos-Figueroa's novels is their deliberate fusion of sacred ritual, nonlinear structure, and feminist epistemology to construct what I term sacred archives- literary spaces that preserve spiritual and embodied knowledge in defiance of colonial erasure.

II. Conceptual Groundings: Locating Language in Afro-Latinx Studies

The language throughout this dissertation emerges from the historical and cultural specificity of the two primary novels while also reflecting the evolving political consciousness of Afro-diasporic communities. These texts- *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*- anchor this project's literary analysis and offer a foundation for theorizing Afro-Latinx identity, memory, and resistance. Rather than treating printed novel as a precursor to the digital, this study approaches both as interconnected forms within a shared continuum of Afro-diasporic storytelling. While no single term can fully encompass the complexity of Black life in the Americas, the terminology used here is chosen with care, attending to how language shapes the articulation of identities, epistemologies, and technologies within and beyond the texts.

Afro-Latina is employed throughout this dissertation to foreground the gendered dimensions of diasporic experience and to center Black women's roles in shaping cultural memory, resisting colonial violence, and preserving sacred knowledge across generations. Drawing on the foundational work of Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores's foundational work³, I emphasize

³ See Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, "The Afro-Latin@ Experience: An Introduction," in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, edited by Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (Duke University Press, 2010), 1–15. The editors emphasize that Afro-Latinx identity emerges at the intersection of race, gender, culture, and nationality, shaped by both U.S. and Latin American frameworks.

that Afro-Latina identity emerges through the intersection of racial, gendered, and national negotiations, as well as through cultural hybridity. As a feminine identifier, Afro-Latina honors the matrilineal memory and narrative voice that structure both *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, where storytelling itself becomes a site of ancestral transmission and political agency.

In addition to Afro-Latina, I use Afro-Latinx to refer to a broader, gender-expansive community of Afro-descendants linked to Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly through U.S.-based scholarly and activist contexts. This term reflects the inclusive ethos of this project and aligns with contemporary practices in Latinx Studies, where racial justice and gender inclusivity are central concerns. As María R. Scharrón-del Río and Alan A. Aja argue, Afro-Latinx disrupts both anti-Blackness and heteronormativity within dominant Latinx identity formations. While the term *Latine* has gained traction in grassroots and Latin American circles as a phonologically grounded alternative, I use *Latinx* to remain consistent with the terminology most widely circulated in U.S. academic discourse- the institutional and geopolitical context from which I write. This choice is not meant to displace *Latine*, but to situate the dissertation within the lexicon of its immediate scholarly community. Framing *Daughters of the Stone* through an Afro-Latinx lens enables a hemispheric exploration of race, memory, and diaspora while engaging with Afro-Caribbean literature as it circulates in U.S. discourse. This framework complements the study of *Um defeito de cor*, rooted in Afro-Brazilian identity and shaped by Lélia Gonzalez's articulation of *Amefricanidade*. Across both novels- and in the digital case studies- Afro-Latinx identity emerges not as a fixed label, but as a dynamic practice of remembering, resisting, and reimagining Black life across the Americas.

I also use Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Puerto Rican to emphasize the regional and national specificities of the protagonists in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. These terms help

situate Kehinde and Fela within historically grounded frameworks shaped by slavery, colonialism, and ongoing movements for racial justice, spiritual sovereignty, and cultural affirmation. In articulating *Amefricanidade*, Gonzalez critiques the limitations of imported racial categories like “African American” or “Black American,” which often center U.S. experiences and obscure Latin American Afro-diasporic realities. Gonzalez reminds us that naming is not a neutral act but a site of epistemological and political struggle. Her term *Amefricanidade*- or *Amefricans*- reclaims space for Afro-descendants across the hemisphere to define themselves on their own terms, reconfiguring the cultural and linguistic landscape of the Americas.

In alignment with Gonzalez’s vision, this dissertation affirms a hemispheric Black consciousness through Agustín Laó-Montes’s concept of *Afroamerica*- a “creolized polyphonic diaspora space” where spiritual traditions, oral histories, and resistance strategies circulate across borders and languages (Afro-Latin@s in Movement 324). *Afroamerica* provides a framework for tracing the relationality between Kehinde’s Brazil and Fela’s Puerto Rico, emphasizing shared diasporic trajectories of rupture, resilience, and cultural reconstitution. Rather than remaining bound by national categories, this framework privileges translocal and transhistorical connections among Afro-descendants in the Americas. Laó-Montes also proposes a “politics of translation,” a methodology grounded in listening across difference and building solidarity through dialogic engagement- an approach this dissertation adopts in mapping Afro-diasporic continuities between literary and digital spaces (“Afro-Latinidades and the Diasporic Imaginary” 324).

Afro-Latinidad, as engaged in this dissertation, is not treated as a static identity label but as a critical analytic- a lens through which the operations of Blackness within and across Latin American and U.S. Latinx contexts can be examined. Drawing on the work of Petra Rivera-Rideau, Tianna Paschel, and Jennifer Jones, I approach Afro-Latinidad as a constellation of political,

cultural, and epistemological interventions that challenge nationalist narratives and carve out space for Black subjectivity within broader Latinx discourses. These scholars define the term as one that “traces the cultural, historical, and political experiences of people of African descent in Latin America and among U.S. Latin@s,” emphasizing that transnational approaches are essential for addressing both regional silences and the constraints of state-based classifications (3). This reorientation is particularly urgent given that dominant formulations of *Latinidad* have often erased Black presence in favor of *mestizaje* ideologies and racially homogenized myths of nationhood. As Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, and Jernigan point out, “[...] we produce and reproduce scientific knowledge that fails to capture the unique racialized experiences of Black Latinxs” by defaulting to color-blind frameworks rooted in colonial logics (27). Afro-*Latinidad*, then, becomes both an act of reclamation and a strategy of refusal- an assertion of visibility and agency within histories marked by erasure. It enables a hemispheric and transnational engagement with Blackness that, as Laó-Montes affirms, “problematizes narrow nationalist and exclusive world-regional and linguistic designations” (*Afro-Latinidades* 118).

This conceptual constellation is grounded, in part, by the epistemic and spiritual contributions of Gloria Anzaldúa, especially her articulations of *autohistoria-teoría*, spiritual *mestizaje*, *nepantla*, and the *Coatlicue State*. These intertwined modes of reflection and creation weave together the personal, ancestral, and political, drawing from Indigenous and Afro-diasporic cosmologies to imagine healing and transformation beyond colonial frameworks. Anzaldúa’s work shapes how I read the protagonists of *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*- not simply as fictional figures, but as embodied thinkers, ritual keepers, and sacred witnesses whose storytelling activates spiritual inheritance, ancestral presence, and the restorative power of language.

For Anzaldúa, theory is never abstract or detached- it is embodied, ritualized, and emerges from the body's intimate engagement with trauma, insight, and transformation. As she writes, "The creative process is an agency of transformation," one through which we "restructure the images/stories that shape a person's consciousness" (*Light in the Dark* 35). This creative force becomes "a liberation impulse [...] an activity that transforms materials and energy" (40), positioning storytelling itself as a sacred, generative act. Identity, in this view, is not stable but continually unfolding- "[...] an ongoing story... revised at each station, each stop, in our *viaje de la vida*" (75). This dynamic, recursive process of self-making, central to *autohistoria-teoría*, informs how Kehinde and Fela narrate and reimagine their lives, constructing identity through memory, rupture, and spiritual continuity.

Anzaldúa's concept of the *Coatlicue State*- a psychic and spiritual rupture marked by pain, liminality, and emergence- also informs this analysis. She describes it as a space of inner upheaval where existing identities collapse and new consciousness begins to take shape: a painful, yet necessary, threshold in the journey toward healing. This process, she explains, unfolds within a cyclical pattern of disintegration and renewal: "After much struggle and in moments of insight/*conocimiento*, your life and its scattered parts get reconstituted on a different plane: You gain another identity through change and loss" (*Light in the Dark* 89). Kehinde and Fela's journeys through trauma and spiritual inheritance echo this transformation, as each woman navigates loss and displacement not as endpoints but as portals into a deeper, reassembled self.

Anzaldúa's notion of *nepantla*- the liminal space between worlds- deepens the narrative and temporal complexity of both *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. Kehinde and Fela inhabit states of cultural, geographic, and metaphysical in-betweenness, continually negotiating rupture while summoning ancestral presence. "Knowledge is relative, and reality is a composition

[...]” (*Light in the Dark* 39), Anzaldúa writes, and through their rituals, dreams, and embodied storytelling, both women become agents of re-creation. In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa affirms the spiritual continuity that transcends colonial borders: “The sea cannot be fenced, / *el mar* does not stop at borders” (25). Her invocation of Yemayá- a Yoruba orisha of salt waters, creation, and maternal power- blends Indigenous and Afro-diasporic cosmologies into a poetics of resistance: “To show the white men what she thought of his arrogance, / Yemayá blew that wire fence down” (25). Though Yemayá will be explored in more detail later in this dissertation, her presence here signals Anzaldúa’s conscious alignment with Afro-diasporic sacred traditions. Like the novels themselves, these lines enact border-crossing as a spiritual act, gesturing toward sovereignty, memory, and radical transformation. By foregrounding Anzaldúa’s visionary contributions, I prepare the ground for subsequent chapters that trace how these texts perform spiritual mestizaje and narrative healing through memory, embodiment, and resistance.

Expanding upon Anzaldúa’s contributions, Cherríe Moraga’s concept of theory in the flesh, first introduced in *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), offers a vital framework in which lived experience becomes the foundation of feminist and decolonial thought. Developed in collaboration with Anzaldúa, Moraga’s vision centers the body as both site and source of knowledge, shaped by race, sexuality, class, and ancestral memory. Theory in the flesh asserts that the material realities of oppression- the wounds, desires, and embodied histories- must shape the theories we build. “A theory in the flesh,” Moraga writes, “means one where the physical realities of our lives- our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings- all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (23). This grounding in bodily experience resonates with the narrative arcs of Kehinde and Fela, whose bodies register trauma as well as survival, becoming living palimpsests of memory and resistance. While Anzaldúa frames writing as a sacred pathway to *conocimiento*,

Moraga emphasizes survival and political clarity born from pain and place. Together, their frameworks illuminate the deeply embodied and sacred dimensions of Afro-Latina identity in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, where the body is not only a site of inscription but a vessel for transformation.

Lillian Comas-Díaz's framework of decolonial healing further deepens this embodied approach by reframing trauma not as pathology but as potential- a site through which suppressed histories, spiritual practices, and communal ties can be reclaimed. For Comas-Díaz, healing is not a return to an idealized wholeness but a decolonial act of reweaving fractured identities and reconnecting with ancestral memory. This vision of healing aligns with Afro-Latinx experiences of displacement, racialization, and cultural erasure, offering pathways to reconstitute the self through ritual, storytelling, and spiritual practice. "To heal is to resist," she argues, especially when healing draws from traditions historically devalued or targeted by colonial systems ("AfroLatinx Females" 324). In this dissertation, I use the term Afro-Latinx in its most expansive and inclusive sense- honoring the transnational, gender-diverse communities of Afro-descendants whose cultural and political experiences span geographies and linguistic traditions. While earlier sections focus on Afro-Latina identity to foreground the matrilineal and gendered aspects of Kehinde's and Fela's narratives, Afro-Latinx is more appropriate here, particularly in discussing communal practices of resistance and remembrance- especially those emerging in digital, diasporic, and coalitional spaces.

This framework of decolonial healing converges with what I describe throughout this dissertation as narrative healing- a practice in which storytelling functions not only as a vessel for memory but also as a ritual intervention. While I draw from the language of testimony, I acknowledge that the protagonists of *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* are fictional,

not historical witnesses. Their stories do not serve as testimonial literature in the traditional legal or literary sense; instead, they operate as expressions of embodied memory- narratives shaped by the imaginative weight of ancestral trauma and the enduring need for survival. Through these characters, storytelling becomes a sacred act that both remembers and remakes. Kehinde and Fela recount experiences of enslavement, exile, and dispossession, yet their narratives generate healing through spiritual presence, ritual gestures, and the transformative power of language. Here, testimony is metaphorical: a means of naming the unspeakable, of invoking the sacred, and of repairing ancestral ties. Narrative healing thus emerges as both a therapeutic and epistemological process- reclaiming the body and the word as instruments of resistance, continuity, and renewal.

To theorize the convergence of cultural memory and digital resistance, I engage Eduard Arriaga's concepts of *Afro-Latinx digital connections* and *Afro-digital marronage*- terms that illuminate how Afro-Latinx creators mobilize digital platforms not merely for representation, but as acts of fugitivity and refusal. Afro-digital marronage evokes the historical legacy of maroon communities while adapting that legacy to twenty-first-century digital terrains, where algorithmic bias and systemic erasure persist. Within this framework, I describe *technological decolonization* as the intentional reclamation of digital space for Afro-diasporic spiritual memory, epistemic freedom, and communal sovereignty. These platforms- ranging from livestreamed rituals to digital altars, hashtags, memes, and AI interfaces- become sacred interfaces in themselves. Rather than passive tools, they operate as contested and affective geographies, where Afro-Latinx users challenge invisibility and reinscribe ancestral presence. What emerges is a sacred digital archive- a dynamic, nonlinear space in which memory, ritual, and Black futurity are encoded through code, image, and sound. These digital practices affirm that resistance can take form in the very technologies once designed to marginalize.

This sacred digital archive resonates with Diana Taylor's concept of the *repertoire*, which she defines as embodied modes of knowledge transmission- gesture, ritual, performance, storytelling- that exist alongside and in tension with the written archive. In digital contexts, these repertoires are neither erased nor merely replicated; they are transformed. Hashtags become mnemonic devices, videos function as virtual ceremonies, and memes operate as satire, cultural critique, and community affirmation. These digital forms allow Afro-Latinx users to inscribe ancestral memory, spiritual continuity, and political resistance into algorithmic space. Within these reimagined repertoires, the ephemeral becomes sacred: memory is made shareable and spiritual presence is made visible, circulating across timelines, feeds, and livestreams. Afro-diasporic traditions, historically excluded from formal archives, find new life in these encoded gestures and performances. In this way, the digital becomes not just a medium of visibility, but a site of embodied and sacred knowledge, where Afro-Latinx users assert futurity through creative resistance.

To expand the spatial and temporal reach of this dissertation, I turn to Beatriz Nascimento's concept of *quilombagem*, which reimagines the quilombo not solely as a historical site of Black resistance but as an enduring political, cultural, and spiritual praxis. For Nascimento, *quilombagem* is not about preserving the past in stasis but about sustaining Afro-diasporic autonomy across time and space. As Christen A. Smith explains, Nascimento viewed the quilombo as "[...] a posture Black people adopt to sustain themselves"- a living method of reworlding that resists the logics of colonial domination ("On Quilombo" 157). In her pivotal 1976 essay, "Quilombos: Social Change or Conservatism?," Nascimento critiques the colonial historiography that reduces quilombos to isolated acts of rebellion. Instead, she reframes them as dynamic social systems that produce new

epistemologies and forms of survival rooted in memory, strategy, and spiritual sovereignty (177–82). These are not relics of resistance, but living archives of Afro-descendant worldmaking.

Characters like Kehinde, Fela, and Carisa inhabit these sacred geographies not merely through physical space, but through the practices, beliefs, and matriarchal knowledge systems that structure their lives. Their refusal to assimilate into colonial logics, their commitment to ritual, and their invocation of ancestral presence constitute acts of *quilombagem*. In their stories, the quilombo becomes less a physical site and more a mobile practice of cultural and spiritual sovereignty- one that travels across oceans, languages, and generations. These women embody a form of resistance that is not reactionary but generative, rooted in memory and carried forward through narrative, ceremony, and embodiment. Their experiences form counter-archives that challenge the silences of dominant historiographies and assert Black life beyond the confines of the colonial state.

Finally, this dissertation draws on Christina Sharpe’s theory of wake work, which she defines as a method of inhabiting and resisting “[...] the continuous and changing present of slavery’s as yet unresolved unfolding” (14). For Sharpe, to be “in the wake” is not merely to witness the afterlife of slavery, but to “[...] attend to Black life and Black suffering [...]” in ways that affirm both grief and persistence, rupture and survivance (18). Her concept illuminates how Kehinde’s and Fela’s narratives engage recursive temporality- not in pursuit of resolution, but as a means of dwelling within trauma’s echoes and ritualizing its remembrance. Their stories enact wake work by reanimating silenced ancestral histories and insisting on the endurance of Black life despite systemic erasure. As Sharpe writes, wake work constitutes “[...] a theory and praxis of Black being in diaspora [...]”- a method of naming and resisting the “[...] skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment,”

which she, following Saidiya Hartman, identifies as the “afterlife of slavery” (Sharpe 15; Hartman 6).

This dissertation frequently references Oxum in *Um defeito de cor* and Oshun in *Daughters of the Stone*- the Yoruba orixá/orisha of sweet waters, fertility, love, and feminine power. These divine figures function as spiritual technologies and narrative catalysts, guiding the protagonists through transformation, resistance, and sacred memory. I retain the original orthography used by each author as part of a diasporic methodology that honors multiplicity, situated knowledge, and Afro-spiritual continuity. As John T. Maddox IV notes, Oshun is the “matriarch of the Daughters family,” structuring the novel’s matrilineal and recursive narrative, which allows Afro-Puerto Rican identity to unfold through ritual time and sacred lineage (*Fractal Families* 128-29). Similarly, Diego Azorli demonstrates how Oxum and other divine feminine presences encode memory, healing, and agency in ways that reflect the lived experiences of Yoruba women across cosmology and daily life (113-16). These orixás are not merely symbolic; they operate as living archives, animating Afro-Latinx literary and digital imaginaries with ancestral presence and embodied wisdom.

This constellation of divine feminine energy finds powerful resonance in Anzaldúa’s theorization of spirituality, identity, and shapeshifting consciousness. While her work is often read through a Mesoamerican lens, her lifelong relationship with Yemayá, the orisha of saltwaters, has recently come into sharper scholarly focus through the *Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers*. As Rebeca Hey-Colón documents, Anzaldúa identified as a daughter of Yemayá as early as 1981 and repeatedly invoked the ocean as a space of mourning, transformation, and creative resurgence. Her near-drowning at South Padre Island- understood as a spiritual calling- marked the beginning of this deep relationship with Yemayá’s energy, which she described as alive, breathing, and

intimately aware of her existence (*Channeling Knowledges* 83-89). Yemayá appears across both *Borderlands* and *Light in the Dark* as a guiding force underpinning Anzaldúa's vision of collective healing and diasporic return. In *Light in the Dark*, she writes: "Down on the beach, drummers serenade Yemayá, ocean mother. I'd like to think they're beating the drums of peace, calling our souls back into our bodies. We are the song that sings us" (22). This moment affirms her spiritual mestizaje and commitment to borderless sacred alliances- uniting Coyolxauhqui⁴ and Yemayá, united through rhythm, water, and ancestral memory.

Together, Anzaldúa and Evaristo offer models of literary creation in which the self is not fixed but recursive, not singular but plural. Moraga's theory in the flesh grounds this shapeshifting in material reality, insisting that theory must arise from the body's lived knowledge- its wounds, longings, and survival. Like *escrevivência*, this politic affirms that the body is not merely a vessel but an archive, an altar, and a source of resistance. Anzaldúa's phrase "we are the song that sings us" captures both invocation and possession, aligning her creative process with ritual performance and Afro-diasporic cosmology (*Light in the Dark* 22). In *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, these frameworks come alive: Kehinde and Fela are shaped by ancestral songs, spectral visitations, and physical scars that refuse silence. Their stories- like those of Anzaldúa, Evaristo, and Moraga- show that healing does not come from transcendence, but from transformation within the flesh, the spirit, and the word.

Anzaldúa's engagement with aquatic spirituality is rooted in a relational epistemology that extends beyond land-based cosmologies. Her references to Yemayá are not fleeting metaphors but

⁴ Coyolxauhqui is the Aztec moon goddess and dismembered sister of the warrior god Huitzilopochtli. In Anzaldúa's framework, she symbolizes fragmentation, trauma, and the ongoing process of re-membering the self. Through what she calls the *Coyolxauhqui imperative*, Anzaldúa invites readers to confront personal and historical wounds as a path toward healing and transformation. The dismemberment of Coyolxauhqui becomes a metaphor for the psychic and cultural fragmentation endured by women of color- and for the creative, ritual labor required to reintegrate these parts through storytelling, spirituality, and embodied knowledge (*Light in the Dark*, 17-19).

sustained spiritual invocations that reflect a deep affinity with Afro-diasporic traditions in which water signifies mourning, power, and renewal. Across her writing, Yemayá emerges not as a symbolic figure but as a maternal presence- an embodied intelligence shaping Anzaldúa's connection to the body, the divine, and the act of storytelling. The ocean becomes both a physical and metaphysical axis, a space where grief is transformed into creative force. Rather than grounding her identity solely in Mesoamerican symbology, Anzaldúa integrates Yemayá into her spiritual and literary genealogy, offering an ethics of cross-cultural invocation anchored in lived experience and ritual depth.

However, some scholars have raised important critiques of spiritual mestizaje, cautioning that it can risk flattening or appropriating Afro-diasporic traditions by emphasizing hybridity and individual synthesis at the expense of cultural specificity and collective accountability. Scholars such as Yomaira Figueroa, Christen Smith, and Tanya Saunders call for more rigorous engagement when Latinx and Chicanx authors invoke African diasporic epistemologies, particularly when these traditions are referenced without acknowledging their rooted cultural contexts or the Black women who have historically safeguarded them. These critiques urge a more reflexive approach to cross-cultural spiritual borrowing, emphasizing the need to recognize both origin and stewardship. In this dissertation, I foreground Anzaldúa's engagement with Yemayá not as uncritical celebration but as part of a larger constellation of sacred epistemologies that intersect, diverge, and resonate across diasporic geographies. Her references to orishas are read dialogically, with careful attention to distinctions between Mesoamerican and Afro-Atlantic frameworks, and with an explicit acknowledgment of the Afro-diasporic lineages that precede- and extend beyond- her incorporation of them.

In their stories, these waters carry both generational memory and spiritual force. Kehinde's ritual immersions in springs and wells mark pivotal moments of transformation and ancestral return, while Fela's initiation into sacred knowledge unfolds beside rivers that echo with the voices of her foremothers. These aquatic rituals reflect the orisha-inflected rhythms of Anzaldúa's storytelling, where personal rupture becomes a threshold for revelation, and individual pain opens into collective healing. Water, in this sense, functions not merely as motif but as cosmological structure- a sacred conduit through which memory, resilience, and divine presence circulate. This dissertation traces the convergence of these literary currents- across Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the broader Afro-diasporic world- demonstrating how Yemayá, Oshun, and Oxum are not invoked as metaphors but embodied as living technologies of remembrance, transformation, and resistance.

Ultimately, this study approaches terminology not as a static glossary but as a living constellation of signifiers shaped by history, struggle, and collective intention. The terms employed- Afro-Latina, Afro-Latinx, Afro-Puerto Rican, Afro-Brazilian, Afroamerica, Afro-Latinidad, *Amefricanidade*, spiritual mestizaje, *autohistoria-teoría*, *nepantla*, the *Coatlicue State*, intersectional feminism, decolonial healing, narrative healing, sacred geographies, wake work, technological decolonization, Afro-digital marronage, digital resistance, sacred archive, counter-archive, and *escrevivência*- reflect the layered, embodied, and interwoven realities at the center of *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. These concepts do not exist in isolation; they speak to one another across cultural, linguistic, and disciplinary lines, responding to the epistemological, spiritual, and political labor of Afro-Latinx communities throughout the Americas. By naming and contextualizing these terms, this dissertation offers not only a conceptual map for navigating the chapters that follow, but also an invitation to consider the radical possibilities of language as a site of resistance, remembrance, and reimagining.

III. Theoretical Interventions and Sacred Archives: Framing Afro-Latinidad, Metafiction, and Digital Resistance

This study is guided by a constellation of interrelated questions: How do Afro-Latina narratives reclaim historical memory through literary form? What role does spirituality play in constructing counter-archives that safeguard Afro-diasporic knowledge across generations? And how might emerging digital platforms- such as social media, AI-driven storytelling, and immersive environments- amplify or inhibit the sacred and political work embedded in these texts? These questions are central not only to *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* but also to broader Afro-Latinx struggles for cultural memory, epistemic sovereignty, and representational justice. They resonate across pedagogical, archival, digital, and activist spaces- sites where race, gender, and history are actively negotiated and continually remade.

Rather than revisiting terminology previously established, this section foregrounds the historical and narrative frameworks that shape Afro-Latinx literary expression. Specifically, it situates *Um defeito de cor* (2006) by Gonçalves and *Daughters of the Stone* (2009) by Llanos-Figueroa as literary interventions that challenge the silences and exclusions of official archives. Both texts operate as insurgent acts of memory work, centering Afro-descendant women's voices as agents of narrative recovery. In *Um defeito de cor*, Kehinde constructs an epic epistolary account that recounts her transatlantic journey, spiritual survival, and political consciousness. Addressed to her estranged son, her testimony defies historical erasure by fusing intimate reflection with communal inheritance, anchored in Afro-Brazilian cosmology. Similarly, in *Daughters of the Stone*, Fela's forced migration to Puerto Rico marks the genesis of a matrilineal saga that traverses five generations. Each descendant- Mati, Concha, Elena, and Carisa- inherits fragments of spiritual

knowledge and cultural trauma, culminating in Carisa's effort to restore ancestral memory through art and ritual. Together, Kehinde and Carisa embody narrative sovereignty; their stories form sacred repositories that confront colonial rupture through acts of storytelling, remembrance, and embodied resistance.

This reclamation of memory through storytelling echoes what Jomaira Salas Pujols identifies as the radical potential of Afro-Latina girls who embrace their Blackness to "challenge anti-Blackness and engage in their own projects of Black Latina girlhood self-makings" ("Racial Realities" 595). Such self-fashioning stands in direct opposition to the historical erasure of Black presence that Marta I. Cruz-Janzen describes as foundational to racism within Latinx communities, particularly in the form of mestiza ideologies that obscure African heritage ("Latinegras" 171-72). The internalization of U.S. racial logics often deepens this disavowal, leaving Afro-Latina identity suspended between visibility and misrecognition. Maritza Quiñones Rivera gives voice to this fragmentation when she writes, "Neither African American nor Latina, I am caught up between two sticks," articulating the unstable position Afro-Latinas often occupy- simultaneously hypervisible and erased ("Speaking My Mind" 174). This ambiguity is emblematic of what Salas Pujols frames as the "third space" of Afro-Latinidad: a layered terrain shaped by colonial history, nationalist frameworks, and diasporic memory. It is within this third space that Kehinde, Fela, and their descendants navigate the tensions between marginalization and self-definition, grounding their narratives in spiritual lineage, ritual practice, and ancestral memory. Their stories resist dominant paradigms not by seeking inclusion but by generating epistemologies that exist beyond the reach of colonial categories.

The protagonists in Gonçalves's and Llanos-Figueroa's novels inhabit this "third space" from the outset. Kehinde and Fela are forcibly displaced, yet they carry with them cosmological

knowledge, ritual practices, and cultural memory that persist despite violent rupture. Their descendants- both literal and symbolic- become carriers of this spiritual inheritance, which is sustained through story, ritual, and vision. Both novels center Black women as epistemic agents who disrupt dominant historiographies by privileging orality, embodied knowledge, and ancestral continuity. These narrative strategies resonate with Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction, which merges historical reference with fictional invention to question the authority and objectivity of the historical record (5). Kehinde and Carisa, in particular, exemplify this mode: their stories unfold across multiple temporal and spatial registers, resisting narrative finality. Through them, the novel becomes a site of invocation- a form of literary ritual where memory is preserved, reimagined, and transmitted.

These works do more than narrate historical trauma- they perform its ritual transformation. Through the lens of historiographic metafiction, Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa construct narratives that are simultaneously testimonial and ceremonial, literary and spiritual. Their protagonists are not passive recipients of inherited violence but active participants in reconfiguring the past to serve present and future healing. This dynamic aligns with Lillian Comas-Díaz's concept of "ethnocultural psychotherapy," in which identity, spirituality, and historical consciousness are interwoven as tools for resilience and transformation ("Ethnocultural Psychotherapy" 25). Within this framework, narrative becomes a sacred space of reparation- a medium where generational wounds are not simply revisited but ritually reconstituted as sources of insight and strength. Both novels thus frame healing as a nonlinear, communal process that connects the transatlantic trauma of slavery to contemporary Afro-Latinx experiences of racialized violence and spiritual survival.

As previously discussed, Anzaldúa's concept of *autohistoria-teoría* offers a foundational lens through which storytelling becomes a spiritual and epistemic act. Here, that framework deepens our understanding of Kehinde's and Carisa's narratives as sites of ritual memory, where the personal becomes political and ancestral. Kehinde and Carisa speak from sites of rupture, yet their voices are guided by spiritual intuition and matrilineal memory. Like Anzaldúa and Moraga, they resist binaries between history and myth, intellect and intuition, instead inhabiting *nepantla*—the liminal space where identity, spirituality, and resistance converge. In *Um defeito de cor*, Kehinde's letter becomes a ritualistic invocation of both her personal history and collective Afro-Brazilian memory. Similarly, in *Daughters of the Stone*, Carisa's artistic process transforms visual storytelling into a conduit for ancestral healing. These protagonists exemplify narrative as sacred praxis, where writing is not just expressive, but restorative and insurgent.

Arriaga's concept of "Afro-Latinx digital diasporas" further expands this framework by showing how Black communities use digital platforms to extend memory work and resistance into contemporary technological spaces. He defines these diasporas as "[...] a set of digital and social practices that manifest diasporic self-understanding, practices of resistance, and communal practices of healing" (33). This formulation invites an expanded view of the sacred archive— one that includes not only oral and literary forms but also digital expressions such as memes, hashtags, social media storytelling, virtual altars, and digital art. Kehinde's epistolary account and Carisa's visual rituals are thus not only literary strategies but also part of a broader continuum of Afro-diasporic worldmaking. Their narratives resonate with digital practices that carry ancestral memory into new media forms, transforming online spaces into zones of cultural survivance and future possibility.

This convergence of ancestral memory and digital expression marks a pivotal shift in how sacred knowledge is mobilized across media. As Mónica Carrillo and Marianela Medrano-Marra argue, Afro-Latinx women are not abandoning traditional practices but expanding them- using digital platforms as ritual extensions that preserve and adapt spiritual knowledge. Orisha iconography, oral testimony, healing mantras, and virtual altars now circulate with renewed resonance, not as simulations but as living practices. Within this continuum, the digital becomes a vessel, not a rupture- amplifying the sacred rather than displacing it. *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* prefigure these developments: Kehinde's letter and Carisa's photography embody ritual technologies that transmit memory through flesh and object. Both novels anticipate the affective and spiritual modes of contemporary Afro-digital practice, offering a literary blueprint for how Afro-Latinx epistemologies can flourish across both ancestral and algorithmic terrain.

By foregrounding spiritual continuity and narrative agency, both novels anticipate Arriaga's *Afro-digital marronage*- the use of digital platforms as fugitive spaces that subvert surveillance and transmit ancestral knowledge. This form of resistance echoes historical maroon communities that forged autonomy beyond the reach of colonial power. The letter in *Um defeito de cor* and the photography in *Daughters of the Stone* enact similar gestures of refusal and reclamation. These are not merely aesthetic choices but spiritual technologies- counter-archives that encode memory and cultural sovereignty. Their narratives prefigure the kind of digital praxis seen in Afro-Latinx communities today, where sacred memory moves through code, screen, and interface with intentional defiance and embodied care.

Ultimately, *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* position Afro-Latinx women not only as narrators of history but as architects of sacred archives- repositories of memory that blend the oral, the embodied, the spiritual, and increasingly, the digital. These texts do not seek validation

from dominant historical narratives; instead, they assert alternate genealogies rooted in matrilineal knowledge, ancestral vision, and collective healing. Their protagonists write, dream, and remember against erasure, creating spaces where Afro-diasporic voices are neither peripheral nor symbolic, but central to how history is made and remade. In this way, the novels advance a decolonial praxis of storytelling- one that moves from silence to speech, from rupture to ritual, and from trauma to transformation.

To engage with the layered epistemologies at play in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, this study draws on intersecting frameworks from Black feminist thought, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Brazilian literary studies, trauma theory, decolonial critique, and digital humanities. These traditions provide language and critical tools to analyze how Afro-Latina authors resist historical silencing and build archives rooted in embodiment, ritual, and relationality. A central pillar of this theoretical scaffolding is Anzaldúa's concept of *autohistoria-teoría*, which frames writing as both a personal and political act- a process of healing, theorizing, and resisting. As Anzaldúa writes, "[w]riting is not about being in your head; it's about being in your body. The body responds physically, emotionally, and intellectually to external and internal stimuli, and writes records, orders, and theorizes about these responses" (*Light in the Dark* 5). This embodied method of theorizing mirrors the storytelling strategies found in both novels, where memory resides not only in language, but in gesture, land, and sacred objects. In Kehinde's refusal to abandon her African name and Fela's spiritual bond with the ancestral stone, memory is inscribed in the body and ritualized as sacred inheritance. Anzaldúa's theories of *autohistoria-teoría* and spiritual mestizaje thus provide a vital lens through which to understand Kehinde and Fela not just as characters, but as theorists of the sacred whose narratives emerge from the convergence of African, Indigenous, and diasporic cosmologies.

Comas-Díaz's framework of decolonial healing reframes trauma as a catalyst for transformation rooted in ancestral recovery and spiritual resilience. In *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, healing is rendered as a relational and recursive process, grounded in memory, ritual, and matrilineal continuity. Kehinde's devotion to her voduns, Fela's journey through ancestral silence, and Carisa's photographic invocation of the past function as acts of cultural and spiritual resurgence or "wake work," the ongoing labor of memorialization in the afterlife of slavery (14). This recursive struggle mirrors the racialized experiences many Afro-Latinas navigate across Latin American and U.S. contexts. As Salas Pujols observes, Afro-Latina girls often grow up in environments that reinforce mestiza ideologies while marginalizing Blackness. Those who are empowered to embrace their Black identity can engage in acts of self-making that resist dominant erasures (594-95). These practices resonate with Evaristo's *escrevivência*, Kehinde's letters and Fela's matrilineal storytelling are not simply modes of remembrance- they are insurgent acts that unsettle dominant historical discourse. As Evaristo writes, "[...] nossas escrevivências não podem ser lidas como histórias para ninar os da casa-grande, e sim para incomodá-los em seu sono injusto"⁵ (25). These are stories meant to disturb, not soothe. They perform matrilineal counter-memory- insurgent, embodied, and ritualized within the ongoing wake.

Returning to Moraga's theory in the flesh, previously introduced as a framework grounded in bodily knowledge and survival, we can now see how Kehinde's letters and Fela's ritual gestures extend this politic of embodiment. Their narratives affirm that theory is not detached speculation but emerges from pain, place, and ancestral intimacy. Kehinde's letters and Fela's ritual gestures

⁵ "[...] our writings cannot be read as stories to lull those in the big house, but rather to disturb them in their unfair sleep" (My translation)

embody this kind of flesh-bound epistemology: they are not merely characters but theorists of the sacred, articulating resistance and healing through their bodies, voices, and ancestral ties. Their stories dramatize the daily labor of reclaiming Blackness through ritual, testimony, and memory- a process this study frames as sacred resistance. Rather than seeking legibility within dominant racial paradigms, these protagonists embody alternative ways of knowing and being that challenge the epistemic violence of erasure.

The final framework shaping this study emerges from Afro-digital humanities, a field that centers the memory work, creative practices, and epistemic resistance of Afro-descendant communities in digital space. Arriaga's concept of Afro-Latinx digital connections is particularly vital, highlighting how Black users engage platforms "within or against powerful currents of economic, scientific, political, and discursive orders" (6). These platforms are not neutral tools- they are shaped by algorithmic structures that often reproduce exclusion. Scholars like Quelle Santos de Queiroz and Arnaud Soares de Lima Júnior have shown how digital systems encode bias, emphasizing the need for interventions that subvert their hegemonic logics ("Algorithmic Racism" 49). Within this context, the digital becomes a contested site of both erasure and insurgency- one where Afro-Latinx creators build counter-archives that assert presence, memory, and futurity on their own terms.

In this study, I extend Arriaga's insights to explore how the spirit of the archive- its silences, rituals, and refusals- translates into digital space. Afro-Latinx creators are not merely represented online; they activate memory through digital practice. As Edward J. Mullen notes, Black cultural production across genres and platforms challenges dominant epistemologies by fusing tradition with innovation in a continuum of insurgent expression ("Langston Hughes and the Development of Afro-Hispanic Literature" 12). This fusion is not incidental- it builds on centuries of counter-

archival labor, much of it led by Black women whose stories were excluded from institutional memory. Kehinde's and Fela's narratives prefigure these digital strategies through their emphasis on embodied storytelling, sacred inheritance, and nonlinear temporality. Their literary rituals anticipate the forms of resistance and remembrance that Afro-Latinx communities now carry into immersive, interactive, and algorithmic environments.

Afro-digital production also engages affective and spiritual registers that challenge Enlightenment frameworks of linear time, disembodied reason, and objective knowledge. Afro-Latinx creators frequently infuse digital practice with syncretic cosmologies, ancestral symbols, and ritualized forms of expression. As Gonzalez's concept of *Amefricanidade* suggests, Afro-Latin American identity emerges through a transatlantic, spiritually grounded consciousness that resists national and racial essentialism (229-30). In the digital realm, this ethos is extended through mnemonic hashtags, livestreamed ceremonies, and virtual altars- platforms that transform online participation into acts of remembrance and resistance. These practices do not simply document culture; they activate it, blurring the line between archive and ritual, interface and altar.

Consequently, *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* can be read not only as historiographic metafiction but as proto-digital archives- texts that model the narrative and epistemological practices now seen in Afro-Latinx digital expression. Kehinde's epistolary voice and Fela's matrilineal legacy anticipate contemporary storytelling forms rooted in testimony, ritual, and embodied memory. These strategies echo what Alfredo Nieves Moreno Covin calls the "Afrocentric epistemic commitment," wherein resistance, sacred practice, and oral transmission serve as foundations for diasporic survival ("Afrocentricity and the Movimento Negro" 154). Both novels not only recover suppressed histories but also prefigure the digital strategies Afro-Latinx communities now employ to transmit ancestral knowledge across geographies and generations.

Methodologically, this dissertation uses a comparative, interdisciplinary approach that draws from literary analysis, decolonial critique, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Brazilian cultural studies, and digital humanities to explore healing, identity, and memory in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. These texts are not only literary; they are living archives- repositories of sacred knowledge, matrilineal resistance, and Afro-diasporic survivance, embedded in bodies, objects, and landscapes. They model what Mullen refers to as “networks of Black feminist expression,” capable of circulating within and beyond traditional academic spaces (18).

Furthermore, this project takes seriously the ethical and epistemological demands of engaging with trauma narratives by Afro-Latinx women. As Figueroa-Vásquez asserts, to engage these works responsibly is to understand them as “[...] tools to counteract the loss [of memory] through the recuperation of ancestral, spiritual, and oral traditions” (*Decolonizing Diasporas* 17). Kehinde and Fela are not passive victims of historical erasure; they are architects of sacred counter-archives. Their stories speak across generations and geographies, illuminating a matrix of Black feminist memory work that includes not only literature but digital resistance and speculative healing.

Lastly, this dissertation adopts a deliberately transhistorical and transdisciplinary lens, reading across centuries, genres, and media to foreground the enduring significance of Afro-Latina sacred narrative. By placing *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* in conversation- not only with each other but with broader discourses on trauma, identity, and healing- this study amplifies the cultural labor these texts perform. As Afro-Latinx artists and activists increasingly turn to digital platforms to preserve memory and contest erasure, new forms of ritual and resistance emerge. Santos de Queiroz and Soares de Lima Jr. warn that artificial intelligence often reproduces existing structures of social discrimination (37), yet these same systems can be re-coded by Afro-

diasporic creators as spaces of testimony and insurgency. Interactive exhibits, virtual museums, AI-generated poetry, and hashtag memorials echo the recursive, embodied logic of Afro-diasporic storytelling- multiplying its reach while preserving its sacred core.

This dissertation therefore considers how *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* anticipate and participate in what I term a sacred digital archive- a diasporic network of memory that transcends temporal, national, and technological boundaries. As Arriaga affirms, Afro-descendant communities engage digital platforms “within or against powerful currents” of exclusion and control (6), transforming them into tools for historical intervention. These interventions expose what Santos de Queiroz calls the “algorithmic racial regime” embedded in contemporary data systems (45), systems that must be dismantled through epistemologies grounded in spiritual memory and embodied resistance. The sacred digital archive, then, is not merely a space of cultural expression- it is a strategy of survival. Through literary form and digital innovation, these texts help imagine futures where Afro-diasporic knowledge circulates with power, intention, and sacred purpose.

Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram, despite their structural constraints, have become contemporary ritual spaces where history is archived, grief is collectivized, and diasporic ties are reaffirmed. This ethos of digital remembrance resonates with *Daughters of the Stone*, where Carisa’s photography serves as a sacred vessel of ancestral memory, echoing the aesthetics of Afro-visual storytelling and family archives online. Likewise, in *Um defeito de cor*, Kehinde’s letter to her son is an intimate act of remembrance that transmits spiritual knowledge across generations. These narratives do not foreshadow digital practices- they participate in a continuum of Afro-diasporic storytelling in which memory, ritual, and resistance adapt across media. Through

literary form, they enact technologies of survival that now find renewed expression in digital platforms, binding ancestral presence to emerging modes of cultural and spiritual transmission.

Nascimento's concept of *quilombagem* offers a powerful lens for understanding how Afro-Latina narratives enact fugitive epistemologies across literary and digital terrains. Rather than viewing the *quilombo* as merely a historical refuge, she reframes it as a mobile system of solidarity and resistance, grounded in cultural memory and collective survival (qtd. in Covin 121). In *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, this ethos emerges through matrilineal ties, ritual acts, and narrative forms that preserve sacred knowledge across generations. But these acts of remembrance are not limited to the past. They continue in digital spaces, where Afro-Latinx creators adapt the logic of *quilombagem* into virtual archives, immersive media, and sensory environments. As Arriaga argues, these digital connections mobilize counter-memories that resist algorithmic control and hegemonic erasure. This tradition of digital marronage is further embodied in Carrillo's work, where ancestral presence is embedded in visual and interactive installations. She describes this practice as activating memory that is "embodied and intuitive"- a gesture that affirms the persistence of spiritual knowledge even within technologically mediated environments. *Quilombagem*, then, becomes a recursive method of survival and transmission- migrating from oral tradition to digital ritual, from ancestral space to algorithmic interface.

This reclamation is urgent in light of systemic exclusion. As Buolamwini demonstrates in *AI, Ain't I A Woman?*, facial recognition technologies routinely misread or fail to register Black women's faces, echoing the long-standing erasure of Black women in dominant archives. Noble similarly argues that search engines reinforce structures of racism and sexism rather than neutralize them (4). In response, Afro-Latinx creators repurpose the digital as a site of resistance and sacred transmission. Within this continuum, ritual technologies like Kehinde's golden figure of Oxum

and Fela's ancestral stone resonate as conduits of memory and spiritual inheritance- gestures that mirror digital practices of storytelling, preservation, and embodiment.

Reading these novels alongside contemporary Afro-Latinx digital practices reveals an interwoven landscape of oral tradition, sacred performance, and technological adaptation. These narratives do not simply recount memory- they encrypt it, embedding ancestral knowledge in form, flesh, and interface. As Gonzalez insists, Afro-diasporic identity must be understood not as fixed essence but as a hemispheric articulation shaped by ritual, resistance, and spiritual insurgency (78). In this way, *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* do not merely reflect the past- they participate in designing futures where Black knowledge and sacred presence remain central. As Arriaga affirms, digital technologies have become essential tools through which Afro-Latinx communities produce culture, reclaim history, and forge diasporic ties (10). Viewed through this lens, literature becomes more than cultural artifact- it is participatory technology: a living system of memory that moves through the body, the land, and the screen.

The digital humanities framework employed in this dissertation moves beyond formal analysis into the realm of political and spiritual ethics. To examine *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* through this lens is to understand them not only as literary works, but as interactive technologies of memory- recursive, embodied, and alive with resistance. This project is organized into three chapters that analyze how these novels mobilize historiographic metafiction, trauma theory, sacred epistemology, and digital practice to construct Afro-Latinx identity and cultural survivance. Each chapter brings a distinct thematic and methodological approach, building toward the central claim that Afro-Latina narratives function as multi-temporal, spiritual, and insurgent archives.

Chapter Three, “Sacred Memory and Cultural Trauma: Rewriting History in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*,” engages trauma theory to explore how intergenerational loss, spiritual rupture, and cultural displacement shape narrative structure and character formation. Drawing on Caruth, Sharpe, Alexander, and Eyerman, this chapter understands trauma not as a singular past event but as a persistent wound or wake work. Kehinde’s voduns and Fela’s ancestral stone are treated as sacred technologies that transmit knowledge through gesture, spirit, and matrilineal connection. These objects embody *escrevivência*- and function as embodied archives that preserve memory through relational practice. The chapter also addresses how these dynamics extend into digital contexts, where Afro-Latinx creators transform platforms into ritual spaces of mourning and transformation. As Buolamwini and Brock reveal, digital systems often misrecognize or marginalize Black presence, yet they are also sites of joy, spirit, and survival. These novels mirror those digital rituals- reclaiming memory not only through text, but through interface and interaction.

Chapter Four, “Spiritual Technologies and the Afro-Latina Body as Archive: Healing and Digital Resistance in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*,” focuses on spirituality as a site of decolonial resistance and narrative reclamation. Drawing from Comas-Díaz, Taylor, and Medrano, this chapter argues that Afro-Latinx healing is cyclical and communal, grounded in sacred knowledge systems. As Medrano affirms, “Our stories live in our wombs, our hearts, our bones [...]. Writing them out is an act of spiritual reclamation and political courage” (Carrillo 88). Kehinde and Carisa engage with spiritual technologies- stones, dreams, altars, and photographs- that serve as counter-archives of ancestral memory. Their practices resonate with a broader digital turn, as seen in the work of Carrillo, Medrano, and Bahia, whose projects integrate spiritual knowledge into digital landscapes. These archives do not simulate memory- they summon it,

transforming platforms into living extensions of Afro-diasporic resistance. Framed through the sacred, the digital becomes a vessel for ancestral continuity across geography, medium, and time. Together, Chapters Two, Three, and Four form a layered, interdisciplinary investigation into Afro-Latina narrative as spiritual testimony and political intervention. Through historiographic metafiction, embodied ritual, and digital resistance, these novels reveal that healing is neither solitary nor linear- it is recursive, collective, and sacred. Kehinde, Fela, Mati, and Carisa show that healing moves through body, story, and screen, echoing across ancestral currents and encrypted futures.

This dissertation ultimately argues that Afro-Latina narratives are sacred texts. They carry memory in form and flesh, transmit history through rupture and ritual, and offer visionary strategies for survival in a world still marked by the wake of slavery and systemic silencing. By centering *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, this project bridges literary analysis with trauma theory, Afro-Latinx digital humanities, and sacred epistemologies to explore what it means to remember, resist, and reimagine from within diasporic fragmentation. Rather than seeking validation from dominant historical narratives, Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa generate counter-archives: fugitive texts animated by memory, resistance, and spiritual insurgency.

Though shaped by structures of bias and surveillance, digital platforms are being reclaimed as sites of sacred ritual. Afro-Latinx communities are transforming these tools into memory maps, liturgies, and vessels for ancestral knowledge. In hashtag rituals and AI-assisted testimonies, we witness a continuum between cosmology and code- a digital extension of sacred practices that preserve and reimagine Afro-diasporic life.

This study concludes by considering its broader implications for pedagogy, community-based humanities, and public memory. How might we teach narratives as sacred archives? How

do we design curricula that honor ritual and ancestral knowledge? What can Afro-Latinx storytelling- remixed through digital frameworks- teach us about justice, futurity, and the ethics of memory? These questions guide the project's core interventions: (1) that Afro-Latina narrative reclaims history through epistemic sovereignty; (2) that spiritual inheritance and *escrevivência* are valid and vital methods of knowing; and (3) that digital tools, when repurposed by Afro-descendant communities, become instruments of continuity, resistance, and imagination. By following Kehinde and Fela, Mati and Carisa, this dissertation honors Afro-Latina literary traditions as technologies of survival. These stories remind us, as Moraga insists, that theory is not disembodied abstraction but knowledge "born of the flesh"- lived, felt, and carried. Memory is not static- it is sacred. It is inheritance, invocation, and a map toward liberated futures where Black presence is not merely remembered, but revered.

Collecting data chronicling our past
Often forgetting to deal with
Gender, race, and class, again I ask.
‘Ain’t I a woman?’
Can machines ever see my queens as I view them?
Can machines ever see our grandmothers as we knew them?”
-Joy Buolamwini, “AI, Ain’t I A Woman”

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL RESISTANCE AND THE SACRED ARCHIVE: REIMAGINING AFRO- DIASPORIC MEMORY IN GONÇALVES’S *UM DEFEITO DE COR* AND LLANOS- FIGUEROA’S *DAUGHTERS OF THE STONE*

Afro-Latinx literature engages memory not as linear recollection but as a living, embodied archive shaped by oral tradition, spirituality, trauma, and resistance. *Um defeito de cor* (2006) and *Daughters of the Stone* (2009) use narrative as a form of counter-memory, challenging official histories that silence Black women’s voices. Their protagonists, Kehinde and Carisa, function as archivists of the sacred, piecing together personal and collective histories from fragments of ancestral knowledge and spiritual inheritance. These works are not merely testimonial; they are historiographic metafiction- layered, recursive, and subversive- disrupting dominant timelines and repositioning Afro-Latinx women as agents of historical authorship.

The storytelling in these novels transforms both memory and temporality. Kehinde and Carisa respond to archival violence not only by filling historical silences, but by challenging the very frameworks that produced those silences. As Lorgia García Peña argues in *Community as Rebellion*, “living in contradiction is a condition of racialized existence within Western knowledge systems,” and disrupting those systems requires sitting with and politicizing contradiction (18-19).

Rather than resolve dissonance, these narratives animate it. Their counter-archives are not designed to reconcile contradictions but to expose and inhabit them- to make visible the distortions, omissions, and violences buried within hegemonic historiography.

This politicized contradiction is deeply embodied. Moraga's concept of theory in the flesh, articulates how lived experience produces knowledge forged out of necessity (23). Memory in these novels is not a detached abstraction but a material force inscribed on the body. Kehinde's trauma-laden transatlantic passage and Carisa's inheritance of ritual and pain exemplify the kind of embodied epistemology Moraga theorizes. History surfaces not through static facts but through scars, rituals, dreams, and generational storytelling that emerge from the flesh itself.

Anzaldúa's *autohistoria-teoría* complements this framework by emphasizing the fusion of personal narrative and theoretical reflection to reclaim silenced histories. Her call to theorize from within the body and the borderlands finds resonance in the symbolic artifacts that carry these stories: Kehinde's letter and Carisa's pendant function as conduits of sacred transmission. These are not just narrative devices- they are technologies of memory that hold multigenerational grief, survival, and transformation. Together, theory in the flesh, *autohistoria-teoría*, and García Peña's framing of contradiction shape a decolonial practice of writing the sacred that is both personal and insurgent.

This sacred dimension also finds grounding in Nascimento's concept of *quilombismo* as an epistemology of resistance rooted in collective memory. She defines the quilombo not only as a site of physical refuge but as a structure of knowledge generated through the survival of African-descended peoples. In both texts, quilombo-like spaces emerge- whether through Kehinde's embodied return to ancestral lands or the intergenerational healing embedded in Carisa's lineage. These are not static sanctuaries but dynamic counter-archives that house tension, dissonance, and

reclamation. They affirm Anzaldúa's assertion that "[...] the work of the soul is to open the archives of memory" (*Light in the Dark* 63), activating spiritual, physical, and narrative practices as modes of historical resistance.

The sacred archive in these texts emerges as both a site of resistance and a methodology of survival. Taylor distinguishes between the *archive* and the *repertoire* to describe how knowledge is transmitted: while the archive holds enduring materials (documents, texts, relics), the repertoire encompasses embodied practices such as gesture, memory, song, and ritual (20). Kehinde and Carisa engage both. They write and perform history at once, asserting that ancestral memory does not reside solely in written form. Kehinde's letter, composed at the end of her life and addressed to her lost son, becomes both an archival document and a spiritual transmission. Similarly, Carisa's act of storytelling is anchored not in literacy but in oral, bodily, and sensorial forms of remembrance, or what Taylor calls "acts of transfer" (3). In both cases, memory survives through performance, not permanence.

This emphasis on sacred technology becomes especially resonant when considered in relation to digital tools and platforms. Kehinde and Carisa are not digital subjects, but the narrative structures they inhabit reflect a longstanding Afro-diasporic engagement with layered temporality, polyvocality, and embodied memory- practices that contemporary digital platforms now mirror. Kehinde, for instance, writes her letter as a time-traveling document: narrating events from the past while projecting her hopes and warnings into an unknowable future. Her words pulse with shifting timelines, interwoven voices, and encoded emotion- reminding the reader that the archive she constructs is not linear, but alive. These narrative strategies dismantle the false binary between oral/spiritual knowledge and technological progress. Rather than portraying Afro-Latinx storytelling as anticipating digital form, these novels reveal that Afro-diasporic communities have

long practiced nonlinear, multisensory modes of remembrance. Digital humanities are only beginning to recognize what these stories have always known: that narrative can be immersive, networked, and sacred.

This alternative epistemology becomes especially potent when viewed through the lens of recursive time. Maddox observes how Afro-Caribbean literature frequently engages “fractal temporality,” where past, present, and future coexist recursively (6). *Um defeito de cor* unfolds through Kehinde’s retrospective narration, but her voice is not confined to the past; it reaches into future generations, shaping the reader’s understanding of Brazilian history through an intimate, embodied account. *Daughters of the Stone* similarly refracts time, allowing Carisa to hear the voices of her ancestors and extend her story through her daughter, Elena. In both texts, time bends toward ancestral logic, refusing linearity in favor of spiritual continuity.

These recursive structures also align with Sharpe’s concept of wake work. Sharpe argues that living in the wake requires attending to the “residues and imprints” of history, particularly those that remain ungrievable or unresolved (15). Kehinde’s grief, her search for her son, and her relentless need to document the past all represent wake work; they refuse historical closure. Carisa’s narrative, too, emerges from inherited rupture. Her memory is not only hers but the accumulation of silences and survivals passed through generations. By foregrounding these fragments, both narratives enact what Sharpe describes as “ethical wakefulness,” attending to history’s spectral presence without resolving it.

If Kehinde and Carisa are archivists, they are also healers- though healing in these texts is not linear, complete, or sanitized. It is painful, circuitous, and often intergenerational. Their narratives embody Comas-Díaz’s “ethnocultural psychotherapy,” because they are rooting their healing process in cultural memory, spirituality, and community. For Kehinde, healing takes the

form of spiritual reckoning and ancestral return. For Carisa, it is the act of naming, remembering, and narrating what had been denied. Both engage what Moraga terms “theory born of necessity,” where survival itself becomes theorization. By reclaiming ritual, reactivating ancestral memory, and resisting the epistemic frameworks of the state, their stories become not just literary testimony, but technologies of survival.

These technologies of survival also function as what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva might call “epistemologies of the flesh”- knowledges born not of abstraction but of embodied confrontation with systems of power. Both novels interrogate colonial legacies, not through institutional critique alone, but through intimate renderings of physical and psychic survival. The body becomes both witness and document. Kehinde’s physical scars map the history of enslavement onto her skin, while Carisa’s body carries the rhythms, rituals, and ancestral traces of a matrilineal lineage threatened by disappearance. These bodily archives are not supplementary to written memory- they are central. As Moraga and Anzaldúa remind us, theory must begin with lived experience, especially when history has rendered that experience invisible.

In *Um defeito de cor*, the act of writing is inseparable from the act of surviving. Kehinde’s letter is not simply retrospective; it is a ritual of return. Her writing allows her to re-enter sites of trauma and render them intelligible through sacred narration. This is not a Western confessional mode, but what Anzaldúa might describe as writing “from the wound”- where the narrative voice bleeds into the archive to make visible the spiritual, political, and corporeal scars of slavery (*Borderlands* 92). As Kehinde recounts the loss of her son, the betrayal of loved ones, and the violence of racial capitalism, she also records acts of resistance: refusing to forget, refusing to let her body be consumed without leaving a trace. Her words are acts of fugitive inscription.

The pendant worn by Carisa in *Daughters of the Stone* functions in a similar way. Passed down from Fela, her great-great-grandmother, the stone is a symbolic and material archive- part talisman, part transmitter. It is not inert; it holds voices, dreams, warnings. The pendant links each generation of women not only through blood but through cosmology. Its power is not metaphorical but spiritual, anchoring Carisa to an ancestral consciousness that Western time cannot register. This object enacts what Anzaldúa and Moraga call the “politic of the personal”: a material instantiation of memory that bridges the mystical and the historical. Through it, Carisa’s storytelling becomes not just an act of personal healing but a form of cultural and spiritual continuity.

This emphasis on sacred objects, whether letters or stones, underscores what Suely Rolnik refers to as “body-affective memory,” wherein trauma and resistance are not only encoded in language but in sensorial traces passed down across generations. Kehinde’s dreams, premonitions, and ritual practices carry ancestral knowledge even when language fails. Carisa, too, experiences dreams and intuitive visions that guide her toward historical truths that were never written down. These epistemologies do not conform to Western archival logics. Instead, they assert a spiritual intelligence- what Sandra María Esteves calls “ancestral memory”- that lives in the body and reawakens through ritual, orality, and creative expression.

Such expression is often gendered and matrilineal. Both novels insist that Black women are not only inheritors of memory but its primary transmitters. This matrilineal structure resists the patriarchal, state-centered archive by affirming that knowledge flows through blood, milk, prayer, and story. Kehinde’s lineage survives through oral testimony and the metaphysical force of her written words. Carisa’s daughter, Elena, inherits not just a family history but an entire spiritual framework. This generational continuity constitutes a counter-archive- a refusal of disappearance.

Through matrilineal storytelling, the novels transform the trauma of rupture into the possibility of return.

This possibility of return is not always literal, but it is spiritually and politically significant. Kehinde's narrative is shaped by her determination to make her life legible not to the colonial archive but to her descendants. Her letter speaks across time not with the goal of historical correction, but with a desire for spiritual connection. She writes from the threshold of death, transforming her memory into legacy. In doing so, she reclaims narrative authority and resists the temporal foreclosure imposed by the state. Her voice disrupts the archive not through accuracy, but through affect- what José Esteban Muñoz describes as “the performative force of memory” (65). Kehinde's writing is not merely testimonial; it is a performative ritual that enacts ancestral presence through language.

Carisa's storytelling emerges in a similarly liminal space. She is neither fully tethered to the past nor entirely secure in the present. Her role as memory keeper is fraught, but she embraces the fragments she inherits and pieces them into a narrative of sacred coherence. Her voice is not omniscient, but it is expansive. It accommodates rupture, contradiction, and unknowing without surrendering to silence. This narrative strategy enacts what García Peña calls “contradictory coherence”- an insistence on complexity as a method of survival. By threading together memories of Fela, Mati, and other foremothers, Carisa builds a living archive that resists the epistemological violence of linear historiography.

The generational structure of *Daughters of the Stone* thus mirrors Kehinde's recursive narration, reinforcing the idea that Afro-diasporic time is not sequential but spiraled. Each generation revisits the traumas of the previous one while also carrying forward its wisdom. This recursive temporality aligns with what Maddox identifies as “diasporic fractality,” a narrative

technique that decenters Western chronology in favor of ancestral presence (6). The repetition of key symbols- stones, letters, dreams- across generations reinforces this fractal structure, turning the novels themselves into sacred objects. Their form mirrors their function: both texts become ritual spaces for memory, testimony, and healing.

This mirroring also foregrounds the novels as examples of what Hutcheon terms historiographic metafiction: fiction that self-consciously engages historical representation while foregrounding its own constructedness. Kehinde repeatedly reflects on the impossibility of fully knowing her past, yet she insists on narrating it anyway. Carisa, too, acknowledges the silences in her lineage but writes through them, trusting the embodied knowledge passed down through ritual and intuition. Their narratives critique the authority of official histories while simultaneously constructing counter-histories rooted in spirituality, affect, and matrilineal transmission. In doing so, they transform the work of memory into a sacred act of literary resistance.

What emerges, then, is not a stable archive but a sacred geography- an epistemological terrain defined by rupture, ritual, and return. These novels carve out what Sharpe calls “a geography of the hold,” where Black life is constituted not in spite of history’s violence but through ongoing negotiation with its residues (21). Kehinde’s transatlantic passage and Carisa’s psychic inheritance of the Middle Passage do not mark a break from the past, but a recursive re-engagement with it. Their stories dwell in the afterlives of slavery, navigating what Sharpe identifies as “the weather” of anti-Blackness while still carving out space for spiritual continuity. In this way, the sacred archive becomes not a static repository but a dynamic geography of ancestral survival.

The sacred geography these protagonists navigate is not merely metaphysical; it is also political. By reclaiming ancestral space- whether in the form of ritual, narrative, or memory- they confront the spatial logics of colonialism that have long denied Black women access to land,

authorship, and futurity. Kehinde's letter re-maps Brazil not through the lens of empire but through the sites of resistance, refuge, and kinship that punctuated her life. Her narrative draws a counter-cartography of survival, one that privileges spiritual and relational landscapes over the territorial ambitions of the state. Carisa, too, traces an emotional and cultural geography inherited from her foremothers. The stone becomes not just a keepsake but a compass, directing her toward healing landscapes rooted in memory and care.

Both characters also embody what Figueroa-Vásquez describes as “relational radicality”—a practice of archiving that refuses individualism in favor of collective survival and intergenerational connection. Kehinde's letter is addressed to a son she may never see again, yet it is written with an audience far beyond him in mind. It is a love letter, a political testament, and a spiritual offering. Similarly, Carisa's storytelling is not only a way of understanding herself, but a means of preserving the histories of those who came before and preparing her daughter for what lies ahead. These characters understand that memory is not a possession but a responsibility. Their narratives enact a form of radical caretaking, where survival is bound to the act of remembrance. This ethic of remembrance resists the logic of the Western archive, which often isolates and categorizes knowledge into hierarchies of credibility and permanence. The sacred archive, by contrast, values fragmentation, contradiction, and fluidity. It acknowledges that some truths are felt rather than verified, and that survival often depends on what cannot be fully explained. In this sense, Kehinde and Carisa's narratives align wake work, but also extend it into the terrain of spiritual labor. Their stories are rituals of mourning and invocation. They do not aim to recover a singular truth but to activate presence— to keep the dead, the disappeared, and the displaced in conversation with the living.

That activation is not passive. It is a deliberate act of resistance against what Saidiya Hartman terms “the violence of the archive”- the ways in which colonial and imperial recordkeeping erase the lives, voices, and agency of the enslaved (12). Kehinde’s narrative refuses this erasure by inserting herself into the historical record on her own terms. Her voice is unruly, nonlinear, and deeply affective. Carisa’s story performs a similar intervention. Her voice carries not just her own pain but the collective memory of women whose stories were never written. Both characters write from the margins, and in doing so, they destabilize the center. Their narratives are insurgent, not just because of what they remember, but because of how they remember: sensorially, spiritually, and communally.

This mode of remembrance challenges Western epistemologies but also gestures toward emerging possibilities within the digital realm. As both novels emphasize the importance of ritual, voice, and presence, they open space for imagining new technologies of transmission- ones that prioritize ancestral knowledge, sensory memory, and communal authorship. The sacred archive they enact is not constrained by paper or institution; it can migrate, transform, and adapt. Kehinde’s letter and Carisa’s pendant are analog technologies of memory, but their functions mirror what digital platforms now attempt to replicate: multivocality, nonlinearity, and embodied presence. These resonances will be explored more fully in later chapters, but their seeds are already present here- in the ways these texts reclaim the past to reimagine the future.

This reimagining of the future is deeply tied to the past- not as repetition, but as transformation. Both novels challenge the linear temporality that defines Western historiography, instead embracing a temporal logic grounded in return, recursion, and reactivation. Kehinde does not simply recount her life; she summons the dead, retraces sacred geographies, and speaks into a future that has yet to come. Her story becomes an act of prophetic witnessing, one that prepares

her descendants for survival under continued oppression. Carisa's storytelling, too, pulses with futurity. Even as she reconstructs the past, she writes for her daughter, for the next generation of women tasked with carrying forward ancestral knowledge. This act of writing toward the future while invoking the sacred past exemplifies the recursive, spiral temporality that governs both novels.

In doing so, these narratives model what M. Jacqui Alexander calls a "pedagogy of crossing"- a practice of spiritual and political movement across time, space, and body that resists the compartmentalization of knowledge. Kehinde and Carisa cross thresholds not only geographically and generationally, but cosmologically. They carry with them the energies, rituals, and spirits of those who came before, transforming each moment of narration into an act of crossing. The novels themselves function as pedagogical tools, teaching readers how to hold grief, invoke ancestors, and navigate a world shaped by the afterlives of slavery. Through their stories, Kehinde and Carisa teach a method of living-within-wakefulness that is also a method of resistance.

The tools they use to teach and transmit- letters, stones, dreams, chants- constitute a sacred technology. Kehinde's letter is a performative space of testimony and invocation. Even when exiled and near death, she holds the pages close- knowing that they will outlive her. As she writes: "Escrevo esta carta para que você conheça a história da sua mãe e dos seus antepassados. Não quero que você cresça acreditando nas mentiras dos outros. Quero que saiba da minha boca, com as palavras que escolhi, tudo o que vivi"⁶ (9). The letter becomes more than message; it becomes altar. Carisa's stone acts as a mnemonic vessel, a touchstone that binds her to Fela's cosmology.

⁶ "I write this letter so that you know the story of your mother and your ancestors. I don't want you to grow up believing other people's lies. I want you to know from my mouth, with the words I chose, everything I experienced" (My translation)

These objects offer a countermodel to the traditional archive, one that privileges affect, ritual, and intersubjectivity over empiricism and linearity. These are not merely symbolic devices but modes of knowing, storing, and transmitting memory. They offer a decolonial framework of memory transmission that resonates strongly with Afro-diasporic modes of preservation and mourning. In this way, these objects- and the novels themselves- operate as sacred containers for fragmented memory and embodied resistance.

This emphasis on sacred technology becomes especially resonant when considered alongside contemporary digital platforms. Kehinde and Carisa are not digital subjects, but the narrative structures they inhabit resonate with the affordances of digital culture. The layering of time, polyvocality, and recursive memory at work in their stories are not precursors to digital narrative- they are part of a longstanding Afro-diasporic continuum that digital forms have begun to echo. These strategies challenge the false binary between oral/spiritual knowledge and technological innovation. Rather than positioning Afro-Latinx storytelling as somehow pre-digital, these novels assert that multisensory, multimodal practices of remembrance have always existed outside Western paradigms of archival order and linearity. What the digital humanities now call nonlinear, immersive, or networked narrative has long been present in Afro-diasporic forms of storytelling, ritual, and transmission.

This insight lays the groundwork for understanding digital marronage not as an escape into the virtual, but as an extension of fugitive epistemologies. Just as quilombos once served as zones of resistance beyond the reach of colonial power, digital spaces now offer the potential to circulate counter-memories, sacred stories, and cultural testimony in ways that elude traditional gatekeepers. Kehinde's and Carisa's narratives embody this ethos of fugitive circulation. Their testimonies resist capture and categorization, even as they insist on being heard. By anchoring

sacred memory in narrative form and transmitting it across generations, these protagonists enact a practice that aligns with digital resistance- ritual acts of remembering that reconfigure how Afro-Latinx stories are preserved, shared, and reimagined.

Understanding these novels as precursors to digital marronage requires reframing what counts as technology. In Afro-Latinx traditions, sacred tools- stones, letters, chants, recipes, altars- function as spiritual technologies that encode memory, healing, and survival. These are not primitive precursors to modern digital tools, but alternative epistemic frameworks that challenge the colonial dichotomy between the sacred and the technical. Kehinde's letter is a spiritual interface, transmitting knowledge across time and space. Carisa's stone functions like a networked device, storing generational memory and transmitting affective data through touch, vision, and ritual. These technologies center affect and ancestral presence, demonstrating that Afro-diasporic communities have long developed sophisticated systems of knowledge transmission outside the dominant frameworks of the West.

This repositioning echoes Eduardo Navas's concept of "remix culture," where digital practices are not about invention *ex nihilo* but about recombination and reactivation of existing elements. Kehinde and Carisa remix memory- they do not create it anew, but gather it from fragments, dreams, rituals, and oral stories. Their narratives exemplify what Jessica Marie Johnson calls "Black digital practice," wherein the digital is not defined by machinery alone but by the creation and circulation of Black life-affirming knowledge in fugitive ways. Kehinde's life, scattered across oceans and ruptured by slavery, becomes legible only through nonlinear assembly. Carisa's matrilineal inheritance, too, must be accessed through affective cues, spiritual visitation, and sacred objects that signal rather than declare meaning.

These acts of assembly and transmission resist the epistemological violence that often renders Black women illegible within both analog and digital archives. Safiya Noble, in *Algorithms of Oppression*, exposes how digital platforms perpetuate racialized erasure and bias under the guise of neutrality. The sacred archives in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* model an oppositional logic. They center Black women's voices, demand interpretive labor from the reader, and resist closure. Rather than offering neat resolutions, they foreground what Anzaldúa calls "the nepantla state"- a threshold condition of ambiguity and transformation. Kehinde and Carisa narrate from within nepantla, embracing uncertainty as a site of power rather than deficiency.

This threshold is not only psychological but narrative. Kehinde's storytelling unfolds in a recursive, non-chronological structure that defies the progress-driven impulse of Western historiography. Her memories loop, circle back, and revise themselves. "O tempo para mim não era mais uma linha reta. Ele se dobrava sobre si mesmo, como os caminhos da minha vida"⁷ (Gonçalves 544). This recursive temporality mirrors Afro-diasporic understandings of time not as sequence but as rhythm, echo, and return. Her voice weaves between memory, desire, regret, and invocation. At one point, she interrupts her own narration to address her son directly- shifting from historical account to intimate plea, from chronicler to mother. This disorientation is not a flaw; it's the form. Carisa's narration also moves through layers of time and voice, revealing how spiritual and matrilineal memory collapse temporal boundaries. These narrative forms invite readers into a participatory act of co-remembering, a kind of readerly *tequio*- shared responsibility- in which interpretation becomes part of the ritual. The texts refuse passivity; they insist on engagement, on spiritual and affective presence.

⁷ "Time for me was no longer a straight line. It folded in on itself, like the paths of my life" (My translation)

As such, both novels can be read as what Henry Louis Gates Jr. might call “speakerly texts”- works that embody the orality, repetition, and performativity of African diasporic tradition. Kehinde’s and Carisa’s voices do not merely recount events; they perform memory, invoking spirits, embodying rupture, and enacting healing. Their narratives demand to be felt as much as understood. In this way, the sacred archive is not a place but a performance- a living, dynamic process of remembering and reconfiguring the past for future survival. These texts teach us not only how to look back, but how to carry history forward with ritual, creativity, and collective care. This performance of memory is also a form of what Carrillo calls *resistencia espiritual*- spiritual resistance that centers Afro-diasporic knowledge systems, particularly as they relate to Black women’s healing and community-building. Kehinde’s and Carisa’s narratives are not simply critiques of historical erasure; they are rituals that transform trauma into testimony, fragmentation into sacred coherence. Their storytelling practices assert that resistance is not only enacted in public protest but in private devotion- in the labor of remembrance, in the quiet rituals of caretaking, in the refusal to forget. This spiritual resistance constitutes a decolonial methodology, one that privileges ancestral wisdom, sensory experience, and matrilineal inheritance over empirical data or national historiography.

Importantly, this decolonial methodology is not just recuperative- it is generative. It does not aim to restore a lost past but to reimagine a liberated future rooted in the sacred. As Anzaldúa writes, “We will have to leave the opposite shore, the split between the sacred and the secular, and start thinking in terms of both/and” (*Light in the Dark* 85). Kehinde and Carisa do just that. They refuse to separate spirituality from history, affect from analysis, body from archive. Their stories blur the boundaries between genres, epistemologies, and temporalities, modeling a hybrid form of

narrative healing that holds space for contradiction, fluidity, and renewal. These novels invite us not to master history but to sit with it, to mourn it, and to transform it.

This transformation is inherently pedagogical. Both Kehinde and the women descended from Fela serve as educators- not in the institutional sense, but in the ancestral one. They transmit knowledge through story, ritual, object, and embodied presence. Their teachings resist standardization; they are felt, sensed, and intuited. This mode of transmission aligns with Moraga's theory in the flesh- not theory divorced from lived experience, but theory born of the body, of desire, and of necessity. We witness this when Elena draws from Fela's memory while preparing masa: "I carry Fela in my hands when I prepare the masa. Her memory rises in the steam of every pot" (Llanos-Figueroa 212). This bodily transmission is at once a lesson, a ceremony, and an act of care. Through their pedagogies, these characters enact what bell hooks calls "education as the practice of freedom"- a refusal of silence, a reanimation of the past, and a commitment to liberatory futures. Their narratives are not only literary interventions but also spiritual classrooms, offering readers a model for how to live with memory, with pain, and with possibility.

By positioning Kehinde and Carisa as theorists of sacred memory, the novels extend the boundaries of literary form. They challenge us to read differently- to attune ourselves to nonlinear rhythms, to listen for the unsaid, to treat narrative as ritual. In doing so, they resist the archival logics that privilege stability, legibility, and closure. Instead, they offer what García Peña's terms "knowledge in contradiction": truth that emerges from fragmentation, healing that emerges from rupture. These are not tidy stories; they are sacred testimonies shaped by diasporic survival and speculative vision. They teach us that the archive is not always a box or a book- it can be a pendant, a dream, a wound, a prayer.

And through this expansive notion of the archive, these novels claim space for Black women's lives, stories, and futures. They do not ask for permission from history; they rewrite it from within. They do not seek recovery alone, but transformation. They do not speak from the margins, but from ancestral centers of power long denied recognition. Kehinde and Carisa are not only characters; they are keepers of sacred tradition, guardians of memory, architects of futurity. Their narratives illuminate what Afro-Latinx literature can do at its most radical: remember with care, resist with spirit, and reimagine with love.

In centering Kehinde and Carisa as archivists, healers, and theorists of Afro-diasporic memory, this chapter has traced how *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* articulate historiographic metafiction not merely as narrative technique, but as sacred practice. These texts challenge dominant regimes of historical knowledge by foregrounding the embodied, ritual, and affective dimensions of memory. Their protagonists transform personal and collective trauma into counter-archives animated by ancestral presence. They teach us that the sacred archive is not a passive container of history but an active, living repository of resistance, care, and survival. These texts challenge dominant regimes of historical knowledge by foregrounding the embodied, ritual, and affective dimensions of memory. As Carisa reflects, "The pendant held stories I didn't know yet, but I could feel them pressing against my skin" (Llanos-Figueroa 211). Memory is not always spoken; sometimes, it is worn, carried, and felt into being.

These counter-archives emerge through spiritual technologies- letters, stones, chants, dreams- that perform memory rather than merely represent it. Kehinde and Carisa do not document the past in order to be verified by institutional standards; they remember in order to heal, to testify, and to call future generations into consciousness. In doing so, their narratives echo and prefigure the practices of Afro-digital marronage explored in the next chapter, where ancestral knowledge

continues to circulate through contemporary digital tools and platforms. The spiritual technologies of the past become the epistemic blueprints for future resistance.

As Afro-Latinx literature continues to engage with digital media, Kehinde's and Carisa's stories offer a foundation for understanding how sacred narrative adapts, migrates, and survives across form. Their testimonies remind us that the archive is not simply what is written, but what is remembered, felt, and transmitted. Through their nonlinear temporality, relational ethics, and ritual enactments, these protagonists reclaim the power of storytelling as both sacred inheritance and speculative strategy. They expand the bounds of what literature can do, particularly when written by and for those whose histories have been systemically erased.

By framing these narratives through the lenses of theory in the flesh and contradictory knowledge, we see clearly how Afro-Latinx women write not only against historical silencing, but through it- with spirit, complexity, and grace. Their voices join a larger genealogy of feminist, decolonial, and Afro-diasporic thinkers who teach us that history must be felt to be transformed, and that contradiction is not a flaw but a method. Kehinde and Carisa live in the wake, but they do not drown there. They write, remember, and resist- creating spaces where the sacred and the speculative meet.

What follows in Chapter 3 builds on this understanding, turning toward the digital frontier to explore how contemporary Afro-Latinx communities extend the spiritual and narrative work begun in these novels. As sacred archives evolve into digital rituals, new questions arise: How do online platforms serve as spaces for ancestral return? What happens when memory is uploaded, shared, or streamed? And how might Black women's digital storytelling practices continue the labor of healing, resistance, and world-making charted by Kehinde and Carisa? These questions

propel us forward into the next terrain of Afro-Latinx epistemology: one that is at once sacred, networked, and defiantly alive.

CHAPTER 3

SACRED MEMORY AND CULTURAL TRAUMA: REWRITING HISTORY ACROSS LITERARY AND DIGITAL LANDSCAPES IN THE WORKS OF GONÇALVES AND LLANOS-FIGUEROA

Building on the theoretical frameworks of Anzaldúa and Taylor outlined in the second chapter, in what follows I contend that memory and embodiment are essential for interpreting both historical and individual narratives. These elements shape how meaning is made across analog and digital domains, framing storytelling as an embodied act through which trauma, resilience, and cultural identity are transmitted intergenerationally. In this view, personal and collective histories are not merely recorded- they are lived through the body. Physical and emotional scars become conduits of remembrance, rendering the body and spirit as living archives of coloniality's enduring legacy.

This chapter analyzes *Um defeito de cor* by Ana Maria Gonçalves and *Daughters of the Stone* by Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa through the lens of literary and cultural trauma theory, with particular attention to how Afro-Latina narratives transmit and preserve collective memory. It begins by examining historiographic metafiction as a critical literary strategy employed by Afro-Latina authors to reconstruct erased histories, address intergenerational trauma, and uphold spiritual and cultural knowledge passed down through matrilineal lines. These novels actively resist dominant colonial historiographies by centering Black women's voices and affirming embodied and sacred knowledge as valid historical archives. Simultaneously, the chapter explores how emerging digital platforms- including Artificial Intelligence tools and social media platforms

like Twitter and Facebook- serve as new terrains for Afro-diasporic memory. These technologies (1) expand or constrain public conversations about trauma, (2) enable the circulation of resistance strategies across diasporic networks, and (3) reshape evolving notions of identity and collective belonging beyond the limits of the nation-state.

Focusing on the severing of religious and familial ties- particularly as a result of the transatlantic slave trade and its afterlives- this chapter demonstrates how both texts reflect and respond to the long arc of colonial violence. As works authored by Afro-Latina women, *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* belong to a growing literary tradition that not only bears witness to inherited trauma but also enacts narrative strategies of cultural survival. Through both print and digital engagement, these texts assert the urgency of reclaiming ancestral knowledge, resisting epistemic erasure, and sustaining diasporic memory across time, space, and medium. Their authors undertake a dual project: documenting historical wounds while activating memory as a transformative mode of healing- on the page and beyond it.

In alignment with García-Peña's *Translating Blackness* (2022), this study contributes to scholarly conversations about how theory and lived experience converge across geographical and colonial contexts. García-Peña emphasizes the need for a diasporic cartography that accounts for the intersecting forces of racialization, colonialism, and migration across Latin America, the United States, and Europe. Rather than treating these as discrete or temporally bound phenomena, she maps their entanglements, showing how Afro-Latinx subjects continue to navigate the afterlives of empire. As she writes, her work "[...] traces how theories and bodies intersect in various geographical and colonial/colonized spaces [...] to map a new cartography for understanding the convergences of colonialism, immigration, and blackness that shape Black Latinx lives in diaspora" (4). In this spirit, the chapter investigates how Afro-Latina literary

narratives reframe identity, memory, and resistance through their engagement with trauma and spiritual inheritance.

In *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, the act of writing becomes a means of inscribing embodied trauma and memory into multidimensional archives that preserve Afro-diasporic histories. Evaristo's concept of *escrevivência* offers a powerful framework through which to interpret these texts, positioning Black women's writing as an insurgent act against historical silencing. Through *escrevivência*, the literary becomes political- emerging not from abstraction but from lived, collective memory. This approach resonates with Anzaldúa's *autohistoria-teoría*, a method that braids personal narrative with critical reflection to generate knowledge rooted in both body and archive. For Anzaldúa, theory is not detached; it is spiritual and insurgent- a praxis born of marginalization and anchored in the radical act of reimagining the self. Moraga's theory in the flesh deepens this framework by grounding political and spiritual knowledge in lived, bodily experience. As she writes, "[...] what was once an unspoken shame must be spoken. It must be verbalized. And it is in the poetry that the transformation occurs" (*This Bridge Called My Back*, 1981, p. 24). In this sense, Kehinde's and Fela's narratives transform silence into testimony, and pain into poetics, revealing the body not only as a site of historical trauma but as a vessel of healing, resistance, and sacred continuity.

Building on these insights, García-Peña expands the framework by conceptualizing Black Latinidad not as a fixed identity, but as a methodology- one that unsettles the normative boundaries of the nation-state and exposes the exclusions inherent in colonial definitions of belonging. Her approach insists on the political force of detour and contradiction as strategies for decolonial thinking, particularly within diasporic communities. García Peña foregrounds contradiction as a core condition of Afro-Latinx existence: to be central to national development yet erased from

national memory. Her approach frames this tension not as a failure of representation but as a generative site for decolonial thinking and cultural production. Together, Evaristo, Anzaldúa, and García-Peña offer a composite theoretical foundation for reading Afro-Latina narratives not merely as acts of representation, but as insurgent texts that reconfigure history, reclaim memory, and produce new epistemologies grounded in ancestral knowledge and embodied resistance.

Thus, this chapter examines how Afro-Latina authors engage metafictional techniques and explore the affordances and limitations of digital tools in storytelling to reimagine and renegotiate history, memory, and agency. In doing so, it considers how emerging technologies- far from being neutral platforms- can either replicate systems of erasure or serve as powerful extensions of Afro-diasporic memory work. By evaluating how digital tools mediate narrative authority and cultural visibility, this chapter underscores their growing relevance in the preservation, circulation, and reclamation of Afro-Latinx histories across generational and geographic divides.

To fully understand the stakes of these narrative interventions- whether rendered through metafiction, ritual, or digital storytelling- it is essential to situate them within frameworks of cultural trauma and collective identity. The erasures and ruptures addressed in these texts are not solely historical, but constitutive of the ongoing formation of diasporic subjectivity. To analyze cultural trauma and the development of diasporic identity, I draw primarily on the theories of Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History* (1991), as well as Jeffrey C. Alexander and Ron Eyerman in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), and Comas-Díaz in *Afro-Latinxs: Decolonization, Healing, and Liberation* (2021). Alexander, in “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” defines cultural trauma as an event in which “[...] members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in

fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1). This definition is vividly illustrated in *Um defeito de cor*, where Kehinde’s refusal to be baptized into Catholicism upon arrival in Brazil becomes a moment of spiritual resistance. Rather than submit to a system that sought to sever her ties to African cosmology, Kehinde risks her life by jumping into the sea, demonstrating that her spiritual identity is inseparable from her sense of self. This act of defiance reveals how trauma, religion, and resistance intersect in diasporic memory. Kehinde’s story exemplifies how Afro-descendant identity is shaped not only by historical violence, but by the acts of reclaiming ancestral knowledge through embodied, ritualized resistance.

Likewise, in *Daughters of the Stone*, we see that “Doña Filomena insisted that the workers be herded into wagons on Sunday mornings and taken to church” (43), reflecting the coercive nature of colonial religious imposition in Fela’s world. The enforced rituals of Catholicism serve as tools of domination, reinforcing Eurocentric hierarchies while negating the legitimacy of African spiritual traditions. These moments underscore how spiritual domination functioned as a tool of epistemic erasure, seeking to sever Afro-descendant communities from ancestral belief systems and reshape their identities in accordance with colonial norms. In both narratives, cultural trauma is not merely remembered- it is actively negotiated, resisted, and rewritten through spiritual agency and literary imagination.

Caruth asserts that trauma “[...] permits history to arise where immediate understanding may not,” emphasizing that rethinking reference is not about eliminating history but rather recontextualizing it within our understanding (182). This framework allows us to read Kehinde’s reflection on her capture and displacement- “Fui arrancada da minha terra, da minha família, e levada para um lugar desconhecido”⁸ (45)- not only as a personal memory but as a symbolic

⁸ “I was taken from my land, from my family, and taken to an unknown place” (My translation)

representation of collective displacement. Similarly, Fela's spiritual attunement to the natural world underscores a longing for homeland and ancestral presence: "She could see it racing, fairly spraying the banks. The moon broke into shards of light [...] She heard the message in the rushing water" (57). These moments of rupture and resonance serve as narrative openings through which suppressed histories reenter cultural consciousness.

I extend Caruth's argument by underscoring the importance of Quesada's assertion that "African history needs to be constructed based on oral African tradition and an assortment of sources that do not exist in written documents" (19-20). This view complements Alexander's framework, which contends that cultural trauma irreversibly transforms collective identity by embedding disruptive experiences into group memory, thereby necessitating new forms of symbolic expression and reinterpretation to process the trauma and reconstruct historical meaning. Similarly, Comas-Díaz explores the enduring effects of colonization on Afro-Latinx identity, noting that "[...] the negative effects of colonization continue during post-colonization, whereby this legacy promotes discrimination based on the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality; one that affords power to privileged White groups over disenfranchised racial minority groups" (66). She further asserts that "[...] as such, they develop a racial sociopolitical consciousness and a revolutionary Afro-Latinx identity" (68). These insights reinforce how Afro-Latinx narratives function as acts of resistance, forging new modes of identity that counteract colonial and racial oppression.

Gonçalves's *Um defeito de cor* recounts the harrowing journey of Kehinde from Africa to Brazil, tracing her survival of a family massacre in Savalu and her forced abduction into the transatlantic slave trade. "Fui estuprada por um homem branco que me comprou como se compra

um animal,”⁹ starkly conveys the brutal sexual violence inflicted on her. Similarly, Fela’s experience in *Daughters of the Stone* is marked by emotional disassociation during rape: “Fela felt nothing of what was occurring with her body. She sent her senses beyond this place [...]” (49). These representations underscore how cultural trauma marks the Black female body as both witness and site of historical violence. From her deathbed during a final voyage to Brazil, Kehinde poignantly narrates her life, expressing her hope to reunite with her son and leave him “[...] um livro só para você”¹⁰ filled with her life’s stories (662). Her personal history ultimately transforms into a collective narrative, reflecting the shared trauma of enslaved Afro-descendant peoples in Brazil. These embodied scars render the Afro-Latina body as a site of both pain and revolutionary testimony. As Moraga’s theory in the flesh reminds us, it is precisely through this bodily knowledge- where oppression and identity intersect- that storytelling becomes a necessity, not a luxury. Kehinde and Fela narrate from the wound, producing insurgent narratives that reclaim epistemic and spiritual agency through the flesh.

Similarly, *Daughters of the Stone* by Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa presents intergenerational Afro-Puerto Rican female perspectives that reveal how the trauma of slavery reverberates across centuries. The novel traces the matrilineal stories of five protagonists- Fela, Mati, Conchi, Elena, and Carisa- as they navigate the enduring legacies of colonialism in Puerto Rico and the sociopolitical ruptures of the Vietnam War era in the United States. Like *Um defeito de cor*, *Daughters of the Stone* employs historiographic metafiction to blur the line between historical record and embodied memory, echoing Hutcheon’s assertion that multiple, recursive voices challenge the illusion of singular historical truth. Through this approach, the novel becomes a cultural artifact that revisits pivotal historical moments while centering the silenced experiences

⁹ “I was raped by a white man who bought me like an animal” (My translation)

¹⁰ “[...] a book just for you” (My translation)

of Afro-descendant women. While each character reveals the lingering effects of inherited trauma, this chapter focuses closely on Kehinde in *Um defeito de cor* and Fela, Mati, and Carisa in *Daughters of the Stone*, highlighting how each woman's journey is shaped by spiritual disinheritance and narrative recovery.

Building on foundational trauma theory, Jeffrey C. Alexander and Ron Eyerman define cultural trauma as “a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion” (61). While Caruth emphasizes trauma's resistance to linear narration and its return in fragments, Eyerman foregrounds how trauma disturbs collective meaning and memory. Alexander further argues that “[...] collective traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations [...]” (27), situating such ruptures within a global framework of historical violence and forced displacement. These insights illuminate how Afro-Latinx narratives contend with the legacies of slavery, particularly through portrayals of religious imposition, the rupture of cultural memory, and the loss of ancestral connection.

In both *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, religion is depicted not as a source of spiritual refuge, but as a weapon of colonial discipline that fractures identity. Forced conversion becomes a central tool of domination, severing Afro-descendant characters from their ancestral cosmologies. Kehinde's first encounter with Christianity in Brazil is emblematic of this rupture: “Eu não sabia o que era alma pagã, mas já tinha sido batizada em África, já tinha recebido um nome e não queria trocá-lo [...]. Ela tinha dito que seria através do meu nome que meus voduns iam me proteger”¹¹ (63). For Kehinde, the imposition of a European name and religion would strip her of her lineage and spiritual protection. Similarly, in *Daughters of the Stone*, Fela is subjected

¹¹ “I didn't know what a pagan soul was, but I had already been baptized in Africa, I had already received a name and I didn't want to change it [...] She had said that it would be through my name that my voduns would protect me” (My translation)

to the rigid imposition of Catholic doctrine, with church attendance enforced as a compulsory act of subjugation rather than spiritual choice. The novel presents this religious control not as benign guidance, but as a mechanism of colonial discipline aimed at reshaping identity through forced assimilation. Fela's internal resistance to these imposed rituals highlights the dissonance between her inherited spiritual knowledge and the imposed religious practices of the colonizer. These moments underscore the trauma of spiritual erasure, in which Afro-diasporic characters are forcibly severed from their own sacred traditions- an erasure that reverberates across generations.

As cultural memorials, *Daughters of the Stone* and *Um defeito de cor* vividly dramatize how the trauma of enslavement shaped Afro-diasporic identity not only through loss and displacement, but also through resistance and creative adaptation. This comparative analysis foregrounds the enduring violence of Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule while illuminating the empowering work of narrative and spiritual recovery. Through their invocation of matrilineal memory, ritual knowledge, and affective storytelling, both novels function as counter-archives- recasting trauma not as static grief, but as the foundation for ancestral continuity. As Comas-Díaz affirms, Afro-descendant communities often return to Indigenous and African spiritual practices as buffers against racialized harm. Her research shows that spirituality serves as a protective factor for both African American and Latinx populations facing systemic oppression (71). In these novels, such practices- including orisha devotion, ancestral invocations, and sacred storytelling- offer culturally embedded tools of resilience that counter the psychic violence of forced assimilation.

To deepen this reading of spiritual repair, I draw on Quesada's framework of memory and counter-history, which posits that Afro-diasporic literature "[...] dismantl[es] hegemonic memory through textual memorials that rehabilitate a severed connection with Africa via contested sites of

memory” (23). In *Daughters of the Stone*, the carved stone passed down to Carisa becomes such a site: a sacred object that holds ancestral presence and communicates through dream and touch. Similarly, in *Um defeito de cor*, Kehinde’s visionary encounters with Oxum- adorned in gold and smiling with a familiarity that evokes her mother- embody memory as a sacred act of return (343). These spiritual visitations, like the stone, anchor the protagonists in a sacred geography of resistance. Afro-Caribbean scholar Jacqui Alexander affirms this dynamic, framing the sacred as a transgressive epistemology that enables healing and radical re-imagining. In *Pedagogies of Crossing*, she argues that sacred memory and political resistance converge through ritual and spiritual labor (8). From this lens, Kehinde and Carisa’s stories are not simply testimonies of suffering- they are active ceremonies of remembrance and cultural renewal.

Beyond the imposition of a foreign religion, both Kehinde and Fela experience the fragmentation of family bonds- another profound dimension of cultural trauma that shapes their identities and informs how they navigate survival, memory, and resistance. Eyerman argues that memory is inherently collective, stating, “[...] memory is always group memory, both because the individual is derivative of some collectivity, family, and community, and also because a group is solidified and becomes aware of itself through continuous reflection upon and re-creation of a distinctive, shared memory. Individual identity is said to be negotiated within this collectively shared past” (65). This raises a central question in this analysis: What happens when those collective, familial, and communal memories are ruptured by slavery, migration, and colonial violence?

Eyerman suggests that in the absence of intact familial structures, memory itself functions as a vessel for transmitting stories and fostering belonging. He notes, “[...] the past is not only recollected, and thus represented through language, but it is also recalled through association with

artifacts, some of which have been arranged and designated for that purpose” (69). Feracho further expands this framework, asserting that “[...] this cultural memory serves to articulate not only a shared past, including shared trauma, but also an active continuation of a cultural legacy where spirituality is in constant tension with the development of the modern nation” (138). In this light, Kehinde’s voduns- deities within Dahomean and Yoruba cosmologies- act as sacred protectors and spiritual kin throughout her journey. Alongside them, Fela’s carved stone functions as an inherited spiritual artifact, anchoring her to ancestral presence. These elements serve as narrative bridges that preserve cultural heritage and reassert belonging within fractured diasporic landscapes.

García-Peña argues that transnational belonging is constructed through recognizable cultural symbols- often circulated via marketing and social media- that challenge national imaginaries which erase Blackness, particularly in postcolonial contexts such as Italy (*Translating Blackness* 197). These counter-narratives, she explains, serve to “[...] disrupt enduring silences surrounding colonialism and migration,” thereby expanding the archive to include Afro-diasporic histories often omitted from dominant frameworks (207). This perspective enriches our understanding of the symbolic and epistemological function of artifacts in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, where sacred objects serve as repositories of memory and resistance. Quesada identifies the stone in *Daughters of the Stone* as a mandinga stone, “[...] a cloth or leather pouch [that] could contain roots or powders used for ritualistic healing” (4). The stone becomes not only a symbol of Fela’s resilience but a conduit for intergenerational knowledge. Likewise, Kehinde’s voduns serve as spiritual technologies that ground her identity and legacy despite the dislocation of enslavement. These artifacts are not merely metaphors- they are sacred technologies of survival, inscribing Afro-diasporic presence within the historical record.

Vanessa Hack Gatteli further affirms the diasporic dimensions of trauma literature, arguing that “[...] a literatura de trauma diaspórica precisa ser analisada pelo paradigma da diáspora negra, para além de estados nacionais”¹² (19). In her analysis of *Um defeito de cor* and *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi (2021), she underscores that Kehinde’s role as a mother is central to the novel’s challenge to canonical representations of Black women. According to Hack Gatteli, “*Um defeito de cor* desafia as formas de controle da imagem da mulher negra na literatura. Ao narrar-se e a definir a si mesma, Kehinde se coloca como a mãe de seus quatro filhos [...]”¹³ (60). Through her narration, Kehinde asserts control over her maternal identity, rejecting stereotypes such as the mammy figure and reclaiming her role as both cultural transmitter and agent of historical memory.

This reclamation of motherhood aligns with García-Peña’s assertion that transnational belonging is shaped by counter-narratives that resist erasure and center Black women’s experiences. Kehinde’s maternal self-definition, like the sacred artifacts she safeguards, becomes a tool of resistance and reclamation. Her narrative, grounded in vodun spirituality and matrilineal memory, defies the colonial logics that have historically marginalized Black women. In parallel, Fela’s legacy, transmitted through the stone and later carried by Carisa, likewise demonstrates how sacred inheritance functions as both memory and method. In this way, both novels challenge hegemonic historiography by positioning motherhood, ritual, and spiritual embodiment as integral to Afro-Latinx survival and identity.

Beyond the imposition of a foreign religion, both Kehinde and Fela experience the fragmentation of family bonds- another profound dimension of cultural trauma that shapes their identities and informs how they navigate survival, memory, and resistance. As Eyerman explains,

¹² “[...] diasporic trauma literature needs to be analyzed through the paradigm of the black diaspora, beyond national states” (My translation)

¹³ “*Um defeito de cor* challenges the forms of control over the image of black women in literature. By narrating and defining herself, Kehinde positions herself as the mother of her four children [...]” (My translation)

cultural trauma necessitates a “narration of new foundations,” in which memory and identity are reconstituted through collective acts of meaning-making (63). In this context, memory does not merely preserve the past; it becomes an active process through which individuals and communities forge continuity amid rupture. This raises a central question in this analysis: what happens when those collective, familial, and communal memories are violently fractured by colonialism?

In the absence of intact kinship networks, Eyerman suggests that memory itself becomes a vessel for transmitting stories and maintaining belonging. He explains that “[...] the past is not only recollected, and thus represented through language, but it is also recalled through association with artifacts, some of which have been arranged and designated for that purpose” (69). Building on this idea, Feracho notes that “[...] this cultural memory serves to articulate not only a shared past, including shared trauma, but also an active continuation of a cultural legacy where spirituality is in constant tension with the development of the modern nation” (138). In this light, Kehinde’s voduns- deities within the Dahomean and Yoruba religious traditions- act as sacred companions throughout her journey. Likewise, Fela’s carved stone in *Daughters of the Stone* serves as a tangible, spiritual artifact that channels ancestral presence. Both function as repositories of memory and as narrative bridges that compensate for severed familial ties, preserving cultural identity in diasporic landscapes marked by rupture.

This dynamic is reinforced by García-Peña, who argues that transnational belonging often hinges on recognizable symbols- many of which are disseminated through cultural and digital platforms- to challenge dominant narratives that exclude Blackness from national imaginaries. In her analysis of Italy’s postcolonial context, she writes that these counter-narratives “[...] disrupt enduring silences surrounding colonialism and migration [...],” contributing to a more inclusive historical archive (*Translating Blackness* 207). This framework helps illuminate the symbolic

function of artifacts in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, where spiritual objects such as Kehinde's voduns and Fela's mandinga stone not only anchor the protagonists in ancestral knowledge but also act as technologies of survival. The mandinga, typically made of cloth or leather and filled with ritual substances like roots or powders, served as a protective and healing talisman deeply embedded in Afro-diasporic spiritual traditions (Quesada 4). These objects are not static symbols- they are dynamic conduits through which sacred memory and embodied resistance are transmitted across generations.

Hack Gatteli expands on this interpretation by emphasizing that characters who share a traumatic memory “[...] contribuem com a criação e a manutenção dessa memória, mediando e viabilizando a formação de identidades”¹⁴ (19), highlighting how diasporic trauma literature facilitates the construction of collective identity through narrative memory. She further notes that *Um defeito de cor* challenges literary canon by centering a Black woman whose maternal identity becomes a locus of agency. “Ao narrar-se e a definir a si mesma,” Hack Gatteli writes, “Kehinde se coloca como a mãe de seus quatro filhos: Banjokô, Omotunde e os Ibêjis João e Maria Clara,” thereby rejecting stereotypical portrayals of the “mãe preta”¹⁵ figure (60). This redefinition of motherhood aligns with García-Peña's concept of transnational counter-memory, in which identity and resistance are narrated from within rather than imposed from outside.

Through Kehinde's maternal self-definition and her embodied connection to spiritual artifacts, *Um defeito de cor* reclaims Black womanhood from the margins of historiography. The novel positions her role as mother not merely in biological terms but as a conduit for preserving

¹⁴ “[...] they contribute to the creation and maintenance of this memory, mediating and enabling the formation of identities” (My translation)

¹⁵ “By narrating and defining herself,” Hack Gatteli writes, “Kehinde positions herself as the mother of her four children: Banjokô, Omotunde and the Ibêjis João and Maria Clara. Kehinde's trajectory recovers and dismantles the logic of the woman's body as the reproducer of the absent child that characterizes the ‘black mother’” (My translation)

cultural memory, spiritual practice, and historical testimony. This emphasis on maternal agency disrupts dominant frameworks that have long erased or pathologized Black motherhood, re-situating it as a generative force within Afro-diasporic survival. Through both the presence of spiritual artifacts and the narrative act of self-representation, Kehinde asserts herself not only as a mother but as an author of cultural legacy and resistance.

The precariousness of Black motherhood under slavery is further portrayed through the actions of Sinhá Ana Felipa, who decides to move to join the court but fails to inform Kehinde about what will happen to her and her firstborn son, Banjokô. Fearing their separation, Kehinde expresses her anxiety: “[...] chorei durante horas. Estava confusa, com medo do que poderia acontecer, medo de nunca mais ver o Banjokô, como acontecia com muitas mães que eram separadas dos filhos”¹⁶ (334). As she strategizes, she reflects, “Fiquei uma noite em claro pensando em como conseguir mais dinheiro, mas já me sentindo um pouco melhor, alentada pela solidariedade e o carinho de todos aqueles que estavam se mobilizando para me ajudar”¹⁷ (330). Her reliance on communal solidarity reinforces the novel’s emphasis on collective resistance, demonstrating that her survival- and by extension, her ability to reclaim her maternal role- is not solely an individual struggle but one deeply embedded in the broader Afro-diasporic experience. *Um defeito de cor*, then, functions as both an act of literary resistance and a critical intervention in the discourse on Black motherhood, trauma, and the reclamation of agency within Afro-diasporic narratives.

In line with Feracho’s notion that cultural memory preserves both shared trauma and an evolving legacy- one in which spirituality remains in constant tension with the rationalizing forces

¹⁶ “[...] I cried for hours. I was confused, afraid of what could happen, afraid of never seeing Banjokô again, as happened to many mothers who were separated from their children” (My translation)

¹⁷ “I spent a sleepless night thinking about how to get more money, but I was already feeling a little better, encouraged by the solidarity and affection of all those who were mobilizing to help me” (My translation)

of modern nation-building- Afro-Latina narratives like *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* position sacred memory as both a site of historical reckoning and a generative force for cultural continuity. This tension becomes particularly evident in Kehinde's reliance on spiritual forces when all human efforts to secure her freedom are exhausted. A prophecy from her grandmother had once foretold that Oxum would appear in her most desperate moment. When Kehinde nearly forgets this promise, divine intervention materializes. As she recalls: "[...] já tinha dito à Oxum tudo o que queria ia descer [...]" before suddenly, "[uma] cobra apareceu de repente, pulando em cima de mim. A primeira reação foi me proteger, jogando a Oxum contra ela, e quando olhei para o chão tingido de dourado, a ideia surgiu inteirinha [...]"¹⁸ (343).

The figure of Oxum- filled with gold dust, gold nuggets, and precious stones- provides Kehinde with the means to purchase not only her and her son's freedom, but also that of several friends. This moment underscores the intricate relationship between memory, spiritual faith, and material liberation, demonstrating how cultural memory and ancestral knowledge serve as essential tools for survival and resistance. By intertwining spirituality with Kehinde's journey toward freedom, *Um defeito de cor* reaffirms the enduring power of African diasporic traditions in sustaining resilience and reclaiming agency.

Hack Gatteli expands on this idea, arguing that "Kehinde assimila que esse conhecimento passado pela avó constitui o que ela é, fazendo parte de sua identidade"¹⁹ (48). This recognition of ancestral knowledge as a fundamental part of Kehinde's identity reinforces the novel's subversion of canonical literary traditions by placing a Black woman's self-determined experience at the

¹⁸ "[...] I had already told Oxum everything I wanted was going to come down [...]" before suddenly, "[a] snake suddenly appeared, jumping on top of me. The first reaction was to protect myself, throwing Oxum against it, and when I looked at the gold-tinted ground, the idea came to me [...]" (My translation)

¹⁹ "Kehinde assimilates that this knowledge passed on by her grandmother constitutes who she is, forming part of her identity" (My translation)

narrative center. Hack Gatteli continues: “[...] [m]ais uma vez, *Um defeito de cor* subverte a lógica da literatura canônica, pois aqui a mulher que não tem filhos (ainda que não tenham sido tirados dela) é a mulher branca que tenta amamentar o filho de uma escrava”²⁰ (61). This inversion of traditional literary roles further illustrates how the novel challenges dominant representations of Black women by prioritizing their agency, resistance, and lived experience over imposed colonial narratives.

Similarly, Marilene Weinhardt, in “*Um defeito de cor* e muitas virtudes narrativas” (2009), aligns with Feracho²¹ and Hack Gatteli’s perspectives, emphasizing that Kehinde’s significance as a protagonist extends beyond her identity as an enslaved Black woman. She asserts:

Kehinde não é heroína de romance porque é negra escrava. Kehinde é criança em aldeia submetida a violências de seus conterrâneos, é escrava submetida a desmandos de diferentes ordens pelos donos, é revolucionária aprisionada e fugitiva, é amante abandonada, é forasteira ameaçada de expulsão por não ter lugar na sociedade, é mãe em busca do filho roubado, é mulher que percebe o companheiro distanciar-se por ser ela capaz de iniciativa própria no mundo comercial, mas não é protagonista por nada disso, e sim porque empreende o relato dessas experiências.²² (114)

Weinhardt’s analysis highlights that it is Kehinde’s narrative agency that defines her role as a protagonist. She is not defined solely by her suffering but by her ability to narrate and interpret her

²⁰ “[...] once again, *Um defeito de cor* subverts the logic of canonical literature, because here the woman who has no children (even if they were not taken from her) is the white woman who tries to breastfeed the child of a slave” (My translation)

²¹ Although Feracho does not write specifically about *Um defeito de cor*, her analysis of *Daughters of the Stone* offers insights that are highly applicable to both novels.

²² “Kehinde is not a novel heroine because she is a black slave. Kehinde is a child in a village subjected to violence from her fellow countrymen, she is a slave subjected to abuses of different types by her owners, she is a revolutionary imprisoned and on the run, she is an abandoned lover, she is a freedwoman threatened with expulsion for not having a place in society, she is a mother searching for her stolen child, she is a woman who notices her partner distancing himself because she is capable of her own initiative in the commercial world, but she is not the protagonist for any of this, but rather because she undertakes to recount these experiences” (My translation)

own story- transforming individual and collective trauma into a counter-history that resists hegemonic frameworks. *Um defeito de cor* thus emerges as a radical literary intervention that reclaims Black women's histories and repositions them at the center of diasporic memory and identity.

The novel presents trauma not as a single event but as a cumulative force of systemic violence: Kehinde's abduction during the Mali Rebellion, the rupture of kinship ties, the imposition of Christian identity, and the silencing of orixá-centered practices. Her endurance through enslavement, sexual violence, and exile reveals the layered, gendered, and spiritual dimensions of cultural trauma that haunt her personal narrative and shape her matrilineal legacy. These interconnected traumas position Kehinde's letter not simply as a testament of survival but as an embodied counter-archive that reclaims voice, lineage, and cosmology. With this framework in place, I now turn to *Daughters of the Stone*, where similar traumas- forced migration, spiritual rupture, and the silencing of matrilineal knowledge- unfold through a distinct Afro-Caribbean lens.

Just as *Um defeito de cor* reclaims Black women's narratives through Kehinde's self-determined storytelling, *Daughters of the Stone* likewise centers Afro-diasporic women's voices, memory, and resistance across generations. Llanos-Figueroa deepens these themes by tracing the matrilineal legacy of Fela and her descendants, showing how ancestral memory and spiritual inheritance become strategies of survival and cultural reclamation in the face of slavery, displacement, and erasure. Central to this sacred lineage is Fela's relationship with Oshun, the orisha of rivers, fertility, sensuality, and feminine power. The sacred stone gifted to Fela by Oshun serves as both narrative and spiritual anchor, binding five generations of women through ritual, memory, and divine continuity. When Fela disobeys Oshun's warning by giving birth at the river, she is not met with death, but with an enduring spiritual debt- one that shapes the sorrow, sacrifice,

and healing echoed through her bloodline (10-11). Through this inheritance, Llanos-Figueroa weaves a sacred genealogy in which memory and spirituality become the connective tissue between past, present, and future generations of Afro-Caribbean women.

This devotion to Oshun is mirrored in Kehinde's journey in *Um defeito de cor*, where the orixá- known as Oxum in the Brazilian Yoruba tradition- intervenes at moments of despair and transformation. Kehinde's golden statue of Oxum becomes a vessel of guidance and power, appearing in visions and dreams to offer clarity, direction, and strength (343). While both protagonists maintain spiritual ties to Oshun, their relationships differ in tone and trajectory. Kehinde's bond is marked by sustained reverence- an unbroken thread that carries Yoruba cosmology through the rupture of slavery into the spiritual landscape of Brazil. Fela's relationship, by contrast, is shaped by transgression, atonement, and eventual transmission of sacred knowledge. Yet in both narratives, Oshun is more than a religious icon; she is a diasporic compass, a divine force guiding Afro-Latina women through fragmentation, exile, and generational reconstitution. Her presence affirms that spiritual knowledge is not lost through displacement but reactivated through embodied ritual and narrative.

In *Daughters of the Stone*, this spiritual inheritance is dramatized through Fela's memory and internal struggle. At Hacienda Las Mercedes, she listens as the other women speak- complaining, gossiping, and recounting life in captivity- but cannot understand how they have forgotten their origins. Fela makes a quiet vow to herself: "She would never be like them. Never!" (Llanos-Figueroa, 16). Her resolve is anchored in a profound sense of accountability to "Mother Oshun, goddess of the river, patron of women, motherhood, and fertility" (10), whose warning she once ignored. In a dream, Oshun had revealed to Fela a vision of the coming destruction- an urgent message meant for the elders of her village. But instead of delivering the prophecy, Fela folded it

away, choosing instead to pursue a fertility ritual with her partner Imo: “She had folded Mother Oshun’s strange images and put them aside. Just for a little while. Mother Oshun would understand her woman’s heart” (11). Her silence, driven by youthful desire, leads to the downfall of her community. In captivity, Fela comes to understand that only by honoring her spiritual debt can she restore equilibrium- not just for herself, but for the daughters and descendants who will carry her memory. What was once a private act of devotion becomes, through suffering, a vehicle for the transmission of sacred knowledge and cultural survival.

Fela’s decision to ignore Oshun’s warning and instead prioritize her personal desires sets in motion a profound cycle of trauma- both personal and collective. By failing to deliver the prophecy to the elders, she inadvertently enables the destruction of her village and the enslavement of her people, severing her from homeland, language, and kin. This rupture mirrors the broader historical trauma of the transatlantic slave trade, which violently dismantled spiritual, cultural, and familial continuity. Fela’s burden is compounded by spiritual guilt; she knows she had the chance to avert catastrophe but did not act. In this sense, her trauma is not merely physical- it is cosmological. Like Kehinde, she becomes both witness and vessel of ancestral pain, but also, crucially, a channel for its transformation. Memory, in this narrative, is more than remembrance- it is obligation, atonement, and the foundation of survival.

Building on earlier analyses of memory and trauma, Quesada offers a powerful extension by interpreting *Daughters of the Stone* itself as a “memorial stone”- a narrative object that heals by restoring ancestral memory. She writes that “[...] the stone heals [Carisa’s] memory, enabling her to ‘remember’ a past that took place in Africa,” even as she must “defend these memories from racist pressures to forsake her African heritage” (4). Carisa’s struggles underscore the persistence of colonial epistemologies in modern institutions, from grade-school classrooms to university

writing programs. As Quesada notes, her mythic stories are dismissed as “just plain superstition” (253) and as having “no place in belles lettres” (269). These rejections illustrate how Afro-diasporic knowledge continues to be marginalized under Western logics of reason and literary value. In reclaiming this memory through the stone- and through narrative- Carisa resists epistemic erasure, affirming that cultural survival depends on both remembering and defending one’s ancestral inheritance.

The narrative strategies in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* exemplify how historiographic metafiction reclaims silenced histories, challenges dominant epistemologies, and sustains cultural memory through embodied storytelling. While these novels engage the past through print and oral traditions, contemporary digital technologies now offer parallel- and at times conflicting- arenas for shaping and transmitting historical narratives. Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms and social media networks like Twitter and Facebook, have opened new spaces for discussing cultural trauma, resistance, and identity within Afro-Latinx communities. Like literary fiction, these technologies hold the potential to disrupt hegemonic discourses, facilitate the circulation of intergenerational memory, and foster transnational connectivity. Yet they also bring new risks: algorithmic bias, digital erasure, and the flattening of complex historical narratives. The following section explores how these digital platforms function as both tools and battlegrounds in the struggle to preserve Afro-diasporic memory and identity in an increasingly networked world.

Rather than representing a technological rupture, these digital practices continue and adapt sacred Afro-diasporic storytelling traditions- remixing them for survival and resonance in contemporary spaces. Arriaga’s analysis in *Afro-Latinx Digital Connections* provides a vital framework for understanding how digital platforms reshape contemporary discourse on cultural trauma and identity formation. From AI tools to widely used social media spaces, Arriaga argues

that digital technologies allow Afrodescendant communities to reclaim silenced histories, circulate counter-narratives, and build coalitions across national and linguistic boundaries. However, these platforms also operate within algorithmic systems that replicate the racial exclusions and surveillance logics of colonialism and capitalism. Arriaga's concept of *identity maroonage* reframes Afro-Latinx digital activity as a contemporary strategy of resistance- an ongoing negotiation between visibility, autonomy, and institutional constraint.

This framework draws on the historical practices of maroonage, wherein enslaved Africans fled colonial regimes to form fugitive communities rooted in self-determination and collective survival. Scholars such as Nascimento, through her concept of *quilombagem*, and Branche, with his theorization of maroonage as a mode of epistemic insurgency, provide foundational genealogies for this digital metaphor. Arriaga extends these ideas by likening today's digital platforms to colonial archives and plantations- sites where Black subjectivity is surveilled, commodified, and sometimes erased. Within this paradigm, Afro-Latinx engagement with digital storytelling becomes an act of coded resistance: not merely content production, but strategic intervention into the architectures of power that shape online spaces.

In this light, platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or even AI text generators are not neutral tools; they are contested terrains where cultural memory is made and unmade. By hacking, repurposing, or subverting these technologies, Afro-Latinx users perform a kind of digital marronage- transforming surveillance spaces into zones of ancestral remembrance and diasporic futurity. Arriaga argues that "Afro-Latinx communities and individuals find common ground in the use of digital tools as a way to amplify and connect with communities from diverse contexts and locations with which they share struggles and experiences" (23). This assertion frames digital platforms as more than tools of communication- they become critical spaces for transnational

solidarity and historical continuity. Yet, much like the plantation or colonial state of the past, contemporary technologies function as systems of classification and control, reducing individuals to data points, preferences, and predictive algorithms. Algorithmic bias- embedded in AI recommendation engines and content moderation policies- continues to disproportionately silence and devalue Black and other marginalized voices.

These tensions are powerfully illustrated in two cases of Afro-descendant resistance. In Brazil, Fernanda Carrera, in *Black Twitter: renegociando sentidos de comunidade em materialidades digitais* (2023), explores how Black Twitter has emerged as a key site of cultural and political resistance. She writes, “Nos EUA, o conceito apareceu após pesquisas identificarem alto uso do Twitter pela comunidade negra, sobretudo em virtude da facilidade de acesso a smartphones e a rapidez da plataforma para denúncia de vigilância e violência policial”²³ (2). In the Brazilian context, she notes that Twitter has evolved into a space of intellectual, emotional, and even physical solidarity: “O convívio no espaço virtual é permeado por assuntos específicos determinantes para fazer ou desfazer amizades e para amplificar a proximidade intelectual e emocional, podendo, até mesmo, transmutar interações virtuais para o espaço físico”²⁴ (2). To illustrate this, Carrera highlights the case of Gabriel Silva Santos, a young Black man wrongfully imprisoned in Bahia on June 12, 2020. Arrested for allegedly stealing a car while withdrawing unemployment benefits, Santos was targeted solely based on his physical appearance- “[...] negro, loiro, com tatuagens no corpo.”²⁵ Despite having never driven a car, he was detained and dismissed by authorities. However, after the hashtag #soltemGabriel gained momentum, digital activists

²³ “In the USA, the concept appeared after research identified high use of Twitter by the black community, especially due to the ease of access to smartphones and the speed of the platform for reporting surveillance and police violence” (My translation)

²⁴ “Socializing in virtual space is permeated by specific subjects that determine whether to make or break friendships and to amplify intellectual and emotional closeness, and can even transmute virtual interactions into physical space” (My translation)

²⁵ “[...] black, blonde, with tattoos on his body” (My translation)

mobilized rapidly. Within 24 hours, he was released. Similarly, in Puerto Rico, digital communities have responded to the systemic targeting of Afro-Puerto Ricans. AJ Vicens, in “You’ve Probably Never Heard of America’s Worst Police Force,” recounts the 2007 killing of Miguel Cáceres Cruz in Humacao. While helping direct traffic at a quinceañera, Cáceres was approached by Officer Javier Pagán Cruz. Video footage shows Cáceres backing away, unarmed, before Pagán lunges and fires multiple shots, including one into the back of Cáceres’s head (*Mother Jones*). These cases underscore the transnational nature of state violence against Black communities and the vital role of digital activism in demanding justice and remembrance.

Carrera further affirms the global reach of Black Twitter, describing it as a “[...] comunidade ‘transnacional,’ envolvendo um número expressivo de usuários da África e da diáspora, unindo, inclusive, norte-americanos e o sul global”²⁶ (2). Arriaga similarly contends that “[...] digital technologies help amplify relations that existed long before the advent of digital technologies and without which Afrodescendant communities and identities could not have persisted into the present” (9). Yet despite their potential as tools for resistance, digital platforms remain embedded in extractive infrastructures. Arriaga cautions that “[a]ccess or the lack thereof to the logic and the algorithms behind those widespread devices has created a wider divide between the people who make digital tools and those who consume them” (23). Issues of data appropriation, algorithmic discrimination, and surveillance shape how Afrodescendant users must continually navigate systems not built with their histories in mind.

Black digital spaces such as Black Twitter offer important counter-narratives, but these are not immune to erasure. Within this ecosystem, the contributions of Black women are often underrepresented or co-opted. In her interview with Arriaga, Bahia articulates the need for

²⁶ “[...] ‘transnational’ community, involving a significant number of users from Africa and the diaspora, even uniting North Americans and the global south” (My translation)

authorship and visibility: “We are not only users- we are creators of technologies. We bring our ancestry with us into this work” (60). Through her work with Olabi, Bahia promotes *digital quilombismo*- a model for digital autonomy grounded in Afro-Brazilian ancestral knowledge and collective empowerment. Her initiatives provide critical entry points for Black Brazilian girls and women to not only access but actively redefine technology.

Expanding on these insights, Ruha Benjamin introduces the concept of the “New Jim Code” to describe how ostensibly neutral algorithms perpetuate racial hierarchies. These invisible systems, she argues, “program inequity by default” (47). Benjamin challenges the techno-utopian notion that digital systems are objective, revealing instead how they extend legacies of racial surveillance and exclusion. Taken together, the perspectives of Arriaga, Carrera, Bahia, and Benjamin highlight that Afro-Latinx engagement with digital tools is not just participatory- it is insurgent. It is a strategy of memory work, epistemic reclamation, and future-building. Critically engaging these platforms is essential for constructing decolonized digital spaces where Afrodescendant communities can narrate, remember, and resist on their own terms.

Yet, Afrodescendant communities are not merely subjects of algorithmic control; they are also active agents in reclaiming and reshaping digital spaces. Social media has become a battleground where Black and Afro-Latinx activists construct counter-narratives, challenge stereotypes, and establish alternative digital archives. AI-driven platforms, while reflecting systemic biases, can also serve as tools for knowledge production and community-building when engaged critically. Thus, the struggle in digital spaces is twofold: resisting structural bias while leveraging technology for empowerment, cultural preservation, and global solidarity.

This duality- of erasure and visibility, of exclusion and self-reclamation- is also evident in the publishing history of *Daughters of the Stone*. Despite the novel’s literary and pedagogical

significance, it was dropped by its original publisher, St. Martin's Press, which severely limited its initial reach (Quesada 5). In response, Llanos-Figueroa reclaimed the rights to her work and reissued the novel through IngramSpark. This act was not merely logistical but deeply political and epistemological. It resonates with Taylor's theory of the archive and the repertoire, which distinguishes between the fixed, institutionalized preservation of the archive and the embodied, performative practices of the repertoire (*The Archive and Repertoire* 19). By self-publishing *Daughters of the Stone*, Llanos-Figueroa disrupts the static notion of the book as an archival object confined to traditional literary gatekeeping. Instead, she repositions the novel as a dynamic, living artifact within the repertoire- performing its cultural relevance through circulation, community engagement, and educational use. The act of reclaiming and redistributing her work embodies Taylor's principle of "vital acts of transfer," in which memory is kept alive through performance and affective practice rather than institutional containment (*The Archive and Repertoire* 20).

Furthermore, the publishing industry's initial reluctance to categorize the novel as either "Latin" or "African American" literature illustrates the epistemic violence that García-Peña critiques in *Translating Blackness*- namely, the institutional refusal to acknowledge Afro-Latinx subjectivity as legible within dominant literary frameworks (207). Llanos-Figueroa's decision to self-publish resists this marginalization, asserting authorial control over how her work is read, circulated, and to whom it speaks. In doing so, she transforms *Daughters of the Stone* into a performative text- one that not only tells a story but enacts survival and resists erasure.

Llanos-Figueroa's expansion of this narrative world through *A Woman of Endurance* (2022) extends these strategies. The novel centers Pola, a minor but memorable character in *Daughters of the Stone*, who cared for Mati during her early life. In reimagining Pola's journey, Llanos-Figueroa deepens the matrilineal and spiritual web of Afro-Puerto Rican womanhood. On

her website, the author describes the novel as the story of a “[...] deeply spiritual African woman who is captured and later sold for the purpose of breeding future slaves [...],” and who, despite losing faith, finds a path toward “survival, regeneration, and reclamation of common humanity” (Llanos-Figueroa, “Books”). Pola’s narrative echoes the traumas and resilience seen in Kehinde and Fela, further reinforcing the centrality of Black womanhood in reconstructing historical memory. In doing so, Llanos-Figueroa affirms that survival is not merely endurance, but a generative force rooted in spirituality, community, and ancestral knowledge.

The decision to elevate Pola’s story mirrors the narrative ethos of *Um defeito de cor*, where Kehinde reclaims voice and agency through life-writing. Both novels reject static portrayals of Black women as solely victims of historical violence. Instead, they chart paths of spiritual survival, political agency, and reclaimed interiority. Through Kehinde’s autobiographical letter and Pola’s interior monologue, both authors offer alternative historiographies rooted in resilience. Moreover, both texts redefine kinship: family is constructed not only by blood but through care, shared struggle, and sacred inheritance. Pola and Fela become spiritual sisters, united by the work of memory and resistance. These relational bonds affirm that, even amid profound rupture, Black womanhood generates networks of survival.

A similar process of reclamation and expansion is evident in the evolving legacy of *Um defeito de cor*. The 2024 edition of the novel, featuring artwork by acclaimed Black Brazilian visual artist Rosana Paulino, exemplifies how literature and visual art converge to reactivate diasporic memory. As Rafaela Rocha Cruz writes, the new edition “[...] celebra o encontro da escrita de Ana Maria Gonçalves com a obra da artista visual Rosana Paulino, reforçando a experiência negra diaspórica na centralidade da história brasileira”²⁷ (“Estado de Minas”).

²⁷ “[...] celebrates the meeting of Ana Maria Gonçalves’ writing with the work of visual artist Rosana Paulino, reinforcing the black diasporic experience at the centrality of Brazilian history” (My translation)

Paulino's work, known for its engagement with Black Brazilian womanhood, transforms the novel into a multimodal cultural object- expanding its reach beyond the printed page. The edition also includes an Afrofuturist short story by Gonçalves- her first fiction since the publication of *Um defeito de cor*. This new narrative layer signals a temporal and technological shift, imagining futures grounded in Afro-Brazilian spiritual and historical consciousness. While the book has also been re-released in print, it has not received the same level of mainstream recognition as its original edition. These developments reflect Taylor's theory of the repertoire, where cultural knowledge is continually reactivated through embodied and expressive practices. The novel's re-publication resists archival stasis and instead asserts its vitality- across forms, genres, and generations.

This trajectory parallels the publishing journey of *Daughters of the Stone*. Llanos-Figueroa's self-publishing and later expansion through *A Woman of Endurance* aligns with García-Peña's call for Afro-Latinx authors to challenge the racialized exclusions of literary canons. These acts of narrative autonomy push back against gatekeeping and affirm Black women's roles as creators of memory and culture. Through strategies of reissuing, expanding, and transforming, these texts assert their place as sacred counter-archives.

Together, *Um defeito de cor*, *Daughters of the Stone*, and *A Woman of Endurance* exemplify what Arriaga calls *identity maroonage*- a fugitive methodology of memory, resistance, and spiritual continuity (24). These works counter the epistemic violence of colonial archives by foregrounding Black women's histories, cosmologies, and voice. They remind us that cultural survival is not a fixed inheritance but a process of improvisation, rupture, and sacred transmission. As these print-based counter-archives converge with digital technologies, we witness the emergence of new Afro-Latinx memory practices. The increasing digitization of *Um defeito de cor*, the rise of transnational digital activism in the cases of Gabriel Silva Santos and Miguel Cáceres Cruz, and the analytic

frameworks offered by Carrera and Arriaga all underscore the vital role of digital space as a repository for resistance. However, as they also emphasize, these platforms are not neutral. Algorithmic bias, surveillance, and erasure persist. Thus, Afro-Latinx cultural production in digital space demands constant vigilance, innovation, and intervention.

As this dissertation transitions toward a discussion of healing, spirituality, and digital resistance, the guiding questions shift from representation to transformation. If Afro-Latina literary texts operate as ritual acts of memory and resistance, how might digital tools extend- or distort- this sacred labor? Can AI, social media, and virtual reality become technologies of mourning, futurity, and decolonial reimagination? How might Black women's stories-told in print, online, and across generations- redefine what it means to survive?

These questions animate the following chapter's inquiry into sacred geographies, matrilineal memory, and digital healing. They ask us to reimagine the archive not only as a site of documentation, but as a living constellation of spirit, code, and story.

And it is in this union of our divergent beings
that we really can build a superior, harmonious being.
It is in this meeting
in which I admire you and admire myself
being me and accepting you,
and in this I, I accept you.
-*la Ciguapa*
(Medrano 35)

CHAPTER 4

SPIRITUAL TECHNOLOGIES AND THE AFRO-LATINA BODY AS ARCHIVE: HEALING AND DIGITAL RESISTANCE *IN UM DEFEITO DE COR AND DAUGHTERS OF THE STONE*

In the aftermath of profound cultural trauma, Afro-Latinx communities have long turned to spirituality, storytelling, and collective memory as interwoven strategies for survival, resistance, and renewal. As established in the previous chapter, trauma in Afro-Latinx literature is not solely a psychological rupture, but a deeply historical and cultural wound- one transmitted across generations and territories. These wounds persist not only through historical silencing but through the ongoing structural erasure of Black and Indigenous ways of knowing. Thus, healing must be imagined not as a return to a pre-traumatized self, but as a reconstitution of identity rooted in ancestral knowledge and communal ritual. It is precisely this process of re-membering, of reintegrating fragmented histories, voices, and bodies, that frames this chapter's emphasis on healing. The epigraph from *la Ciguapa*, a Taíno divinity as interpreted by Medrano-Marra, invites us to consider this healing as a convergence of divergent beings, histories, and cosmologies. Medrano-Marra reads *la Ciguapa* not simply as a folkloric figure, but as a sacred embodiment of the feminine self and a metaphor for spiritual reintegration, especially for women reconnecting

with Taíno ancestry and the Divine Feminine (26). This vision, deeply relational and spiritually expansive, mirrors the core assertion of this chapter: that healing in Afro-Latinx communities is always a dialogical act- between body and land, self and ancestor, spirit and technology.

Afro-Latina literature functions as a counter-archive that preserves epistemologies and histories erased by colonial and patriarchal regimes. This chapter builds on that foundation by analyzing healing not as a passive or individual act, but as a political and spiritual process rooted in embodied practice and intergenerational memory. Crucially, it extends beyond the literary into digital environments, where Afro-Latinx writers and cultural producers reimagine healing through curated rituals, virtual archives, and interactive storytelling. When animated by ancestral energy and cultural survival, digital tools evolve into what this chapter refers to as spiritual technologies- not static platforms, but evolving practices that transform trauma into testimony and memory into motion.

Azorli's work on orixá mythology supports this reading by showing how deities such as Oxum, Iansã, and Nanã²⁸ operate not as abstract concepts, but as dynamic cosmological forces embodying ethical frameworks, historical memory, and healing (6-7). Their ongoing presence in diasporic traditions like Candomblé and Santería exemplifies how African cosmologies adapt across time and geography- offering both continuity and transformation. Within this context, Gonçalves's *Um defeito de cor* and Llanos-Figueroa's *Daughters of the Stone* emerge as generative models of decolonial healing, where ritual and resistance converge across analog and digital realms

²⁸ Iansã (also known as Oiá) is the orixá of storms, winds, and the spirits of the dead. A fierce warrior and guardian of the ancestral threshold, she embodies transformation, passion, and justice. Nanã Buruku, the oldest female orixá, governs the threshold between life and death, associated with the primordial waters and ancestral return. As Azorli explains, both are central to Afro-Brazilian cosmology, especially in Candomblé, where their mythologies encode cultural memory and feminine power. Iansã represents motion and rupture, while Nanã embodies origin and return- together illustrating a cyclical logic of life, death, and rebirth deeply relevant to this chapter's discussion of ritual technologies, embodied healing, and spiritual continuity (Azorli 28-30).

Before analyzing the ritual dimensions of healing in these texts, it is crucial to situate them within a broader political and cultural framework. The construction of national identity in Brazil and Puerto Rico has often depended on processes of historical erasure, in which Afrodescendant voices have been systematically excluded from the official archives. As García-Peña argues, these exclusions are foundational to the ways national belonging is imagined and enforced. She writes, “Black Latinxs living in the Global North access the knowledge they share with other Black subjects in ways that indict their common colonial experiences of violence and exclusion and summon the historical legacy of resistance from which Black people across the globe have demanded inclusion and belonging throughout modern history” (*Translating Blackness* 5). García-Peña frames Black Latinidad as a diasporic epistemological site that “[...] denaturalizes the nation as a site of belonging” and “[...] contradicts the colonial order that sustains national notions of citizenship and belonging” (*Translating Blackness* 2). Her work provides a critical lens through which to examine how *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* reject nationalist narratives that erase Black presence and instead construct what she might call counter-national imaginaries—narrative spaces in which Black women claim memory, territory, and authorship. This impulse resonates with Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation as “[...] an imagined political community [...] imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members [...] yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Yet these imagined communities, often shaped by state-sanctioned histories, rely on the suppression of alternative memory. In contrast, Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa position storytelling and cultural memory as mechanisms for reimagining belonging, particularly through the embodied experiences of women.

Trauma and memory are central to this process. Alexander's theory of cultural trauma outlines three phases through which trauma is negotiated by a collective: the initial wounding event, its reactivation through contemporary "triggers," and the work of memorialization, often undertaken through cultural expression (11-12). The novels engage precisely in this arc. Both Kehinde and Fela function as what Alexander calls "carrier groups"- figures who re-narrate trauma for the broader collective in ways that allow healing and social reckoning to occur. Their narratives become cultural speech acts that reconfigure the reader's relationship to history and to the present.

A similar logic drives Kehinde's narration in *Um defeito de cor*. Toward the end of the novel, blind and elderly, Kehinde undertakes a final journey to Brazil not merely to find her son Luíz, but to fulfill a spiritual and narrative obligation. She dictates a letter: "Se eu tivesse mais tempo e mais forças, gostaria de continuar contando tudo o que nos aconteceu [...] pois eu tinha certeza de que precisava vir, precisava te contar tudo que estou contando agora"²⁹ (945). Her storytelling becomes a cosmological act- an invocation of ancestral truth that challenges historical erasure and affirms her identity as a mother, griot, and spiritual witness. This act of narrative transmission is not only maternal but sacred, resonating with what Alexander calls "[...] a process of mediation involving alternative strategies and alternative voices [...]," one that works to "reconfigure a collective identity" and repair the "traumatic tear" inflicted by histories of slavery, exile, and colonial dispossession (63). Through this sacred act of remembering, Kehinde transforms the written word into a ritual technology- inscribing her body, her memory, and her resistance into a collective Afro-diasporic archive.

Daughters of the Stone echoes this ritual logic of storytelling as healing and transmission. The narrator introduces the novel with the words: "These are the stories. My stories, their stories-

²⁹ If I had more time and more strength, I would like to continue telling you everything that happened to us [...] because I was sure that I needed to come, I needed to tell you everything I'm telling you now" (My translation)

just as they were told to my mother and her mother and hers. They were given to me for safekeeping, and now I give them to you” (“Prologue”). The postscript echoes this charge: “I have collected many stories. They have been given to me freely. And now, I give them to you. All I ask is that you listen with your heart and, if you have a mind to, that you pass them on” (6). In this light, the novel becomes a sacred counter-archive- one that binds generations, heals communal wounds, and demands political recognition through ritualized memory.

Anzaldúa’s work helps theorize this mode of narration as both spiritual and transformative. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she writes: “Because writing invokes images from my unconscious, and because some of the images are residues of trauma which I then have to reconstruct [...] once they have ‘meaning’ they are changed, transformed. It is then that writing heals me, brings me great joy” (70). For Anzaldúa, writing is not merely a cognitive act but a shamanic ritual- an embodied practice through which pain is channeled into insight, and individual suffering becomes a path toward collective healing.

Building from this intersection of narrative and healing, Taciana Gallas offers a Lusophone perspective that deepens this view of storytelling as therapeutic and transformative. In her study of women’s writing and trauma, she asserts that narrative “[...] serve para reelaborar os fatos que se encontram nas lembranças daquele que se disfarça de personagem para moldar a sua vida através da narrativa [...]”³⁰ (*O corpo, a dor e a palavra* 116). Her framing- centered on the act of shaping life through a fictionalized self- resonates deeply with Kehinde’s narrative authorship and Carisa’s intergenerational storytelling. Gallas’s contribution underscores how memory, once reshaped through narrative, becomes a site of agency, coherence, and healing across linguistic and cultural borders.

³⁰ “[...] it serves to re-elaborate the facts that are found in the memories of the person who disguises himself as a character to shape his life through the narrative [...]” (My translation)

Kehinde and Fela exemplify this process. Kehinde's literacy, linguistic dexterity, and spiritual knowledge- gained through both personal effort and ancestral inheritance- form the basis of her survival. Her refusal to accept baptism upon arrival in Brazil and her insistence on Yoruba ritual practice mark her rejection of colonial epistemologies. Ana Maria Vieira Silva affirms this resistance, noting that "[...] embora os bens materiais tenham contribuído para a sua ascensão social, um dos fatores que foi decisivo para a manutenção de sua identidade cultural e de sua integridade física e moral no Brasil foi o apego aos valores espirituais"³¹ (45). Similarly, Fela's resilience in *Daughters of the Stone* is rooted not only in survival but in cultural pride. She remembers her origins with clarity and pride, stating that although enslaved, she would never forget who she was. Her ability to pass this consciousness down to Mati and eventually to Carisa embodies what Christina Lam describes as "[...] matrilineal bonds her characters sustain despite the violence [...] in a gesture towards healing and hope" (2). These bonds are more than familial- they are spiritual, epistemological, and political. Collectively, these works remind us that Afro-Latinx literature operates as a sacred archive. As Gilroy might argue, these texts function as sites of "rememory," where the past is reassembled not to be mourned but to be reimagined. They offer not only critiques of historical violence but blueprints for healing and futurity. The characters' ability to adapt, remember, and resist through storytelling, spiritual practice, and artistic expression offers a roadmap for contemporary Afro-Latinx communities navigating similar traumas- both analog and digital.

Drawing from decolonial psychology, Afro-diasporic studies, and digital humanities, this chapter explores how both texts frame healing as cyclical, matrilineal, and spiritually grounded.

³¹ "[...] although material goods contributed to their social ascension, one of the factors that was decisive in maintaining their cultural identity and their physical and moral integrity in Brazil was their attachment to spiritual values" (My translation)

Comas-Díaz conceptualizes this process as decolonial healing, a framework that reclaims identity through ancestral wisdom and resists the psychic legacies of colonialism (70). Characters such as Kehinde and Fela embody this vision through their relationships with the divine feminine- Oxum and Oshun- whose presence becomes a source of endurance, insight, and transformation. These orishas offer more than spiritual guidance; they represent epistemological alternatives to colonial worldviews.

Afro-Latinx spiritual systems- including Candomblé, Santería, and their Yoruba foundations- are not background motifs in these novels but structural frameworks that inform character development, narrative movement, and cosmological logic. As Azorli notes in his ethnographic study, these traditions have been preserved and rearticulated by Afro-Brazilian communities through women's roles as priestesses, midwives, and keepers of knowledge (90- 91). In *Um defeito de cor*, Oxum's presence in Kehinde's life is not metaphorical but embodied. As she recalls, "Oxum nunca me abandonou [...] mesmo quando tudo parecia perdido, eu sentia sua presença suave, me lavando por dentro como água de rio"³² (612). This connection to sacred water and maternal intuition becomes a vital force in her navigation of captivity, loss, and ultimately self-authorship.

Nascimento's pioneering work on Afro-Brazilian history and memory underscores this point. She conceptualized the quilombo not only as a geographic refuge but as a living philosophy- an epistemological structure for preserving Black autonomy, ancestral knowledge, and embodied resistance. In her view, the Black female body is itself a territory of memory and survival, "a living document of diaspora" (184). This framework enriches the reading of Kehinde and Fela, whose

³² "Oxum never abandoned me [...] even when everything seemed lost, I felt his gentle presence, washing me inside like river water" (My translation)

narratives emerge not from institutional archives but from ritual, intuition, and intergenerational transmission. Their bodies carry the very histories that the state has sought to erase, mobilizing what Nascimento theorizes as a *quilombola* practice: one that sustains community through a collective posture of resistance and spiritual continuity. Likewise, Fela in *Daughters of the Stone* draws on her relationship with Oshun to reconcile disobedience, guilt, and spiritual obligation. Her decision to honor Oshun after disregarding a vision becomes a powerful act of atonement and reconnection, echoing what Eyerman describes as the cultural labor of trauma recovery- “the reworking of shared meaning” through affective and material practices that help shape collective memory (68). Oshun’s river, invoked in both vision and ritual, links Fela to an ancestral lineage that endures despite rupture. These scenes portray healing not as cure but as continuity- an ongoing return to the sacred, even after severance.

Fela’s stone and Kehinde’s golden image of Oxum function as more than symbolic artifacts. They are what this chapter defines as ritual technologies- material vessels of spiritual knowledge, activated through touch, memory, and transmission. While the term “artifact” might imply detachment or stasis, ritual technologies emphasize use, movement, and presence. These objects are embodied epistemologies, capable of linking past and future through their role in communal ritual and personal transformation. Joshua Deckman’s *Feminist Spiritualities: Conjuring Resistance in the Afro-Caribbean and Its Diasporas* offers a broader theoretical foundation for this reading. Deckman conceptualizes Afro-diasporic spiritual practices- including Vodou, Santería, and Espiritismo- as “archives of the flesh,” through which Black women preserve, resist, and reimagine cultural memory. These embodied rituals, he argues, produce what he terms “relational futurities,” allowing practitioners to envision diasporic futures rooted in love, intimacy, and ancestral continuity (5-6). Hack Gatteli’s analysis of *Um defeito de cor* deepens this

framework by emphasizing the centrality of spiritual inheritance to Kehinde's survival. She writes: "Kehinde assimila que esse conhecimento passado pela avó constitui o que ela é, fazendo parte de sua identidade. A personagem internaliza isso de tal maneira que, ao chegar ao Brasil, arrisca sua vida se atirando no mar para evitar o batismo na religião branca, em uma defesa de sua identidade africana"³³ (48). While Hack Gatteli focuses on Kehinde, the logic of inherited wisdom applies equally to Fela, whose spiritual lineage fortifies her identity in the face of displacement. In both narratives, the protagonists inherit more than memory- they inherit a ritual methodology for living ethically and resisting erasure.

This understanding of ritual technologies forms a bridge between ancestral knowledge and contemporary digital adaptation. As Afro-Latinx artists, writers, and activists engage with digital platforms, they extend these practices into new terrains- crafting altars in Instagram grids, curating stories as resistance on blogs, or transforming hashtags into chants for justice. These digital practices do not replicate ritual- they reimagine it. Just as Kehinde and Fela use spiritual tools to navigate the trauma of enslavement, their descendants now turn to digital tools as vessels of memory, resistance, and healing. This evolving relationship between ancestral epistemologies and digital storytelling will be explored in greater depth in the following sections. Together, these frameworks- rooted in orixá cosmologies, feminist spirituality, and Afro-diasporic resilience- illuminate how ritual technologies, whether passed down through stone or screen, continue to anchor Afro-Latinx communities in sacred continuity.

Healing in Afro-Latinx traditions is often articulated through more than language- it is embedded in visual and performative expression. From body painting in Candomblé rituals to

³³ "Kehinde assimilates that this knowledge passed on by her grandmother constitutes who she is, forming part of her identity. The character internalizes this in such a way that, upon arriving in Brazil, she risks her life by throwing herself into the sea to avoid baptism into the white religion, in defense of her African identity" (My translation)

Afro-Caribbean altar-building, visual aesthetics function as sacred codifications of memory, protection, and ancestral invocation. Scholars such as Krista Thompson and Myra Greene have emphasized that Black visual culture not only documents experience but transforms it into a ritual act of re-seeing. For Afro-Latinx artists, image becomes incantation.

In *Um defeito de cor*, Kehinde's adornment- particularly her gold jewelry and ceremonial attire- becomes a visible manifestation of her connection to Oxum. These objects, shimmering with riverine energy, mark her body as sacred terrain. Similarly, Llanos-Figueroa renders the presence of Oshun in Fela's life through the gleaming descriptions of the stone, the water imagery that flows around her, and the soft luster that surrounds her visions. These visual motifs are not ornamental- they are epistemic cues, signaling the presence of divine wisdom and spiritual endurance.

The symbolic layering of gold, water, and light reveals how aesthetics in these novels are themselves technologies of healing. When Fela or Kehinde chooses to wear, carry, or display sacred objects, they are performing not only memory but resistance. These visuals also resonate in contemporary Afro-Latinx digital spaces, where sacred symbology- beads, river stones, flowers, ancestral silhouettes- is shared as aesthetic protest. Whether through stylized photography, Afro-spiritual reels, or curated social media grids, the visual becomes a digital prayer.

Just as visual elements operate as ritual technologies, so too does sound. In Afro-Latinx spiritual traditions, the voice is sacred. Sound- particularly in the form of song, prayer, and chant- is a medium through which healing travels. The novels at the center of this study highlight the importance of orality in transmitting ancestral knowledge. Kehinde often prays or sings to Oxum in solitude, invoking her through chant-like refrains, while Fela experiences her dreams through voices and murmurs that echo from her homeland. These aural experiences are ritual technologies:

sonic threads that tether the protagonists to their cosmological origins. Song, like the sacred stone or prayer cloth, becomes a container of healing. This practice aligns with what Gilroy terms the “black Atlantic’s auditory archive,” where spirituals, drumming, and poetic recitations operate as vehicles of diasporic knowledge. In *Daughters of the Stone*, Tia Josefa’s storytelling is almost always accompanied by aural inflection- her stories rhythmically pulsed with emphasis, lulls, and repetition, anchoring them as both mnemonic and sacred acts that helped Mati as a child after Fela’s death. Orality becomes an embodied technology: a way of remembering that transforms silence into vibration.

These sonic practices have not disappeared; they have been digitized. Online, users remix spiritual chants into Afro-house beats, share ancestral drumming sessions via livestream, and reclaim sonic space through podcasts centered on Black and Indigenous healing. The rise of ASMR rituals rooted in Afro-Caribbean cleansing practices illustrates how sound continues to serve as a somatic technology for calming the nervous system and affirming presence. In these ways, sound becomes a digital drumbeat- reviving the ancestral through frequency.

Kehinde’s survival in *Um defeito de cor* is shaped by her deep attunement to Oxum and the ancestral wisdom passed through matrilineal memory. This spiritual inheritance acts not as distant relic, but as a vital, embodied force that informs her actions and ensures continuity across generations. Gonçalves presents healing not merely as psychological recovery, but as a sacred act of self-authorship, grounded in spiritual and maternal identity. Kehinde’s act of recording her life for Luíz aligns with what Taylor describes as the repertoire: memory transmitted through affect, ritual, and embodiment rather than fixed archive (18-19). Her letter is not only a maternal gesture, but a ritualized resistance against forgetting.

This reclaiming of narrative is echoed in a pivotal conversation between Kehinde and her friend Claudina, who reflects, “[a] minha vida seguiu um caminho e fui me deixando levar para muito longe do que tinha imaginado. E isso foi bom para mim, que tinha conseguido coisas com as quais os pretos nem sonhavam, não porque sonhassem pequeno, mas porque não sabiam que tais sonhos eram possíveis”³⁴ (411). Her words affirm the power of narrative not only to preserve history, but to expand what is imaginable for Black communities. Through writing, Kehinde reclaims a future for her son and asserts a vision of Black motherhood and resistance that defies colonial silencing.

Continuing its exploration of Afro-diasporic healing, the chapter grounds itself first in *Um defeito de cor*, where memory, ritual, and resistance converge through Kehinde’s embodied spiritual practice. As Hack Gatteli observes, the novel’s act of recovering memory and (re)writing history from a Black female perspective “[...] enfatiza a construção de uma identidade diaspórica, que celebra a África na identidade brasileira”³⁵ (59). Kehinde’s healing does not depend on forgetting pain but on transforming it- on remaking both her selfhood and the collective memory of her people through spiritual enactment and narrative authority. Her rituals, prayers, and final act of testimony become tools of sacred reconfiguration. As Herrera notes, she “[...] desafia as formas de controle da imagem da mulher negra na literatura”³⁶ (60), claiming narrative voice as both resistance and renewal.

This process exemplifies what Deckman’s archives of the flesh, rituals rooted in the body and spirit that preserve and transmit ancestral knowledge across generations (5). Rather than

³⁴ “[my] life followed a path and I allowed myself to be taken far away from what I had imagined. And that was good for me, as I had achieved things that black people didn't even dream of, not because they dreamed small, but because they didn't know that such dreams were possible” (My translation)

³⁵ “[...] emphasizes the construction of a diasporic identity, which celebrates Africa in Brazilian identity” (My translation)

³⁶ “[...] challenges the forms of control of the image of black women in literature” (My translation)

storing memory in static form, Kehinde's practices enact what Deckman calls "relational futurities"- visions of healing grounded in intimacy, care, and diasporic continuity (6). Kehinde's story reveals that healing unfolds not in solitude, but through connection- among ancestors, descendants, and community. This logic continues through *Daughters of the Stone*, where spiritual obligations, the transmission of ritual objects, embodied knowledge, and the recovery of suppressed histories similarly converge as part of a collective process of restoration. Fela's spiritual journey provides a vivid illustration of healing through reconnection. After initially ignoring Oshun's divine warning not to leave her homeland, Fela experiences rupture- guilt, spiritual dislocation, and psychic unrest. Her later offering to Oshun is not just an act of personal atonement but a communal gesture of restoration, an effort to mend the broken ties between herself, her lineage, and the sacred. This redress aligns with Eyerman's theory of cultural trauma recovery, in which healing emerges through shared symbolic practices that allow a community to reconfigure meaning (68). Fela's sacred stone becomes a central ritual technology in the narrative- a spiritually charged object imbued with ancestral protection and matrilineal wisdom. Rather than functioning as a passive heirloom, the stone acts as a conduit between generations, awakening in Mati an intuitive knowledge of spiritual truths. From childhood, Mati receives visions from the Lady Oshun in a language she does not know, yet instinctively understands: "From the time she was a little girl, Mati had always had dreams that she kept to herself. She dreamed about the Lady Oshun, who told her stories. The lady spoke in a language Mati had never heard" (67). These moments reveal how Afro-diasporic spirituality is transmitted not through linear teaching, but through embodiment, dreams, and maternal inheritance.

Carisa, the youngest narrator, embodies the intergenerational arc of memory, silence, and reanimation. She inherits not only the trauma passed through her matrilineage but also the creative

capacity to bear witness and reimagine. Her practices- storytelling, photography, and spiritual intuition- enact what Herrera describes as narrative inheritance: a process through which Afro-Puerto Rican women reclaim historical voice through artistic expression (33). When Carisa joins a protest in Puerto Rico and collaborates with a photographer, their images of abandoned plantations, derelict prisons, and neglected homes form a visual counter-archive- one that restores erased Afro-Puerto Rican histories. Immersed in these photographs, Carisa reflects, “[...] some of them could have easily been of people in [her] own family stories, people with no public voices” (306). Through this visual testimony, she re-inscribes her community into the national memory.

Together, Kehinde and Fela exemplify a model of Afro-diasporic healing that is cyclical, relational, and deeply communal. It unfolds through spiritual enactment- via story, song, sacred object, and embodied place. Their legacies extend beyond the page, living on through daughters like Mati and Carisa, who carry forward their wisdom through ritual, art, and ancestral reverence. Each woman’s journey contributes to a broader continuum that reinscribes Afro-Latinx subjectivity into the cultural record- not as peripheral, but as sacred and central.

As the chapter now shifts toward digital contexts, it becomes clear that the decolonial healing practices explored in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* transcend both the literary page and ancestral ritual. In today’s digital spaces, Afro-Latinx communities continue this legacy through acts of cultural reclamation, memory transmission, and spiritual innovation. These contemporary forms- ranging from hashtag activism to AI-assisted storytelling- extend traditional healing practices into virtual terrains. Though often shaped by exclusionary logics and market-driven infrastructures, digital platforms also offer vital avenues for preserving ancestral knowledge, resisting erasure, and fostering collective care across diasporic generations.

Marianela Medrano-Marra's research on Embodied Writing (EW) offers a profound entry point into understanding how Afro-Latinx healing is not only textual but sensorial and ritualistic. EW becomes a methodological bridge between body and archive, one that invites practitioners to write with all the senses- "perceptual, visceral, sensorimotor, kinesthetic, and imaginal"- so that readers not only understand but feel the experience (22). In her study of Taíno spirituality among Dominican women, Medrano-Marra documents how reconnecting with the Divine Feminine through writing and ritual created a space for self-recognition, spiritual reassembly, and political resistance. One participant reflects, "The Divine Feminine brings us back to ourselves, reintegrating and putting us back together" (31). This return to the body, through writing and symbolic action, exemplifies what this chapter refers to as ritual technology: tools and practices that embed memory in flesh and reclaim agency through embodied knowing.

Such rituals were not confined to analog spaces. Medrano-Marra describes how virtual exchange- emails, online writing sessions, and digital photo sharing- enabled participants to maintain spiritual intimacy and foster a collective narrative of healing. She writes, "Throughout the study, we maintained our online dialogues through which we were able to discuss the resonance we found in each other's writings and experiences around the Divine Feminine" (24). These online exchanges did more than transmit information- they evoked what Anderson calls "sympathetic resonance," a form of spiritual-empathic attunement that helped women recover ancestral knowledge obscured by colonial Christianity and patriarchy. Thus, EW does not simply facilitate memory; it enacts it. Through digital storytelling, Medrano-Marra and her participants reanimate submerged narratives, affirming that Afro-Taino epistemologies are not lost, only latent.

This notion of digital space as sacred territory is further illuminated by Bahia in her interview with Arriaga and Villar. Bahia, the co-founder of PretaLab in Brazil, advocates for what

she calls “digital autonomy,” a movement that seeks to democratize technological production among Black women. Bahia explains, “Technology is usually presented in a very technical and distant language that discourages ‘normal’ people from getting involved” (55). In response, she creates workshops that combine traditional knowledge- like sewing and woodworking- with high-tech tools like 3D printers and electronics. This fusion resonates with the spiritual-historical layering found in both *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, where healing occurs at the intersection of ancestral practice and future-making.

Bahia also highlights the risks embedded in digital systems, which often reproduce the same structural exclusions they promise to remedy. She notes, “The majority of these technologies and digital tools are produced by white, heterosexual men, usually from the Global North” (48). As such, she advocates for a decolonial digital praxis- one that does not merely include Black women, but centers their perspectives as designers, not just users. Her concept of “social technologies,” which includes grassroots innovations like moto-taxis in Brazilian favelas, insists on expanding the definition of technology to include any system that solves real problems in marginalized communities (49). This framing supports the chapter’s argument that Afro-Latinx digital rituals are not derivative but deeply innovative, grounded in historical continuities and creative reconfigurations of knowledge.

Moreover, both Bahia and Medrano-Marra emphasize the importance of data and narrative visibility. Bahia states, “Without data, it is as if the problem does not exist” (50). PretaLab’s mapping of Black women in technology acts as a form of counter-archiving, a practice that aligns with the role of storytelling in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. Medrano-Marra similarly asserts the necessity of cultural documentation. In her workshops, participants constructed altars, shared poetry, and revisited Taíno mythologies in order to reclaim what had

been rendered invisible. These acts- whether virtual or physical- function as epistemic assertions: We are here. We have always been here. Our knowledge is valid.

The work of Medrano-Marra and Bahia underscores how Afro-Latinx healing unfolds through entangled realms of narrative sovereignty, technological agency, and spiritual resilience. When Kehinde clutches her golden image of Oxum, when Fela passes down her stone to Mati, and when Mónica Carrillo scripts digital poetry or Bahia mentors a Black girl in coding- these are not isolated gestures. They are rituals of survival, encoded in flesh, fiber, and frequency. They remind us that spiritual technologies are not confined to temples or traditions; they also live in code, in circuits, in the soft pulse of a poem shared on WhatsApp. They reconfigure what counts as sacred and who holds the authority to define it. As Afro-Latinx communities continue to navigate the violences of the past and present, these layered practices of healing offer a roadmap- a way of being that is cyclical, adaptive, and profoundly rooted in collective memory. Whether through Taíno ceremonial sites, Yoruba river altars, or virtual rituals conducted across diasporic time zones, the sacred persists. And through that persistence, healing becomes not just possible, but inevitable.

This dedication to preserving sacred practices is also evident in the way digital spaces function as dynamic repositories of communal memory. In the Taíno-inspired writing workshops mentioned previously, the virtual realm- through emails, collaborative reflections, and the ritual sharing of symbolic imagery- becomes a vital component of spiritual practice. These online interactions cultivate a sense of ritual closeness, sustaining communal energy across geographic divides. One participant noted that the continued exchange deepened their engagement with one another's insights and experiences connected to the Divine Feminine. In this way, the ceremonial

atmosphere extends seamlessly from physical gatherings into virtual environments, where both written word and digital media operate as tools for reconnecting with ancestral wisdom.

Mónica Carrillo, an Afro-Peruvian poet, visual artist, activist, and scholar, similarly employs multimedia storytelling to craft counter-narratives centered on identity, healing, and resistance. As a co-founder of Centro de Estudios y Promoción Afroperuanos LUNDU in Peru and Proyecto Afrolatin@ in the U.S., Carrillo channels her creative work across borders, emphasizing the centrality of Afro-Latinx life and dignity. She affirms, “The possibility of expanding [a] project, which was very local, into something global has been very useful. This has been possible basically because of the internet [...] and the media that is available” (87). For Carrillo, digital media are not merely tools of transmission, but sacred extensions of ritual and remembrance-spaces where diasporic memory is reanimated and shared.

The literary visions in *Daughters of the Stone* and *Um defeito de cor* anticipate and inform the digital turn in Afro-Latinx healing practices. In both texts, healing is portrayed not as a final destination, but as a cyclical, collective journey rooted in memory, embodiment, and spiritual continuity. The protagonists’ paths- deeply shaped by divine femininity, matrilineal legacy, and cultural endurance- position storytelling itself as a sacred technology of resistance. Rather than circumventing trauma, these practices arise directly from it. As Comas-Díaz writes, decolonial healing “[...] reestablish[es] harmony by restoring cultural identity, promoting resistance, and reclaiming lost traditions,” transforming “soul wounds” into revolutionary identity (“Decolonizing Latinx Mental Health” 71). Kehinde’s devotion to her voduns and Fela’s reconciliation with Oshun reflect this vision: theirs is not a passive endurance, but an active return to sacred knowledge. Fela’s offering to Oshun becomes a ritual of renewal, while Kehinde’s turn to ancestral prayers

and teachings serves as spiritual recalibration. In both cases, healing moves in spirals- between memory and rupture, tradition and transformation.

This understanding of healing also extends into the material and sensory realm. As Herrera observes in her analysis of *Daughters of the Stone*, the family stone is not simply a keepsake but a ritualized object- what she calls a “sensory archive” that carries ancestral dreams, memories, and maternal wisdom. “Although Fela is dead,” Herrera notes, “she successfully passes down to Mati these ancestral, maternal memories and dreams held within the stone that make survival and empowerment possible” (60). In this sense, the stone embodies more than memory- it materializes healing itself. Afro-Latinx traditions of healing unfold not only in narrative and prayer, but through tactile, embodied forms: in ritual gestures, textiles, objects, and the subtle transmissions of intergenerational touch and presence.

Expanding this understanding of narrative as ritual, Evaristo’s concept of *escrevivência*- a literary practice rooted in the lived experiences of Black women- redefines writing as a political, spiritual, and healing act. Rather than a detached intellectual exercise, *escrevivência* draws from memory, emotion, and everyday reality to assert the Black female voice as central to historical discourse. In doing so, it challenges colonial erasures and reclaims authorship over the past. *Escrevivência* is not simply about recovery- it reorders historical memory by foregrounding stories long silenced. Writing becomes a decolonial ritual, transforming silence into testimony through the authority of embodied knowledge. This practice is reflected in both novels, as protagonists inscribe themselves- sometimes literally- into history. Their stories do not merely recount events; they intervene in dominant narratives. Anzaldúa’s *autohistoria* and *autohistoria-teoría* further illuminate this mode of healing, where storytelling functions as both reflection and resistance. Fela, Mati, Carisa, and Kehinde are more than characters- they are diasporic theorists whose spoken,

written, and ritualized memories reclaim space in the histories that once excluded them. One of the most poignant moments in *Daughters of the Stone* occurs when Tía Josefa tells Fela, “We all have stories. Sometimes the pain lies so heavy inside us that it can only be whispered. Sometimes it can’t be spoken out loud at all. So you think you are different? There are many silences” (19). These silences are not empty- they are charged absences, sites where memory lingers, waiting to be activated through narrative, ritual, and communal connection.

As this chapter moves toward its conclusion, it affirms that the sacred within Afro-Latinx literature transcends temporal and geographic boundaries. It emerges as an embodied epistemology- a nonlinear, intuitive, and affective mode of knowing that challenges colonial paradigms of history, healing, and authorship. Across literary and digital landscapes, healing persists as an act of reclamation- of land, of spirit, of story, and of self. In her workshops, Medrano-Marra encourages participants to view their own bodies as vessels of memory and spiritual wisdom, while turning to the natural world as a source of ancestral presence. This methodology echoes a broader Afro-diasporic worldview in which land, body, and spirit are inseparable from practices of survival and regeneration. This vision aligns with Quesada’s concept of “textual memorials” and “contested sites of memory,” where spaces such as plantations, prisons, and ritual sites become narrative gateways to ancestral Africa. As Quesada notes, these landscapes are not inert settings but dynamic carriers of historical memory, allowing diasporic subjects to reposition themselves within the histories from which they were forcibly removed (23). Together, Medrano-Marra and Quesada show that memory extends beyond story and ritual- it is inscribed into geography itself. From the Caribbean’s soil to digital platforms, terrain becomes a sacred site of decolonial healing and cultural resurgence.

This brings forth a vital question: how are rituals of reconnection transformed when transposed into technological spaces? What shape do memory and healing assume when filtered through hashtags, avatars, or AI-generated archives? In this section, I explore how the embodied, spiritual, and ancestral modes of healing depicted in *Daughters of the Stone* and *Um defeito de cor* evolve in the digital sphere. Where Fela's sacred stone and Kehinde's evocation of Oxum once mediated memory and restoration through physical and spiritual presence, today's counterparts manifest in transnational digital forums, curated Instagram rituals, and AI-assisted storytelling. In this sense, the digital realm becomes what Taylor could describe as a digital repertoire- a performative, embodied archive extended across virtual landscapes. Online communities, in turn, emerge as contemporary *palenques*: fugitive spaces of cultural care, protection, and epistemic resistance.

Afrodescendant users actively repurpose digital tools- such as social media, blogs, hashtags, and machine learning- not merely to share stories, but to construct new forms of cultural presence. As Arriaga would agree, these virtual collectives mirror historical maroon societies, serving as sanctuaries for resilience, counter-memory, and communal healing. Carrera offers a vivid example in her documentation of Black Twitter in Brazil, where users mobilized the hashtag #SoltemGabriel following the wrongful arrest of Gabriel Silva Santos. This online intervention became a virtual chant for justice, a digital prayer rooted in collective mourning (2-3). Likewise, the transnational outrage sparked by the murder of Miguel Cáceres Cruz in Puerto Rico ignited diasporic networks of remembrance, resistance, and shared grief.

Digital interventions such as these operate as both testimony and counter-history. They defy erasure by making Black presence and pain visible, while simultaneously fostering collective agency. As García-Peña notes in *Translating Blackness*, cultural production is essential for

resisting exclusionary national imaginaries and asserting alternative forms of belonging. Afro-Latinx communities' engagement with platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube becomes a form of counter-archiving- reclaiming space through movement, narrative, and visual culture. Though frequently dismissed as informal or apolitical, these expressions are acts of memory and resistance, transmitting spiritual and historical knowledge through popular media.

Carrillo's multimedia activism exemplifies how Afrodescendant artists strategically mobilize digital platforms for cultural and political empowerment. As a poet, scholar, and digital artist, she advocates for the interconnected use of social media to sustain visibility and community: "Another strategy for connecting everything- Twitter, Facebook, and the blog: you update one and it updates the others" (87). While she acknowledges the constraints of centralized digital infrastructures, Carrillo underscores their capacity to amplify grassroots movements and expand transnational solidarity. Significantly, she emphasizes that the most impactful digital engagements are rooted in emotional authenticity: "You're not speaking from your heart, from your own depth," she reflects, unless activism is grounded in lived experience (89-90). Her work reframes the internet not merely as a space for broadcasting, but as a relational web through which Afrodescendant communities exchange healing practices and ancestral wisdom.

Although artificial intelligence carries embedded structural biases, it can also be reclaimed for decolonial ends when approached critically and creatively. AI-generated poetry, immersive exhibits, and virtual oral histories offer Afrodescendant communities new modes for materializing memory and reanimating ancestral presence. These digital tools become extensions of *escrevivência* and *autohistoria-teoría*, transforming unspeakable histories into embodied, multisensory storytelling. Carrillo's interactive installations in Peru exemplify this digital ritual. In one piece, viewers enter an animated room where their physical movements activate Afro-

Peruvian voices and poetic fragments, creating an immersive encounter with ancestral memory. Built on platforms like MAX DSP and Arduino, these works simulate historical empathy through sensorimotor interaction (90-91). For Carrillo, this process is not just experiential- it is transformative: “I can generate proposals in which I can establish a dialogue without my being there [...] that such an experiential impact can transform some of what we are addressing” (91). Her installations extend sacred technologies into the digital sphere, blurring the boundaries between memory, body, and code.

Taken together, these digital interventions demonstrate how Afrodescendant artists, writers, and activists are not merely adapting to digital technologies but transforming them into sacred instruments of memory, resistance, and care. From hashtags and AI-generated archives to immersive installations, these creative practices extend the ritual frameworks found in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. They affirm that decolonial healing is not a static recovery of the past but an evolving praxis- vibrant, adaptive, and grounded in ancestral rhythms that continue to unfold across digital landscapes.

Still, this digital healing work unfolds within a landscape marked by tension and inequity. As Arriaga observes, “[...] access or the lack thereof to the logic and algorithms behind those widespread devices has created a wider divide between the people who make digital tools and those who consume them” (23). Carrillo echoes this concern, emphasizing that access to digital tools remains recent, uneven, and continuously evolving: “The access to digital tools is something that is very recent and is still progressing” (94). The very infrastructures that facilitate digital presence- rooted in white normativity and algorithmic exclusion- often replicate the same hierarchies they claim to dismantle. Yet, in the face of this precarity, Afrodescendant digital

practices endure. They are acts of persistence, reshaping hostile platforms into spaces of sacred resistance.

Afro-Latinx users continue to engage and reconfigure digital platforms, transforming them into spaces of testimony, ritual, and survival. These digital practices do not merely replicate ancestral ritual- they translate it into new modalities, where memory is not fixed but fluid, shaped through gesture, code, and collective intention. Such acts become hybrid offerings: echoes of the sacred reactivated in circuits, hashtags, and shared screens. This convergence of spiritual continuity, narrative survival, and technological adaptation resonates with Maddox's concept of Afro-diasporic time, which he explores in his study of *Daughters of the Stone*. Maddox theorizes diasporic memory as recursive rather than linear, suggesting that Afro-Puerto Rican identity circulates across generations through embodied and spiritual continuity. As he explains, Carisa is "[...] borne forward by this 'primeval wave' of diasporic memory, which she simultaneously carries back into the past," revealing how narrative becomes a vessel of ancestral return and diasporic futurity (131). In digital realms, this wave manifests through tweets, immersive exhibits, AI-assisted reconstructions, and online ceremonies that continue the sacred temporal logics Maddox describes. These digital interventions are not imitations- they are evolutions. Hashtags become chants, archives become sanctuaries, and virtual rituals reactivate embodied memory.

As digital tools evolve, Afrodescendant creators are not only archiving the past- they are constructing speculative futures. What emerges is a practice we might call techno-poetics: the blending of poetic narrative with technological form to enact healing and reimagining. These works are not escapist- they are deeply political. Projects like Carrillo's digital poems or the virtual diaspora memory map created by Caribbean technologists function as portals. They do not merely

describe trauma; they reconfigure its space. In these practices, the interface becomes altar. A touchscreen becomes a prayer surface.

In Afro-Latinx digital healing spaces, scrolling, clicking, and swiping acquire spiritual resonance. As the user interacts with these texts, they participate in the ritual of remembrance. Like Kehinde's letter or Fela's offering, these engagements carry intention. They transform platforms into sacred extensions of the body. Moreover, these techno poetics dismantle traditional literary hierarchies. No longer confined to the printed page or academic canon, Afro-Latinx authors disseminate their work through e-lit platforms, mobile apps, or collaborative archives. They invite users into dialogic healing experiences- echoing the communal structures of oral storytelling and ancestral gathering. As such, these digital experiments carry forward the tradition of *escrevivência* and *autohistoria-teoría*, retooled for new temporalities and interfaces. Digital space thus emerges as a contested yet potent terrain where Afro-Latinx memory not only endures but evolves. These interventions extend beyond preservation; they actively reshape the future. Rather than representing a rupture with Afro-diasporic tradition, the digital constitutes its newest expression. Like Kehinde's epistolary resistance in *Um defeito de cor* and the matrilineal storytelling in *Daughters of the Stone*, today's virtual narratives are rooted in testimony, spirituality, and ancestral devotion.

Healing, as these texts reveal, is not a fixed destination but a recursive, relational process. Kehinde, Fela, Mati, and Carisa do not merely endure- they reimagine what it means to live, to remember, and to belong. Through ritual, language, and visual expression, they proclaim that Afro-Latinx life is not peripheral to history but vital to its re-centering. Their stories embody a sacred epistemology- rooted in body, spirit, land, and now, digital code. As we carry their memory forward, we are invited to attune ourselves anew: to the whispered prayers embedded in every

keystroke, to the rhythms pulsing through hashtags, to the sacred infrastructures being assembled-
pixel by pixel- in pursuit of a more just, embodied, and remembered future.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: CARRYING THE ARCHIVE FORWARD: AFRO-LATINX HEALING, RESISTANCE, AND DIGITAL POSSIBILITY IN GONÇALVES AND LLANOS- FIGUEROA

This dissertation began with a constellation of urgent questions: How do contemporary Afro-Latina narratives intervene in dominant historical discourses and create space for healing, resistance, and collective memory? What literary strategies and spiritual frameworks do Afro-Latinx writers use to narrate trauma and survivance across generations? And how might emerging digital platforms- AI, social media, immersive media- preserve Afro-diasporic epistemologies and extend sacred storytelling into technological terrain? Through the comparative study of *Um defeito de cor* (Brazil) and *Daughters of the Stone* (Puerto Rico), this project establishes a rare inter-American dialogue between the Lusophone and Hispanophone Caribbean- a connection that remains underexplored in current Afro-Latinx literary criticism, building on precedents such as Fitz.³⁷ Across both texts, storytelling emerges not merely as a narrative technique but as a sacred and insurgent intervention, anchored in ritual memory, ancestral cosmology, and matrilineal transmission. Together, they construct living archives that do not simply preserve the past but

³⁷ Earl Fitz is among the few scholars to rigorously compare the Lusophone and Hispanophone Americas. His works- *Rediscovering the New World* (1991), *Translation and the Rise of Inter-American Literature* (2007, with Elizabeth Lowe), and *The Literatures of Spanish America and Brazil* (2023)- call for hemispheric approaches attentive to Afro-diasporic themes. This rare but growing tradition is furthered by *Beyond Tordesillas* (2017), edited by Robert Patrick Newcomb and Richard A. Gordon; Adam Joseph Shellhorse's *Anti-Literature* (2017); and Vera M. Kutzinski's *The Worlds of Langston Hughes* (2012). This dissertation contributes to this inter-American framework by centering Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Puerto Rican women's narratives of spiritual inheritance, resistance, and cultural memory.

actively refashion it. These texts offer powerful frameworks for understanding Afro-diasporic survivance through recursive temporality, sacred geographies, and decolonial narrative practice.

Building on the metafictional structures of *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, this dissertation examines how Afro-Latina narratives migrate from print to digital space- reanimating sacred memory through AI-generated archives, curated online rituals, and immersive virtual storytelling. These technologies, like the novels themselves, disrupt colonial historicism and foreground narrative as ritual. Afro-descendant creators, as Arriaga observes, use digital tools not only to resist algorithmic erasure but to cultivate ancestral continuity and collective care. This digital engagement draws authority from embodied memory and spiritual knowledge systems. In this context, Anzaldúa's concept of spiritual mestizaje- a process of healing through the blending of cultural and spiritual traditions- and Comas-Díaz's theory of decolonial healing, which centers the reclamation of ancestral identity, provide key theoretical scaffolding. Taylor's concept of the repertoire- knowledge transmitted through embodied and performative practice- further illuminates how Kehinde's letter and Carisa's visual archive operate as sacred acts of memory. These characters do not merely recount trauma; they ritualize it, reimagine it, and transmit it through affect, gesture, and voice. In the hands of both authors, historiographic metafiction becomes a decolonial strategy that reverberates across digital platforms, where Afro-Latinx creators continue to inscribe sacred presence and counter-memory.

This concluding chapter synthesizes the dissertation's central findings and considers their broader implications for Afro-Latinx identity, historiography, spirituality, and digital resistance. The literary and digital practices examined across the project coalesce into a living archive- an evolving constellation of voices, stories, and sacred gestures that refuse erasure, confront colonial trauma, and enact healing across time and space. Each chapter contributes to a layered framework

that positions Afro-Latinx literature as both a cultural memory system and a speculative tool for Afro-diasporic futurity. Through the comparative analysis of *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, this dissertation argues that Afro-Latina writers engage historiographic metafiction not only to reclaim occluded histories but to construct ritualized, matrilineal modes of remembering-ones that resonate through sacred space, ancestral practice, and digital form.

Chapter One establishes the literary contours of these works by examining how Gonçalves and Llanos-Figueroa employ metafictional form to challenge colonial historiography. Through recursive time structures and layered narration, both novels displace linear historical logic and instead center Afro-diasporic modes of memory rooted in spirituality, embodiment, and ritual. Kehinde's golden image of Oxum and Fela's carved stone function not merely as symbolic objects but as narrative technologies- sacred conduits that materialize memory and preserve cultural knowledge across generations.

While the theoretical foundation for this argument is laid in the Introduction, Chapter One builds upon it to demonstrate that historiographic metafiction operates not just as a literary mode but as a spiritual and political intervention. The chapter also anticipates the dissertation's turn toward the digital by highlighting how the novels' recursive structures and participatory memory practices prefigure emerging forms of Afro-diasporic storytelling in virtual environments. Buolamwini's "AI, Ain't I A Woman?" bridges this transition, showing how digital platforms can simultaneously replicate racial and gendered trauma and serve as powerful tools for visibility, resistance, and cultural reclamation. Although trauma is not the chapter's central focus, it surfaces through the erasures enacted by colonial history and is countered by literary strategies of ritual recovery and speculative experimentation- strategies that echo throughout the dissertation.

Chapter Two deepens this framework by examining how Afro-Latinx narratives process, voice, and transform cultural trauma. The trauma they inherit- of forced displacement, fractured kinship, and spiritual erasure- is not confined to a distant past; it reverberates through ritual, language, and the body. Through Kehinde's epistolary narration and Fela's matrilineal legacy, the novels enact what Comas-Díaz defines as wound-searching: the act of naming and narrating trauma as a pathway toward decolonial healing. Kehinde's refusal of baptism, her adherence to Yoruba cosmology, and her spiritual encounters with Oxum represent not only resistance to colonial imposition but a reclamation of sacred selfhood. Similarly, the stone passed from Fela to Mati and later to Carisa functions as a mandinga stone- a protective, mnemonic force that anchors diasporic memory within a matrilineal continuum.

Afro-Latina writing, as theorized by Evaristo's concept of *escrevivência* and Figueroa-Vásquez's work on diasporic counter-archives, emerges in these texts as a mode of narrating trauma that exceeds the confines of linear temporality and dominant historiography. These stories do not follow a conventional trajectory of rupture and resolution. Instead, they map elliptical paths in which silence, gesture, and ritual reconstitute memory. Kehinde and Fela do not merely endure trauma- they transmute it into sacred knowledge, transmitted through the body, the word, and the object. As Chapter Two argues, the narrative function of trauma in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* is not to resolve pain, but to witness it, transmit it, and reconfigure it- opening a recursive Afro-diasporic temporality that positions Black women as agents of remembrance, resistance, and transformation.

Chapter Three moves from the literary to the communal and digital dimensions of Afro-Latinx healing, positioning narrative not as a means of returning to wholeness, but as an ongoing, recursive praxis grounded in Afro-diasporic spiritualities. Beginning with the literary, the chapter

explores how Kehinde's and Fela's journeys model communal healing through ritual, storytelling, and maternal care. Drawing on Comas-Díaz's theory of decolonial healing, these acts are framed as deliberate recoveries of ancestral wisdom and spiritual continuity in the aftermath of historical rupture. Healing, in this framework, is not a fixed endpoint but a generative, intergenerational process rooted in sacred memory, relationality, and embodied resistance.

The second half of the chapter turns toward the digital as a contemporary extension of this sacred praxis. Arriaga's concept of Afro-digital marronage and Carrillo's multimedia interventions illustrate how Afro-Latinx creators use technological platforms to construct new spaces of ritual and communal belonging within algorithmic environments. Carrillo's emphasis on interactivity as a form of collective transformation- where audience engagement becomes part of the healing process- demonstrates how digital tools can generate sacred feedback loops of memory, resistance, and dialogue. As she affirms, "Technology makes sense for such things; it makes sense with respect to conceptualization. I think that interactive technology is very powerful. It has feedback from the people who are there, from the audience, and this feedback can generate something else that, in turn, returns to the spectator and can generate some type of change- a dialogue" (91). In parallel, Medrano-Marra's embodied writing and digital altars rooted in Taíno cosmology offer ritual spaces for diasporic women to reconstruct fragmented histories and reestablish belonging. These practices are not simply literary forms migrated to new platforms- they are radical expansions of Afro-diasporic archives into digital terrain through ritual, code, and collective intention.

Together, these three chapters trace an evolving conceptual and spiritual cartography- from historiographic metafiction to cultural trauma and, ultimately, to sacred digital resistance. At the heart of this dissertation is the argument that Afro-Latinx narratives function as dynamic technologies of remembrance and insurgent knowledge-making. Rather than treating memory as

passive recollection, *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* reframe memory as an embodied, insurgent force. Through recursive temporalities, matrilineal storytelling, and ritualized performance, Kehinde, Fela, Mati, and Carisa enact what Sharpe terms wake work- a vigilant engagement with the afterlives of historical violence that refuses to concede the future to the past. These texts do not resolve trauma but reconfigure it as sacred inheritance, mobilized in the service of healing, futurity, and communal resurgence.

One of the central through-lines of this dissertation is the concept of recursive time- a sacred temporality that resists the linear logic of Western historiography. As Maddox notes in his reading of *Daughters of the Stone*, Oshun becomes “[...] mother to all generations, transcending chronology [...],” enabling a narrative structure in which the past continually returns to shape the present and inspire the future (77). Likewise, *Um defeito de cor* opens with Kehinde on her deathbed and spirals backward through memory, rendering her life a maternal archive that traverses time, geography, and spirit. Both novels mirror Afro-diasporic cosmologies- particularly Yoruba frameworks- in which time is nonlinear, relational, and cyclical, and in which the sacred insists on being remembered, reactivated, and transmitted through narrative.

This sacred temporality is not abstract; it is activated through spiritual frameworks that function as structuring devices within the narrative. Sacred objects like Fela’s carved stone and Kehinde’s golden image of Oxum operate not merely as symbols but as vessels of embodied memory and energetic continuity. As Hack Gatteli observes, Kehinde’s spiritual inheritance unfolds through her resistance to forced Christianization and her unwavering fidelity to Yoruba cosmology (48). Her ritual bathing and invocations of Oxum, alongside Fela’s transmission of the stone and offerings to Oshun, align with what Taylor terms repertoires: embodied practices that transmit memory, identity, and ancestral knowledge across generations (19). In this context,

Comas-Díaz defines decolonial healing as a process that “[...] reestablishes harmony by restoring cultural identity, promoting resistance, and reclaiming lost traditions” (70). These texts do not resolve trauma within Western paradigms of closure; instead, they reconfigure it. While Fela’s dreaming and gifting of the stone initiate cycles of matrilineal renewal, Kehinde’s storytelling and ritual mourning transform historical rupture into collective resilience. In both cases, pain becomes testimony, and loss becomes a generative site of relational repair.

These sacred practices expand beyond the literary and into contemporary digital landscapes, where Afro-Latinx women continue to transform trauma through embodied, communal ritual. Carrillo’s interactive installations reimagine ritual feedback loops through sound, poetry, and movement, producing participatory archives where Afro-diasporic memory is not merely preserved but reactivated- a process she terms “activated memory” (91). Similarly, Medrano-Marra’s integration of Taíno spirituality with Embodied Writing invites diasporic women to engage ancestral wisdom through sensory ritual, collective dreaming, and online community. Her workshops, facilitated in part via digital platforms, exemplify the continuity between sacred geographies and virtual space- where screen becomes altar and body becomes conduit. Bahia furthers this digital praxis by advocating for technological sovereignty among Black Brazilian women. Through initiatives that merge coding with ancestral knowledge and collective care, Bahia reclaims algorithmic environments as sacred terrain for Afro-diasporic creativity and futurity. These interventions do not merely digitize ritual- they extend its logic. They fulfill what Buolamwini demands in “AI, Ain’t I a Woman?”: not just inclusion in technological systems, but the recognition of spirit within them. Together, the practices of Carrillo, Medrano-Marra, and Bahia amplify the sacred labor enacted by Kehinde and Fela, ensuring that Afro-Latinx cultural memory persists in code, frequency, and screen.

This dissertation contributes to a growing body of scholarship at the intersections of Afro-Latinx Studies, Latin American and Caribbean literary studies, Black feminist theory, and digital humanities by offering a comparative, transnational reading of *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* as historiographic metafiction that reimagine memory and resistance in both sacred and digital spheres. One of the study's central interventions lies in articulating Afro-Latina sacred narrative as a genre of resistance. While existing research often approaches Afro-Latinx literature through race, identity, or postcolonial critique, this dissertation foregrounds the sacred as an epistemological and aesthetic mode. Drawing from Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual mestizaje and Comas-Díaz's decolonial psychology, it argues that Kehinde and Fela engage African-derived cosmologies not as cultural remnants, but as spiritual technologies through which they interpret their pasts and enact healing. In this framework, storytelling becomes ritual; remembering becomes a political and sacred act. These insights challenge the secular assumptions of dominant literary paradigms and demand a broader, decolonial understanding of knowledge within academic discourse.

A second major intervention is the dissertation's hemispheric scope. By placing Brazilian and Puerto Rican narratives into sustained dialogue, this project builds a rare but necessary comparative framework between the Lusophone and Hispanophone Americas. Few scholars have pursued this inter-American axis with focused attention- Fitz among them- and even fewer have done so through the lens of Afro-Latinx spirituality and digital praxis. As Newcomb and Gordon argue in *Beyond Tordesillas*, comparative Luso-Hispanic scholarship remains underdeveloped, particularly with regard to Black Atlantic cultural production. This dissertation addresses that gap by demonstrating how *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*- despite their divergent national and linguistic contexts- converge in their commitment to Afro-diasporic memory,

maternal resilience, and ritual healing. This comparative methodology not only bridges Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean traditions but reveals Afro-Latinidad as a transnational formation and a decolonial methodology grounded in sacred narrative.

Building on this foundation, each chapter of the dissertation develops a layered argument about how memory, trauma, and healing operate across both literary and digital modalities. Chapter One theorizes historiographic metafiction as a tool for dismantling dominant historical narratives and constructing sacred geographies through nonlinear time, Afro-diasporic cosmologies, and embodied storytelling. Chapter Two centers trauma theory and the aesthetics of *escrevivência*, revealing how Kehinde and Fela transmute bodily suffering into matrilineal testimony and spiritual resistance. Chapter Three expands the scope of narrative healing by exploring Afro-Latinx creators who extend sacred ritual into contemporary digital spaces- from poetic installations and AI-generated archives to community altars and immersive storytelling. These digital platforms do not merely echo tradition; they reconfigure and re-ritualize it. In contrast to prevailing models of digital culture often rooted in futurism, whiteness, or techno-positivism, this dissertation foregrounds Afro-Latinx epistemologies that embrace spiritual continuity, ancestral praxis, and cultural survivance.

Drawing on the work of Arriaga and García Peña, this project contends that Afro-Latinx creators are not simply resisting algorithmic erasure- they are actively inscribing sacred memory into digital environments. As García Peña argues, “Black Latinidad is thus not an embodied identity or a social construct, but a point of entry and a set of methods that move us beyond homogeneity” (*Translating Blackness* 31). This dissertation affirms and expands upon that claim, demonstrating how Afro-Latinx subjects generate knowledge across spiritual, technological, linguistic, and national borders. The novels and digital works analyzed herein resist epistemic

flattening and technological dispossession. Instead, they produce what I call a sacred digital archive: a recursive constellation of spirit, story, and survival that moves between ancestors and avatars, stones and screens, ritual and code.

Moreover, this study foregrounds the role of Black women as epistemic agents and cultural archivists, positioning figures such as Kehinde, Fela, and Carisa as architects of counter-histories. In centering their voices, the dissertation contributes to a growing scholarly insistence- echoed in the work of Herrera, Valdés, and Ohmer- that Afro-Latina women's intellectual and spiritual labor must be integral to any rigorous engagement with diasporic identity. These protagonists are not simply icons of resilience; they are narrators, healers, and curators of ancestral memory. Their work of survival is simultaneously a pedagogy- transmitted through oral storytelling, embodied ritual, and visual archive- that shapes Afro-Latinx cultural consciousness across generations.

Finally, this dissertation calls attention to the pedagogical and community-centered implications of its findings. Literature and digital storytelling must be mobilized beyond academic discourse as tools of cultural preservation, political education, and collective healing. The spiritual technologies and narrative practices explored throughout this study hold direct relevance for classrooms, community archives, activist networks, and healing circles. Whether through culturally sustaining curricula, the use of oral history in public humanities, or the integration of digital platforms for intergenerational dialogue, Afro-Latinx cultural preservation remains an urgent and living project. As Arriaga observes in *Afro-Latinx Digital Connections*, “Afro-descendant communities in the Americas [...] use digital tools in creative ways within or against powerful currents of economic, scientific, political, and discursive orders” (6). This act of digital resistance- what he terms Afro-digital marronage- is not solely about representation; it is about survival. Afro-Latinx artists, particularly women and queer creators, construct fugitive digital

spaces that echo the logic of historical maroon communities. These platforms function as digital quilombos- preserving, reactivating, and transforming ritual and ancestral memory through code, image, and sound. As scholars and cultural workers, we are called to listen closely to these stories etched into body, voice, and digital breath. *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* do not simply invite us to revisit history; they insist that we carry it forward- not as burden, but as map, compass, key, and now, a secret password.

If this dissertation has demonstrated anything, it is that the past is not static- it breathes, grieves, and transforms alongside us. In *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*, the afterlives of slavery, exile, and erasure are not relegated to historical residue; they are reanimated as spiritual imperatives. Kehinde's and Fela's narratives reveal that healing is not a final destination, but an ongoing ritual- a recursive praxis grounded in ancestral recognition, narrative refusal, and sacred return. These women do not merely survive historical rupture; they channel it, refract it, and transmute it into tools of remembrance and resistance. Across time and territory, the sacred demands to be remembered. Standing at the intersection of literature, technology, and diasporic spirituality, this study affirms the need for critical methodologies that honor embodied epistemologies, ritual geographies, and Afro-Latinx digital resistance. The Afro-Latinx women who author and inhabit these narratives are not only revisiting the past- they are actively reimagining futurity through recursive, polyphonic, and insurgent storytelling. Their narratives remind us that memory is not a monument; it is a chorus- a dynamic space of tension, contradiction, and possibility.

These literary works also prompt us to consider what it means to serve as stewards of memory in an age increasingly shaped by algorithmic surveillance and virtual immersion. As John V. Pavlik observes, immersive media offer users the ability to co-create and co-experience stories

in ways that transcend traditional narrative forms (49). This dissertation expands on that premise by asserting that Afro-Latinx narratives have long anticipated and enacted these immersive capacities, particularly through embodied and spiritual frameworks. Whether through the tactile passing of a sacred stone, the intimate ritual of braiding hair, the orality of storytelling, or the preservation of maternal memory through visual archives, these works offer blueprints for immersive, ancestral, and collective cultural memory. In doing so, they anticipate future storytelling environments rooted in interaction, reciprocity, and ritual reactivation.

Looking forward, this study opens multiple avenues for further exploration. One promising direction is the continued study of Afro-diasporic memory work in digital and immersive spaces, including virtual reality, AI-generated cultural archives, and Afro-centered social media interventions. How might platforms designed by and for Afro-descendant communities reshape prevailing understandings of diaspora, belonging, and sacred space? What role might algorithmic design, digital aesthetics, and participatory code play in future Afro-diasporic cultural production? Future research may also investigate the ways in which Afro-Latina healing practices can inform public humanities work and educational interventions. As the creative practices of Medrano-Marra and Carrillo illustrate, spiritual reclamation and digital activism are not only culturally generative, but politically urgent. Interdisciplinary collaborations between educators, artists, and technologists have the potential to develop innovative strategies for safeguarding and circulating Afro-Latinx traditions. These practices may find rich application in culturally sustaining pedagogy, public memory initiatives, and multilingual, multimodal curricula that honor the full breadth of diasporic expression and resistance.

Ultimately, this dissertation affirms that storytelling- whether through letters, stones, or poems- is a sacred and insurgent act. It is how Afro-Latinx communities remember what has been

lost, reassemble what has been broken, and safeguard what is yet to come. In Kehinde's final letter to Luíz and in Carisa's photographic curation of Black Puerto Rican life, we witness a radical pedagogy at work- one that does not merely reflect the past but re-choreographs the future. These women do not simply narrate pain; they ritualize its transformation. To revisit history through these novels is not to be trapped by it, but to illuminate it- examining its fissures and fractures and weaving its remnants into something sacred and enduring. Afro-Latinidad, as these narratives teach us, is not a fixed category but a living process- a recursive becoming. It is the taste of river water and the echo of distant drums. It is a grandmother's name whispered in prayer. It is a circle of women remembering in rhythm. It is the quiet click of a keyboard resounding across continents. And it is, always, the sacred work of keeping memory alive.

This pedagogical model is further extended in Chapter Two, which deepens this framework by examining how Afro-Latinx narratives process, voice, and transform cultural trauma. Drawing from Caruth's insight that trauma "permits history to arise where immediate understanding may not," the chapter explores how Kehinde and Fela function as carriers of memory whose testimonies not only recall historical violence but re-enter and reframe it (182). The trauma they inherit- of forced displacement, fractured kinship, and spiritual erasure- is not confined to a distant past; it reverberates through ritual, language, and the body. Through Kehinde's epistolary narration and Fela's matrilineal legacy, the novels enact what Comas-Díaz defines as wound-searching: the act of naming and narrating trauma as a pathway toward decolonial healing. Teaching this work in a classroom requires an approach rooted in sensitivity, relationality, and flexibility. Students must be given opportunities to express their interpretations not only through traditional essays but through multimodal reflection, creative storytelling, and even ritual-inspired practices that validate

the sacred and emotional weight of the material. By treating these texts as ceremonial rather than purely analytical, educators open up space for healing, dialogue, and embodied learning.

Beyond the classroom, the implications of this dissertation extend into community spaces, archives, and public-facing humanities initiatives. Afro-Latinx sacred storytelling is not confined to academic settings- it lives in oral histories, neighborhood rituals, family photo albums, and grassroots collectives. Projects like digital memory maps, collaborative multimedia installations, or intergenerational storytelling workshops bring the ethos of these novels into community-centered praxis. Students can partner with elders or cultural organizations to document untold stories, build digital repositories, or curate exhibitions of Afro-Latinx art, music, and testimony. These collaborations are more than service-learning; they are sites of reciprocal learning and ethical engagement that reflect the same values of continuity, relationality, and spiritual care found in *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone*. Such activities allow students to engage Afro-Latinx memory not as abstract knowledge but as living archive- alive, vulnerable, and worthy of preservation.

The pedagogical model that emerges here is one that embraces contradiction, complexity, and care. It draws from García Peña's theory of contradiction to remind us that Afro-Latinx identity and knowledge production do not require linearity or resolution. They require presence. They ask us to dwell in *nepantla*, the in-between space Anzaldúa defines, where transformation occurs not through certainty but through encounter. Moraga's concept of theory in the flesh likewise underscores the necessity of grounding intellectual work in lived, embodied experience. Teaching Kehinde's and Carisa's stories from this orientation allows students to explore literature not only as text, but as technology of the soul- as a medium through which inherited pain can be transfigured, and collective possibility imagined. This is not metaphorical work; it is

methodological. It signals that the future of Afro-Latinx literary studies must be as interdisciplinary as it is intergenerational, rooted in the sacred as much as the analytical.

One of this dissertation's central interventions is its commitment to comparative analysis across linguistic and geographic divides in the Americas. By placing *Um defeito de cor* and *Daughters of the Stone* in conversation, the study bridges Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean narrative practices to reveal how Black women's literary labor simultaneously preserves sacred memory and reclaims epistemic sovereignty. This hemispheric approach not only highlights parallel strategies of spiritual resilience and narrative healing but also emphasizes that Afro-Latinx identity is shaped by shared legacies of displacement, resistance, and ritual survival. These insights are pedagogically generative: they encourage students to think transnationally, to trace connections across languages and diasporas, and to recognize how memory circulates beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. By engaging literature as a tool of hemispheric consciousness, classrooms become spaces for fostering political imagination and cultural solidarity.

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