PART TWO
The seventeenth century marks the historical moment in which Black Africans became a significant presence in Europe and its colonies. By the end of this period slavery constituted a nearly universal foundation of European colonial governance, with the number of Black slaves growing at least tenfold. Along with this increased social visibility, treated in the previous chapters, came a heightened literary awareness of Black Africans. The writings of many New Christian authors on the Iberian peninsula or in Spanish and Portuguese colonial territories, as well as Sephardic authors in northwestern Europe, especially those born as New Christians, reflect both the variety of concerns Blacks raised for Europeans and often concerns specific to Judeoconversos and/or Jews. Amerindians also surfaced in these writings, likewise playing a role in the working through of European identity. In this chapter I explore this literary output in light of European overseas expansion and colonialism, and the demographic and cultural upheavals they engendered.

The increased visibility of Blacks and Amerindians in Judeoconverso and Sephardic literature, as was true for European literature in general, recapitulates the confusion of social and racial categories wrought by the mongrel world order of the Baroque period. (In this chapter I use the term Blacks to refer to all those designated as Africans and their descendants.) Blacks and Amerindians, generally denigrated as primitive, uncultured and born to servitude and the most menial forms of labor,

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1 According to David Eltis, while between 1500 and 1580 some 74,000 Africans were forcibly boarded on boats for transshipment to the Americas, between 1580 and 1640 some 714,000 Africans found themselves in the same dire circumstance (David Eltis, “Atlantic History in Global Perspective,” *Itinerario* 23, no. 2 [1999]: 151 [table 1]. Robin Blackburn writes that “the really massive importation” of slaves into Spanish America began only after 1595. Between then and 1640 some 268,600 slaves were officially brought over, the actual number probably far higher (Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* [London: Verso, 1997], 140).