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The “New World” Surrounds an Ocean

Theorizing the Live Dialogue between African and African American Cultures

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My best friend in Brazil is a priest of Candomblé, a stunningly beautiful religion of divination, healing, spirit possession, and celebration that is often taken as proof that African culture has “survived” in the Americas. Indeed, my friend Roberto knows a fantastic array of songs in languages called Jeje and Nagô, which he and his priestly colleagues agree are African. They largely agree on the moments in any serious Candomblé ceremony (the likes of which they also tend to consider African) when any given song is to be sung. Roberto’s command of the ritual standards, songs, and aesthetic values of the Jeje nation, or denomination, have won him not only acclaim but also a wide following.

Yet Roberto fears that the substance of his power is draining away as the number of people who know how to respond to the songs in the Jeje language—and thereby know how to celebrate and activate the gods of the nation—declines every year. The Yorùbá-affiliated Nagô, or Quêto, nation so dominates the religious landscape (including the attention of the Brazilian mass media and the sponsors who fund the most lavish ceremonies) that the Jeje nation is in danger of a progressive form of extinction that Roberto and his friends call *anagonization*.

For example, because audiences at the great public festivals know few Jeje songs, Roberto must compromise the purity of his nation by singing Nagô songs in honor of his gods.

On the day we met in August 1987, Roberto thought that I was from Africa, which is at least one reason he immediately invited me into the shrine of the messenger god Exú to witness the annual sacrifice. I am certain, however, that some measure of spontaneous affection was also among his motives. We've been friends ever since. To most people in Brazil—not to mention West and West Central Africa—I look African, but Roberto was none too disappointed to discover that I had simply spent a great deal of time in Africa, mostly in Nigeria, where I had studied the gods of the Nagô-affiliated Yorùbá people.

Roberto has always been disinterestedly kind toward me, but soon after we met, he asked me to teach him some Yorùbá. Some of it rang a bell for him and some didn't, though he had spent much time in the great Nagô temples of Bahia (such as Casa Branca and Aizinho's Pilão de Prata), where the priests are reputed to speak, and, above all, sing in "perfect Yorùbá." Roberto soon tired of these lessons and set his goals higher. He wanted to go to Savalou, the African capital of the Savalú—his Jeje subnation—which I had told him was located in the People's Republic of Benin. He was anxious to visit there and to recover all that his Brazilian Jeje-Savalú forebears had forgotten or—out of spite, selfishness, and stupidity—refused to divulge to their successors before they died.

I could not imagine the immediate means of getting my friend to Savalou, but I promised to visit the place on his behalf and to find out as much as I could. I also agreed to bring him some African wild buffalo horns and instructions on how to make African black soap, which simply cost too much in Brazil. I quietly strategized on how I would get him plenty of some other ritual items, which I knew mainly by their Yorùbá names—*efun* (white river lime), *osùn* (camwood powder), and *atare* (alligator pepper). A priestess friend—or actually the lively *caboclo* Indian spirit who spoke to me through her body at the priestess's fortnightly Candomblé "sessions"—sent me off with an order for a whole suit of *pano da costa*, the costly handwoven Yorùbá cloth worn around the waist, typically in more affordable quantities, by female Candomblé elites. Other priests and priestesses simply sent me off with

so much love and generosity that I was anxious to bring them whatever ritual items, photographs, and bits of information I could find. Indeed, their demands, curiosities, concerns, and preoccupations profoundly shaped my questions and activities during the month I then spent in Savalou and the twelve additional months I then spent in Ìgbòho, Nigeria, in 1988 and 1989.

From one travel fellowship to the next—with more or less extended stopovers in London, Paris, Chicago, Washington, Cambridge, and Williamstown in between—I continually squirreled away ritual items, photocopies, books, song texts, praise poetry, newspapers, sculptures, vocabulary lists, and other information whose value would multiply when I took it to friends in places where it was less easily available. I have not yet been able to get Roberto to Savalou, but his several university-sponsored trips to the United States have, besides adding much joy and depth to our friendship, added some small height to his already enormous stature within the Candomblé. Such visits have also enabled him to compare his own beliefs and practices with those of my *santero* friends, practitioners of the Cuban and US Latino counterpart to Candomblé.

I am not the only friend to have sponsored Roberto's travels abroad. His itinerant spiritual godchildren have hosted him in Switzerland, France, Italy, and Spain. Nor is Roberto the only person who has benefited in some minor way from my transnational gratitude. Nor am I the only traveler to maintain such a network of friends who have some material, intellectual, or religious investment in the traveler; I am the successor and the predecessor to tens of thousands of such travelers. Indeed, there have been times in Brazilian and West African history when such investments were the basis of many livelihoods and furnished the foundational principles of major religious trends.

My friendship with Roberto is but a minor illustration of a major dialogue shaping the cultures and politics of the Afro-Atlantic world. Far from being the scattered and fading (or, in a few cases, heroically preserved) remains of "African culture," the cultures of the Afro-Atlantic have continually been refashioned through the voluntary exchange of people, objects, and ideas. The modes of musical creativity, the religious practices, the motor habits, and the linguistic dispositions cited as evidence of African Americans' collective "memory" or the "survival"

of the African past have continually been reinscribed, not simply with meanings specific to their local American or African contexts but also with meanings generated specifically by *dialogue* among Afro-Atlantic locales.

ANALYTIC METAPHORS

This scholarly project employs the insight of Lakoff and Johnson that all perception and thought are mediated by metaphors, which involve the comparison of one domain of experience (the metaphoric "target") with another (the metaphoric "source"). Because of its experiential concreteness and clarity, the source helps illuminate the nature or structure of a target that is less concrete and less clear to those who wish to understand it. Any given metaphor, continue Lakoff and Johnson, tends to highlight particular aspects of the target in ways that another metaphor would not, while hiding other aspects of the target that another metaphor would not. For example, representing an argument as a battle (as in the expressions "Your claims are indefensible" and "He shot down all my arguments") highlights the competitive and mutually destructive aspects of debate while hiding its cooperative aspects (such as the shared effort toward mutual understanding) (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:4,10).

While Lakoff and Johnson are concerned chiefly with the metaphors that structure daily language and experience, I am keen to address the specialized set of metaphors that structure our *scholarly* language about and perception of reality. These we will call "analytic metaphors." Like theories, they should be judged not as true or false but as more or less useful in highlighting important dimensions of the realities we seek to explain and as more or less parsimonious in the explanations they allow.

The phenomenon that my colleagues and I wish to reconsider in this volume is the cultural history of the African diaspora. We are heirs to a family of well-established and productive analytic metaphors in our area of study. While they usefully highlight much about that cultural history that had previously been ignored, they also hide many dimensions of that cultural history that are long overdue for recognition. At times, I will argue, certain well-established metaphors even patently distort the phenomena they are intended to explain.

Thus I wish to propose here a new analytic metaphor in the dis-

cussion of the cultural history of Africa and its diaspora—dialogue. Though it arises from my research on African diaspora religion in Brazil, Cuba, Nigeria, and the United States, I think it helps us understand the similar historical dynamics of music, dance, politics, education, and so forth, around the Atlantic perimeter and other heavily traveled transgeographical complexes, such as the Silk Road and the circum-Mediterranean, circum-Indian Ocean, circum-Saharan, and medieval Islamic worlds.

ANTHROPOLOGY'S FOUNDATIONAL METAPHORS

The student of human culture always faces the quandary of how to explain what is far too complex to reduce to an article, a book, or even a lifelong scholarly opus. Analytic metaphors have helped us discern structural or otherwise salient aspects of social reality in such a way that makes summary sense of the details. For example, the term *culture* itself represents intergenerationally learned aspects of collective lifeways as something like *cultivation*—the agricultural selection, training, and reshaping of nature for the fulfillment of human bio-social needs. Even diasporas are compared, in the Greek etymology of the term, to *sowing*, or the dispersal of seeds.¹ Anthropologists have also represented human lifeways metaphorically as organisms (as in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's organic metaphor) and as symbolic systems akin to languages or texts (as in Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology).

Such analytic metaphors have been convenient tools in highlighting the *synchronic* functioning of any given society or culture, and they emerge from an early-twentieth-century anthropology that was generally averse to the speculative histories of armchair ethnologists, evolutionists, and diffusionists. These metaphors sustained the image of the self-contained, isolated, bounded, and internally integrated society or culture. Yet sustaining that image in an era of worldwide colonialism required the erasure of history and the fiction of the "ethnographic present." Whereas British social anthropology typically endeavored to capture precolonial sociopolitical orders (often complementing the colonialist objective of resurrecting them as administrative units), the German American Franz Boas and the Frenchman Claude Lévi-Strauss shared the somewhat different aim of archiving precolonial lifeways before they were swept away by Western influence and expansion.

Yet the proximity of Columbia's Boas and his students to the black intellectuals and political leaders in New York City—including W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and the literati of the Harlem Renaissance—made it inevitable that American cultural anthropology would turn its analytical eye toward the politically central theme of black difference. Yet Afro-Americanist anthropology remained marginal to the broader discipline. Two reasons stand out. First, from the standpoint of Boas's antiracist anthropology, it was not obvious that African Americans were culturally different from white Americans. Boas's influence lent itself equally both to Melville J. Herskovits's pursuit of what was historically (and had therefore remained) subtly distinctive about African American lifeways and to the argument of Howard University's influential sociologists and jurists that any difference of conduct or values among the races in the United States was but circumstantial, quantitative, and largely the result of unequal structures of opportunity (see L. Baker 1998 and Yelvington's chapter in this volume). Neither model, however, suited African Americans to the image of absolute otherness that had long dominated anthropologists' choice of their objects of study. Second, both the cultures and the very presence of people of African descent in the Americas were so obviously the consequences of a highly transformative, ongoing, and documentable history that an analysis devoid of history seemed not only fictional but also false. African Americans are collectively the product and agent of one of the oldest, largest, and most revolutionary colonizations in the world. Indeed, the triangular trade on which these colonizations depended belies the fashionable conviction that transnationalism is new (Matory 1999a, 2005).

Before it was obvious about any other group that anthropologists had studied, it was obvious about African Americans that they could not be studied in isolation from global political, economic, and cultural forces. Thus, notwithstanding the apparent marginality of Afro-Americanist anthropology, scholarship on African Americans has arguably been the sand in the oyster of the discipline, foreshadowing late-twentieth-century/early-twenty-first-century efforts to restore global political, economic, and cultural forces to the portraits of local societies. Early Afro-Americanists articulated, under these and other names, theoretical themes—such as cultural resistance, alterity and the

subaltern, hybridity, reflexivity, collective memory, embodiment and habitus, diaspora and transnationalism, and the more general rethinking of continent-based area studies divisions—that have become standards across the discipline.²

Afro-Americanist anthropology stands to make a greater contribution still to the discipline, in a way anticipated by Herskovits's "work of comparing cultures in a single historic stream" (e.g., [1956] 1966: especially 76; [1930] 1966; [1945] 1966). That is, the African regions that supplied the slave trade are culturally varied but not infinitely so, and the peoples of African descent in the Americas are culturally varied but not infinitely so. Moreover, many of the political and economic forces that have shaped the differences between African and African American cultures, as well as those that have shaped the differences among African American cultures, are well documented. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine a finer terrain for the comparative study of how geography and history shape culture and how a translocal culture might shape local imaginations of geography and history. The dividends of comparativist Afro-Americanist anthropology are potentially both empirical and methodological. Indeed, on the basis of a comparison of African and African American cases, the present study is intended to revise the range of analytic metaphors devoted to the anthropological study of all dispersed populations.

A HISTORY OF AFRO-AMERICANIST METAPHORS

When Africa is regarded as part of the cultural and political history of the African diaspora, it is usually recognized only as an origin—as a "past" to the African American "present," as a "source" of cultural "survivals" and "retentions" in the Americas, as an essence "preserved" in collective "memory," or as the "roots" of African American branches and leaves. Neither Herskovits nor his numerous followers have ignored the transformative adaptations, "syncretisms," or "creolizations" that have reshaped what remains of African culture in the Americas, but most have focused on the one-way transmission of culture from a past Africa to a present America. Yet this representation of the cultural history of the Afro-Atlantic world is itself culturally, politically, and historically conditioned in ways worthy of study in themselves (see the chapters by Yelvington, Sally Price, and Richard Price in this

volume). What that representation highlights is valuable, but what it hides is often equally important.

From the time of Herskovits, the central analytic metaphors of Afro-Americanist anthropology could not but invoke history and imply the need for its reconstruction and preservation. The tropes in which that history was represented—not only the recently popular trope of “diaspora” but the older “survival” metaphor as well—seem to bear the signs of a uniquely black-Jewish dialogue. In an age and in a nation where collective political identity was increasingly associated with territory and with the new, republican principles defining the role of all citizens, it seems no surprise that an intellectual project involving chiefly Jews and blacks in New York City would generate models of corporate “survival” that rely on continuities of ritual, musical, and sartorial form. European and immigrant American Jewish identities had had an ambivalent and more often contrary relationship to territory, defined alternately by the group’s distance from its ancestral home territory, its alienness within the land of residence, and its exclusion in many places from the right of land ownership. Rituals commemorating the past became much of the substance of Jewish collective identity and corporate survival. African Americans, too, could be imagined as a landless people, defined alternately by their distance from an ancestral home territory, their alienness within the land of residence, and their exclusion from numerous rights of citizenship within the American territorial nation-state. To an even greater than usual extent, the blacks of New York City from the 1910s onward were refugees from places where they had worked the land and where there were more recent memories of being owned, like the land, than of being landowners. For similar reasons, neither group had reasons for full confidence in the nation-state’s much-vaunted promises of “modernity,” as Gilroy (1993) summarizes the fundamental dilemma of the African diasporic experience. Yet for both groups, the option of abandoning one’s past, renouncing pre-American identities, and melting in seemed to require more struggle, reflection, and debate than it did for other non-indigenous ethnic groups in the United States.

Thus, in dialogue with the black intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, Herskovits generated a series of metaphors highlighting continuity against the odds and implicitly acknowledging subaltern

agency in the transmission of culture over time—through “survivals,” “retentions,” and “preservations” of not only practices but also “deep-seated cultural orientations” that guided the selection and “reinterpretation” of cultural precedents in the American context. Herskovits later borrowed the term *syncretism* from Afro-Brazilianist Arthur Ramos to describe the processes of selection and reinterpretation that allowed African practices and creative principles to “survive” in apparently Western milieus. For Herskovits ([1945] 1966:57), syncretism was “the tendency to identify those elements in the new culture with similar elements in the old one, enabling the persons experiencing the contact to move from one to the other, and back again, with psychological ease.” In the classic example, Herskovits employed the term to describe Haitians, Brazilians, and Cubans’ use of the images of Roman Catholic saints in the worship of iconographically similar African gods.³

In their day, Herskovits’s “survival” and “reinterpretation” metaphors helped highlight what had been overlooked—the reality of cultural continuity and transformation in African American history. However, one might justly be dissatisfied with Herskovits and the Herskovitsians’ relative inattention to diverse contextual meanings of apparently similar signifiers. For example, highlighting the formal similarities among possession by the Holy Spirit in North America, the river goddess Yemoja in Nigeria, and the eponymous sea goddess Iemanjá in Brazil might lead the analyst to overlook the radically different theologies and ritual complexes that buoy them.

Herskovits was far more attentive to psychological and unconscious “dispositions” than to agency and strategy in the reproduction of cultural forms. What, for example, might be any given actor’s *motive* (beyond inertia) to reproduce an African cultural form or to identify such a form as “African”? Such an actor is likely to have alternatives to the African-looking form and might risk reprisal or disapproval for adopting even the most camouflaged of non-Western forms. And he or she might choose to interpret that form as non-African in origin. Are antecedent and intergenerational “dispositions” or the desire to hold on to the past (now trendily called “cultural resistance”) sufficient explanations for the genealogy of African American cultural choices?

Herskovits’s methods have invited the same criticism that diffusionism generally has attracted—that it renders culture as a “thing of

shred and patches," to invoke Robert Lowie's (1920:441) memorable phrase (although Lowie referred here to "civilization"), rather than as an integrated, synchronic whole. Indeed, Herskovits deserves more credit for his contributions to the study of cultural *process* than to the study of synchronic issues of meaning, function, and structure. Moreover, as later generations of anthropologists have come to doubt the integrity of any given culture and to recognize the diversity and contradictory relationship among local discourses, it is not clear that Herskovits's critics are more correct than he.

Afro-Americanist anthropology is indebted to Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price (1976, 1992) for their creolization model. Extending Roger Bastide's work on Afro-Brazilian religions, Mintz and Price focus on the New World social institutions, organizations, and sanctioned spaces that made the practice of African creative models possible in the Americas, as well as the situational constraints that transformed them into distinctly *African American* logics of creative production. Mintz and Price argue that such newly African American logics took shape quickly and enduringly—on slave ships and in the early years of any given American slave society. "The rapidity with which a complex, integrated and unique Afro-American religious system [or presumably other cultural systems] developed" and stabilized in a particular American locale is shown to be analogous to the rapidity with which the local creole language variety developed and stabilized (Mintz and Price 1992:22–26, especially 25). Mintz and Price are ultimately less concerned with arguing that all African American cultures formed rapidly or remained fixed than with recommending a search for the precise local *institutional history* by which each culture took shape and changed over time (R. Price, personal communication, April 12, 1999; see also Richard Price's chapter in this volume).

I will argue that the political and demographic contexts shaping African American cultures are *seldom* produced through a once-and-for-all departure from Africa and are seldom isolated from a broader, circum-Atlantic context. I submit that, unlike languages (as they are conventionally understood), African American cultures should not be considered integrated, internally systematic, and bounded in discrete units; they are crosscut (à la Bakhtin, for example, 1981) by multiple transnational languages, discourses, and dialogues.

The most recent analytic metaphor to take anthropology (including its Afro-Americanist varieties) and Afro-American literature by storm is the conception of "collective memory" and "forgetting" as the model and core features of sociocultural reproduction and (in the cases that most concern us here) the model and core features of diasporas' relationships to their homelands. The rhetorical effect of the "memory" metaphor in African diaspora scholarship is to highlight the implicit expectation that African Americans have (amid the ravages of enslavement, oppression, and poverty) lost contact with their past but retain at least mnemonic traces of that past.

Following Maurice Halbwachs, Bastide and others have argued that the recollection of myths, for example, can occur only when the social relationships or places to which they refer, or the institutions to which they are relevant, remain intact. For example, Bastide argues that the Yorùbá goddess Yemoja continues to be thought of as a mother in Brazil because (according to Bastide) lower-class Afro-Brazilian families tend to be "matriarchal." In general, asserts Bastide, the preservation of ancestral images and practices depends on the social relationships and landmarks in which they are "preserved" (Bastide [1960] 1978:243, 247–248).

As evidenced in his apparent influence upon Mintz and Price, Bastide has contributed much more to the study of social structural issues in the practice of Afro-Brazilian religions than to the study of "memory" per se. Yet the failings of his "collective memory" metaphor are instructive. Bastide equates the collective preservation of ancestral images and practices with "memory" because he understands personal memory as a paradigmatic manner of preserving information and technical competency. Yet there are ways in which the reproduction of images or the teaching of techniques in society are *not* self-evidently forms of "preservation"; they are as likely to be forms of appropriation, quoting, mockery, propagandistic nostalgia, and so forth. The selective and strategic interpretation and invocation of the past are not the same as the "preservation," "retention," or "memory" thereof.

Bastide's conception of "collective memory" focuses on what "memories" are structurally possible or conditioned by the circumstances, rather than on social actors' *choice* of possible practices and images to reproduce or the purposes and motives behind those specific

reproductions. Indeed, the "memory" metaphor seems semantically inconsistent with such agency.

In fact, Connerton (1989) identifies bodily practices as a privileged form of collective memory because, in his view, they are exempt from controversy and therefore from the influence of ongoing reinterpretations of the past. On the contrary, I argue that bodily practices—such as ways of walking, dancing, or hand gesturing—become the subject of controversy *as soon as* they are recognized as signs of a collective past or of a legitimate present. Cross-culturally, styles of sacred dance and postures of prayer, for example, often become signs of rival factions and charters for new cult groups. Even *scholars* who declare the historical significance of a bodily practice are moved by particular socially conditioned motives and purposes when they choose which bodily practice to highlight and declare it part of one historical narrative or another. Furthermore, these scholarly pronouncements often enter into the public debate over which versions of history are right. For example, Herskovits's argument in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941) that religious "shouting" demonstrates black North Americans' African cultural roots is neither politically disinterested nor uncontroversial. The debate over this matter between Herskovits and E. Franklin Frazier is significant less for the *scholarly* correctness of one or the other argument than for how it framed a debate that would continue in the general African American population throughout the century and continue to articulate diverse programs for the uplift of African Americans. In other words, such scholarly debates also ultimately affect the object of study. In fact, the involvement of multiple parties, multiple classes, and multiple interest groups makes the intergenerational reproduction of culture a dialogue and a "struggle for the possession of the sign" (Hebdige 1979) instead of a form of "preservation." If it is obvious that the intergenerational transmission of culture resembles and entails a dialogue, it should be almost as obvious that personal memory, too, is shaped by dialogue and controversy.

However, the contributions of the literature on "collective memory" are not to be overlooked. In this genealogy of thought appear Dayan (1995), K. Brown (1989), and Gilroy (1993), who have shown that present-day ritual and verbal forms *indirectly* reveal past cultural dispositions, events, and conditions that have otherwise been over-

looked (see also D. Scott 1991). Brown argues that the prominence of warrior gods in Haitian Vodou reveals the Haitian experience of military dictatorship, and Dayan shows that the coquettish goddesses of Haitian Vodou reveal the experience of mulatto mistresses under the regime of slavery.⁴ Gilroy argues that memories of slavery are manifest—through their metaphorical displacement by lyrics of lost love—in current black music. To Gilroy, lost love itself is the key metaphor in black popular culture's commentary on the failed promises of "modernity." That the oppressed possess the intelligence and the means to think or act about their past—even when those means are indirect—is worth pointing out.

The "collective memory"-based literature on the African diaspora thus contains several rich discussions of ways in which changing social conditions and political needs shape the selective reproduction, meaningful transformation, and meaningful reinterpretation of past cultural forms. Diaspora scholars would do equally well to recognize that *commemoration* is always *strategic* in its selections, exclusions, and interpretations.⁵

So why call such cultural reproduction *memory*—a term that hides rather than highlights the unending struggle over the meaning and usage of gestures, monuments, words, and memories? It implies the organic unity of the collective "rememberer," anthropomorphizing society rather than highlighting the heterogeneity, strategic conflicts, and unequal resources of the rival agents that make up social life. Of course, experts on the psychology of personal memory know how complex, variable, and socially conditioned it is. For example, personal memories are reshaped by conversations and conflicting collective interests. However, if we are seeking a metaphoric *source* that makes the process of cultural reproduction *easier* to understand, isn't it unwise to choose an analytic metaphor whose implications and entailments are so unsettled and so unclear? Metaphors are usually chosen for the concreteness and clarity of the *source*, which enables it to clarify what is otherwise unclear or *inchoate* about the *target* (Fernández 1985). As the scholarly literature indicates, the source itself (that is, personal memory) needs just as much clarifying as the target (that is, the collective interpretation and reenactment of the past).

Invoked casually, the comparison of collective cultural practices to

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the recording system of an individual mind suggests a certain passivity, involuntariness, absence of strategy, and political guilelessness and neutrality that seem quite foreign to the processes that have, in fact, shaped African and African American cultures over time. In general, the "memory" metaphor complements the nationalist personification of the nation and the fiction of innocent, pristine, and primordial folkways that give proof that the nation has always been one and is rooted in God and Nature rather than in human strategy or history.

Among the unavoidable failings of the "memory" metaphor is that by making a figurative *person* of the collective rememberer, this analytic metaphor risks concealing the fundamental pluralness of the agents of this "collective memory." Any memory that might be called collective is ready ground for sharp disagreements and interested rivalries, and any form of *personal* memory describable in terms of "sharp disagreement" and "interested rivalries" would be considered nonnormative—or sick. In fact, as richly suggestive as all of them have been, the "survival," "reinterpretation," and "creolization" metaphors share the potential for similar underestimations of heterogeneity and conflicting strategy. They lend themselves to the premise that, like the survivor of a disaster, like the interpreter of a text, or like a creole language, any given Afro-Atlantic culture is self-existent, internally integrated, bounded, and possessed of its own agency and autonomous authorship; that it is not rent by multiple and contradictory discourses, languages, perspectives, and interests; and that each such Afro-Atlantic culture has evolved in organic isolation or discreteness from the others.

An alternative metaphor might represent these cultures not as self-existent but as organically part of a *dialogue*—less as evolving *langues* or as isolated readers of self-contained national pasts than as interacting and changing sets of participants in a conversation. The metaphor of dialogue places traditions—or strategically constructed genealogies of cultural reproduction—into a context beyond nation and region, a context from which they are rarely extricable.

SOME PRECEDENTS OF THE "DIALOGUE" METAPHOR

In the same year, art historians Michael D. Harris (1999) and Moyo Okediji (1999) and I (Matory 1999c) simultaneously but independently published essays likening the transformative exchange of peo-

ple and ideas between Africa and the Americas to a "dialogue." There must have been something in the air that year, knitting together a range of conceptual and empirical precursors to our concerted move.⁶

The empirical fact that people of the African diaspora have traveled, carrying goods and ideas among various locales on the Atlantic perimeter, has long been known. The intercontinental movement of corn, cassava, cowpeas, peanuts, tobacco, palm oil, and cowries has, over the past five hundred years, wrought incalculable demographic and political changes everywhere on the Afro-Atlantic—changes dwarfing the oft-cited consequences of Europe's importation of the potato. Afro-Atlantic peoples were not only victims but also major agents of these seismic shifts, during and long after the transatlantic slave trade. Focusing on the migration and commerce between Bahia (Brazil) and West Africa, Pierre Verger ([1968] 1976) described this phenomenon as "*flux et reflux*" ("flow and counterflow"). Yet this ongoing transatlantic exchange of people and goods also shaped the well-documented political and cultural histories of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and South Africa. Such transatlantic exchange is also the foundation of Zairean/Congolese Soukous music, of Senegalese president Léopold Senghor and Fort-de-France mayor Aimé Césaire's widely cited Négritude poetry, and of Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah's pan-Africanism—all of which have origins and reciprocal outcomes in the African diaspora. The Afro-Atlantic dialogue is economic, political, literary, and musical.

Just as Africa and its diaspora are linked, diverse African diaspora locales are linked to one another by migration, commerce, and the mutual gaze among them, which are the subjects of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993). Focusing on the English-speaking peoples of the Afro-Atlantic diaspora, Gilroy retheorizes the scope and mechanisms of cultural reproduction that he sees posited in the nationalist and racist cultural histories of blacks in the West. For him, cultural exchanges *among diasporic locales* undermine and falsify the boundaries that nationalists imagine around the races, nations, and cultures of the Atlantic perimeter. Thus, for Gilroy, the ships that carry ideas and cultural artifacts between locales are more emblematic of black Atlantic culture than are the national boundaries and watery divides that separate one locale from another. In the place of continuous forms of "memory" constituting geographically bounded cultural units, Gilroy

prioritizes the “discontinuous” forms of cultural reproduction by which ideas and images from one place constantly amplify and modify the cultural genealogies of other places (see also Roach 1996).

Gilroy charts recent developments in black Atlantic culture in real historical time, documenting how the Anglophone blacks of England, the United States, and the West Indies have—through travel and commerce in, for example, phonograph records—influenced one another’s cultural and political responses to their common exclusion from the promises of the French Enlightenment and from full citizenship in the ideally democratic polities inspired by it. Thus, Gilroy prioritizes cultural exchange across territorial boundaries over the divergent but uninterrupted “memory” of Africa posited by Bastide and many Herskovitsians in the genesis of the Anglophone black Atlantic culture.

Yet Gilroy remains curiously comfortable with the metaphor of the African diaspora’s apparently continuous “memory” of slavery. For example, Gilroy believes that black Atlantic ballads about lost love symbolically commemorate slavery. But when genres inaugurated by one ethnic group, nationality, or race are adopted by another, whose collective past is being “remembered,” and who is the rememberer? Weren’t the regimes of slavery in the different “remembering” communities, nations, and regions different? Wouldn’t the diversity of musical genres suggest that the rememberers are diverse and at least partially constituted and distinguished by nationality? Yet Gilroy, like Appadurai (1990), represents the territorial nation and the local identities it generates as contradictions to (rather than constituents of) these ship-borne cultural crossings.

And if for Gilroy “collective memory” usefully highlights something about Afro-Atlantic people’s relationship to their past, why is the “memory” of *Africa* selected for denial in Gilroy’s analytic model? Perhaps Gilroy is simply much more interested in the cultural exchange between blacks and whites, as well as among English-speaking black diaspora locales, than in Africa. Gilroy’s representation of “black Atlantic” culture essentially as a black response to exclusion from the promises of the European Enlightenment renders Africa irrelevant. Yet the credibility of this representation in Gilroy’s account relies less on a critique of the existing contrary positions than on a silence about them.

Although Gilroy borrows the term *black Atlantic* from Herskovits’s leading successor, art historian Robert Farris Thompson, Gilroy fails to cite not only Thompson but also the entire descriptive literature on the apparently “continuous” forms of cultural reproduction that have invited designation as memory, retention, survival, syncretism, and so forth. The main fields of African diaspora culture that Herskovitsians and Bastideans have represented as the products of “continuous” reproductions of African culture have been structurally and texturally African-looking forms—“Africanisms”—in American religion and music. Yet Gilroy (1993:28) studiously ignores the forms and aspects of African diaspora music that have been cited as proof of “continuity,” while inexplicably dismissing African American religion as “the central sign for the folk-cultural, narrowly ethnic definition of racial authenticity.” In fact, Gilroy’s anthropological and art historical predecessors have usually enlisted African diaspora music and religion as evidence of transethnic and transnational cultural commonalities (*not* national closure) among peoples of African descent. Moreover, *whites*’ adoption of African-inspired folk culture and religion from their African diaspora neighbors is a frequent theme in the writings of Herskovits, Bastide, and their successors (e.g., Bastide [1960] 1978; Herskovits [1935] 1966; Philips 1990; P. Wood 1974, 1975).

Hence, my criticism of Gilroy does not result from any belief on my part that cultural reproduction is “continuous” or nationally bounded. In fact, I believe that Gilroy is correct in emphasizing “discontinuity” and the cross-territorial nature of cultural reproduction. Rather, I disagree with Gilroy’s ironic exclusion of Africans’ participation in this cross-territorial phenomenon and his premise that the changing experiences, cultural conventions, and cultural vocabularies that make up African diaspora cultural history *began*—temporally and conceptually—at the moment blacks encountered the ideas of the European Enlightenment. Such a premise smacks of the same antic cosmopolitan boundary making that Gilroy’s entire oeuvre is arrayed against.

Perhaps, however, a single oversight at once shapes Gilroy’s historical periodizations and his citation practices. At first sight, the type of “culture” documented in the ethnohistorical literature appears distinct from the type treated in the cultural studies literature. On the one hand, Herskovits, his avowed successors, and his critics focus on the

anthropological stuff of culture—the everyday practices and beliefs of the everyman, including the religions and musical genres of what appear to be common people. On the other hand, Gilroy and other cultural studies specialists tend to focus on the writings and political gestures of the highly educated, the efforts of cultural reform movements, and the sort of art forms diffused by professional publishers, recording industries, and museums. To my mind, this division of intellectual labor results less from the empirical accuracy of the low culture/high culture distinction in the Afro-Atlantic cultures than from many of these authors' *trained inattention to the intimate dialogue that unites these cultural spheres*.

I intend to illustrate the empirical and theoretical utility of attending to this dialogue. For example, the literary activities of artists, scholars, and travelers—including those with transatlantic social connections, commercial interests, and political aspirations—have played a significant but under-recognized role in shaping the local *religious* cultures of the Afro-Atlantic. I wish to show that both Africa and non-English-speaking parts of the Americas were deeply involved in this dialogue, that not only political but also cultural transformations were in the offing, and that various African and African-inspired “folk” cultures (of the sort Herskovits and his successors privilege) are among the products of this dialogue.

Joseph Roach has given a further treatment to the cross-cultural exchanges shaping Afro-Atlantic culture, highlighting their symbolic mediation and the rhetorical uses of these exchanges. Through his notion of “circum-Atlantic performance,” Roach (1996) observes that diverse peoples on that ocean perimeter have mimicked one another for five hundred years as a fundamental condition of each such people's formation of its own cultural identity. However, Roach largely ignores (without denying) the active role of Africans in Africa in this dialogue. Unlike Gilroy, Roach calls attention to the frequently ironic and fictional quality of one people's mimicry of another—as in African American and European theatrical performances of “Africanness” and “Native Americanness.” Such mimicry—itself often secondary to literary and celluloid caricatures of the black Other—is a further important element of the Afro-Atlantic dialogue.⁷ Nigerians, Jamaicans, Brazilians, and US African Americans often perceive one another through books and films, many of which are produced or distributed

by whites. For example, some Jamaicans in the United States and in Jamaica imitate black US hip-hop fashion as an assertion of toughness, modernity, and cosmopolitanness, whereas others accentuate the aspects of Jamaican style that *distinguish* them from African Americans in order to defy American and African American cultural imperialism or to exempt themselves from the forms of white American discrimination that target African Americans.

Much inspired by Verger, Gilroy, and Roach, this chapter focuses on the metaphor of “dialogue” as an alternative to the ethnohistorical metaphors of “collective *memory*” and historical *sequence* in order to highlight some major processes in the selective reproduction of culture across time and space—and, more important in the continually changing inscription of meaning—that have produced some of the best-known “traditions” and most pervasive trends on the black Atlantic. That is, when cultural forms are selected, inherited, borrowed, and imitated, their new users invariably inscribe them with new meanings and enlist them for new purposes. Bakhtin employs a similar analytic metaphor—the “dialogic”—in his explanation of the novel, which embodies the speech of such diverse social classes that Bakhtin doubts the authorship, or agency, of the novelist (Bakhtin 1981). Applied to cultural reproduction generally, Bakhtin's analytic metaphor might rightly suggest that multiple agents are powerfully involved in the production of any given culture and that multiple cultures are “quoted” in the production of any one culture. However, Bakhtin's analytic metaphor might incorrectly imply that all of these agents and quoted cultures are equally powerful in the production of local or regional culture. My dialogue metaphor is not, however, intended to suggest political and economic equality among the interlocutors, however.

A major service of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) is that it demonstrates that blacks in the United States are not the lone creators of black Atlantic cultures. Gilroy usefully illustrates the role of Anglophone West Indians and black Britons in the process. However, this insurgent and democratizing move also recapitulates a form of Afro-Atlantic inequality that becomes more obvious when one broadens the scope of the analysis. The Afro-Atlantic dialogue encompasses the speakers of not only English but also a half dozen other European languages, a dozen creole languages, and hundreds of African languages. The members of these Afro-Atlantic language communities far

outnumber the approximately forty million black or mulatto native speakers of English in the United States, the West Indies, and the United Kingdom. However, Anglophone blacks have exercised a disproportionate influence on the contemporary making of all Afro-Atlantic cultures. It is no less true—notwithstanding Gilroy's effort to question the centrality of black North Americans—that the blacks of the United States have been more influential than any other group in the twentieth-century reproduction and reshaping of Afro-Atlantic culture. In general, literacy, economic power, commercial contacts, and command over the English or French language have made certain Afro-Atlantic voices louder than others.

Unlike Gilroy (1993) and Appadurai (1990), I do not believe that international cultural exchange and migration undermine or negate the reality of territorial boundaries and national identities. Rather, the phenomena I describe as dialogue are shaped directly, though not entirely, by the territorial boundaries and political priorities of empires and nation-states. In fact, the transatlantic dialogue has allowed the *creation* of such territorial nation-states as Liberia and Sierra Leone. Two decades ago, Elliot Skinner (1982), too, theorized a "dialectic between diasporas and homelands," showing that the African, Jewish, Irish, Indian, and Chinese diasporas have often aided in the formation of independent nations in their homelands and that such independent homelands often enhance the political stature of their diasporic kin despite the ambivalence that homelander and diasporans often feel toward each other. Thus, the dialogue metaphor does not posit that every interlocutor is an atom. Relative wealth, linguistic proficiency, nationality, and access to the means of communication distinguish *groups* of actors from one another.

On the other hand, the dialogue metaphor does posit one type of equality: temporal equality. It posits the radical "coevalness" (Fabian 1983) of Africa, Latin America, and the United States in a dialogue that, even following the conclusion of the slave trade, has continually shaped them all. In other words, Africa is not, as Herskovits's "social laboratory" would suggest, the past of Afro-Latin America. Nor does either set of cultures represent the past of black North American culture, as Herskovits also suggested (Herskovits 1941, 1956).

The fiction that they do represent the past of black North American culture reproduces the ethnocentric teleology whereby

Europeans classified the Americas as the "New World." The sense in which that world was new to Native Americans would require some explanation. Perhaps the "New World" represents the culmination—the true "Jewel in the Crown"—of European imperialist expansionism, but it might just as easily represent a decline or retrogression for the teleologically oriented historians of, say, the Aztec Empire. Rather than emphasize the newness of any given territory or the advanced temporal stage of any given nation or ethnic group, I prefer to emphasize the newness of the *dialogue* that has united Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans so intimately over the past five hundred years and the newness of the political identities and cultural formations that have resulted on both the eastern and the western shores of the Atlantic. Thus, in my view, the "New World" surrounds an ocean.

If my suggestion is taken seriously, African Americanist cultural historians will no longer begin books with the conventional chapter about Africa (usually based on colonial-era accounts of African culture and history) and then demonstrate the stages by which an African American culture evolved over time out of that "original" African one. The dialogue metaphor instead highlights ways in which the mutual gaze between Africans and African Americans, multidirectional travel and migration between the two hemispheres, the movement of publications, commerce, and so forth, have shaped African and African American cultures in tandem, over time, and at the same time. It highlights the ways in which cultural artifacts, images, and practices do not simply "survive" or endure through "memory"; rather, they are interpreted and reproduced for diverse contemporary purposes by actors with culturally diverse repertoires, diverse interests, and diverse degrees of power to assert them. As in a literal dialogue, such interpretations and reproductions can also be silenced, articulated obliquely, paraphrased, exaggerated, or quoted mockingly.

THE LIVE DIALOGUE

Here I wish to detail just one of the many phenomena that would be difficult to understand if "highlighted and hidden" merely through the standard analytic metaphors of African diaspora studies—"survival," "reinterpretation," "creolization," and "collective memory" (for numerous other cases, see Matory 1999c).

The case study derives from my own study of religion in Nigeria

and Brazil. Much American religious culture that is thought most effectively to have "survived" Africans' enslavement was, in fact, introduced, sustained, and deeply modified by free migrants circulating between Africa and the Americas. The Brazilian Candomblé religion, for example, is often identified as an exemplary, if not *the most* exemplary, survival of African culture in the Americas.

Yet the oral history identifies many founders of its leading institutions as voluntary immigrants from Africa. For example, Otampê Ojarô, founder of Bahia's Alakêtu Temple; Marcos Pimentel, a nineteenth-century chief priest of the Mocambo Temple on the island of Itaparica; and, most important, Iyá Nasô, founder of the ancient Casa Branca Temple in Bahia, are all identified as free immigrants from Africa. Iyá Nasô's mother is said to have secured her own manumission in Bahia and returned to Africa but voluntarily moved to Bahia to found this first of the three most famous Candomblé temples in Brazil. Her successor, Marcelina, is said to have gone voluntarily from Africa to Bahia and returned to Africa for an extended sojourn before returning finally to Bahia, where she assumed leadership of the Casa Branca Temple. Verger reports that it was Marcelina who first brought to Bahia the famous Manoel Rodolfo Bañgboşe—a *babaláwo* diviner from Òyô or Abêòkutà and founder of Brazil's most illustrious line of male priests (Abimbola 2000; Aizinho de Oxaguiã, personal communication, 1999; Matory 1999a; Verger 1980).⁸ Though buried in Bahia, this international priest and traveler appears to have given his name to the main street in the "Brazilian Quarter" in Lagos.

Similarly, in Cuba, the famous African-born Adechina is said to have been enslaved in Cuba but returned to Africa for initiation as a *babaláwo* diviner, later returning to Cuba. The oral history also identifies a freeborn African woman named Efunche (also Efunsetan or La Funche) who traveled as a free person to Cuba and there reformed Afro-Cuban religion in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, Cuban and Cuban American priests continued to rely on handwritten notebooks, or *libretas*, inherited from such free travelers as sources of authoritative religious and linguistic knowledge.

Two of the most influential of these *libretas* were written by free persons who had freely emigrated from British colonial West Africa. The *santero* Sixto Samá came from Sierra Leone (Cabrera 1980:2), and

Andrés Monzón "learned to read and write in an English mission in Nigeria" (Cabrera 1986:16). His *libreta* included a version of the Lord's Prayer in a Hispanicized version of the Yorùbá orthography generated by Anglo-Yorùbá missionaries in Freetown, Sierra Leone—a British colony founded as a home for freed slaves (see Cabrera 1986:17; Matory 1999b). Another of Cabrera's priestly informants in the mid-twentieth century, Miguel Alláí, had lived in Sierra Leone and, according to Cabrera, had learned to speak Yorùbá fluently (Cabrera 1986:17). Also among the most influential writers of *libretas* was Nicolás Angarica. In the mid-twentieth century, he employed a West African Yorùbá dictionary and the Yorùbá translation of the Bible (also written by Anglo-Yorùbá missionaries in British colonial West Africa) to verify the orthography of his multiple primers of Afro-Cuban religious language and ritual practice (see Angarica 1955:4).

In the 1930s, Afro-Bahian high school students also had access to imported books with which to study Yorùbá language and culture (Pierson 1942:314). Even after World War II, Bastide (1973:263) reported that Opô Afonjá, reputedly the most "purely African" of Brazil's temples, based its ritual calendar upon a lunar calendar found in its copy of the Yorùbá-language Bible.

These reports concerning the ongoing movement of people, texts, and ideas between Africa and the Americas are made credible by archives documenting the return of thousands of Afro-Brazilians and hundreds of Afro-Cubans to the West African coast. Moreover, in the lamentably incomplete Bahian archives of return voyages from Lagos, I have counted dozens of ships and hundreds of free Africans traveling from Lagos to Bahia or *through* Bahia to Rio de Janeiro or the state of Pernambuco, Brazil, between 1855 and 1898. Journalistic, epistolary, and ethnographic evidence from that period reveals repeated journeys of another score of African Brazilian travelers up to the 1930s.⁹ Many of them carried British passports, and most appear to have engaged in commerce. The Brazilian travelers sold ethnically marked Brazilian merchandise (such as salted meat and Afro-Brazilian religious paraphernalia) to returnees in West Africa and "authentically African" merchandise (such as the kola nuts and woven cloth [*pano da costa*] used in the Candomblé) to their black customers in Brazil. Thus, under British protection and motivated by their own commercial interests, a

generation of back-and-forth travelers consolidated a set of novel, religiously coded, and transnational identities unprecedented before the slave trade and as yet fragmentary before the nineteenth-century return of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Cubans to Africa. These were the "Jeje" and even the "Yorùbá" identities in West Africa (Matory 1999a, 1999b, 2005).

Thus, as these identities blossomed in early-twentieth-century Brazil, they displayed not only the "memory" or "survival" of religious icons, myths, and practices from the Africa that preceded the slave trade but also the effects of the radical ideological transformations of late-nineteenth-century Yorùbá ethnogenesis, which occurred primarily *after* the end of the slave trade.

The interaction of Westernized African recaptives and returnees in Sierra Leone and Lagos in the nineteenth century had produced, for the first time, a self-ascribed "Yorùbá" identity that embraced the diverse peoples of Ọ̀yó, Èkìtì, Ìjẹ̀bú, Ègbá, Ègbádò, Iléṣà, and so forth. Their Western education gave the returnee advocates of this identity privileged access to international markets and to the emergent colonial administrations of British and French West Africa. Moreover, their literacy allowed them an unparalleled opportunity to articulate their own vision of their culture and history.

Therefore, at the British-dominated crossroads of African/African American interaction, the Yorùbá acquired a highly publicized reputation for superiority to other Africans. This reputation for superiority was useful in the 1880s and 1890s, as the bourgeois black Lagosians faced new forms of economic disadvantage and racial discrimination. Their reaction was the Lagosian Cultural Renaissance, whose literary champions extensively documented Yorùbá "traditional" religion, advocated racial and cultural purity, and popularized the adoption of African names in lieu of the European ones with which many returnees and recaptives had grown up.

These nineteenth-century developments in colonial West Africa have reverberated in the Americas, not only persuading Candomblé Nagô and Santería/Lucumí priests to describe their religion as "Yorùbá" but also convincing American governments, elite sponsors, and the general public that these "Yorùbá"-affiliated religions deserve more respect and tolerance than other African-inspired religions, such as Candomblé Angola in Brazil and Cuba's Palo Mayombe and Abakuá

(Matory 2005). Thus, certain traditions have been privileged over others in the production of "traditional religion."

Equally surprising in light of the conventional analytic metaphors of "survival," "memory," "creolization," and "syncretism" (with its "African god/Catholic saint" paradigm case) is the centrality of British cultural imagery in the performance of "African tradition" and in the literal dialogue among geographically separated subtraditions. We have, in passing, referred to the British-inspired orthography of Yorùbá established by Sierra Leone-trained Anglo-Yorùbá missionaries such as Samuel Ajayi Crowther. It has now come to be regarded as the correct and African way of writing words that Brazilians and Cubans had long written in their respective Romance-language orthographies. In 1987, while receiving Nigerian priestly visitors Wande Abimbola and Omotoso Eluyemi, I heard the prominent Bahian priestess Stella de Azevedo lament in Portuguese to one of her subordinates, "I have *got* to learn English so that I can understand what they are saying!" English is as much a lingua franca in the Afro-Atlantic religious world as it is in the business world. The Afro-Atlantic dialogue is indeed a *circum-Atlantic* dialogue, shaped by the history of European imperialism and mediated by the economic, linguistic, and religious consequences of that imperialism.

It is for this reason that British Freemasonry has also deeply penetrated Afro-Atlantic iconographies of divinity and priesthood. As a secret society, Freemasonry possessed attractive similarities to a range of West African religious sentiments and organizations—including the Yorùbá *orìṣà* priesthoods and Ogbóni Society and the Ekpe Society of Calabar (now in Nigeria), as well as the Ekpe-inspired Abakuá Society of Cuba, oricha/orixá worship in Cuba and Brazil, and the Vodou religion of Haiti. As we shall see, the influence of Freemasonry is evident in the present-day West African Šàngó priesthood and in the various male-dominated African American priesthoods. In Cuba, Abakuá and Palo Mayombe priests, like Freemasons, use special handshakes to distinguish members from nonmembers. One informant tells me that Abakuá members and Freemasons also change their handshakes periodically in order to exclude lapsed or inactive members (Tata Àngel, personal communication, 1996). Haitian Vodou is also full of the iconography, handshakes, and personnel of Freemasonry (see, e.g., Cosentino 1995:33, 44–55).¹⁰

Beyond its resonance with the secrecy and initiatic character of West African priesthoods, Freemasonry acquires an additional resonance for African-inspired priests in Roman Catholic countries. Freemasons and African-inspired priests share a defiance of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical disapproval and of Christian chauvinism generally. Often referring directly to Masonic symbols and terms for the high god—such as the compass representing the “Great Engineer”—the African-inspired religions of the Americas stress their belief in the high god and thus appeal for ecumenical understanding just as Freemasons do (Tata Àngel, personal communication, 1996, and see Cosentino 1995:44).

Freemasonry has empowered African religious resistance in still further ways. In both Africa and the Americas, Freemasonry bears an association with wealth and temporal power, and the secret cooperation among Freemasons is widely understood to facilitate the endeavors of all members. Also apposite to this story are Freemasonry’s origins in early-eighteenth-century England. It is part of a projection of British symbolic power appropriated strategically and with special enthusiasm by Afro-Latins under the domination of Roman Catholic elites. Equally available for the subversion of white power generally is the Freemasons’ avowed debt to the esoteric knowledge of Egypt and their denial of the exclusively Greek origins of “civilization” professed since the 1840s by the Aryanist European racial chauvinists (Bernal 1996:94). Numerous literati and religious figures—including German Yorubanist Leo Frobenius ([1913] 1968), Nigerian J. O. Lucas (1970: especially 272), and Bahian Mãe Aninha (see Pierson 1942:293)—have articulated similarly Egypt-centered defenses of African cultural dignity or have asserted the ancient Egyptian origins of Yorùbá culture. Simultaneous references to both Freemasonry and ancient Egypt have been a repeated theme in the twentieth-century work of canonizing Yorùbá culture (see also Akintola 1992; Anyebe 1989: especially 53, 57, 79, 102, 106).

Thus it is no surprise that in the 1930s, the side of babaláwo diviner Felisberto Sowzer’s house in Bahia bore a seal featuring an Ifá divining board, the Masonic compass, the Yorùbá proverb *Suru ni oogun aiye* (“Patience is the medicine of life”), and two biblical inscriptions in English, “The Lord is my Helper” and “Wait on the Lord and keep his way.” Pierson’s drawing of this seal is reproduced in figure 5.1



FIGURE 5.1

Reproduction of the seal on the side of the home of Bahian diviner Felisberto Sowzer. From Donald Pierson's (1942) Negroes in Brazil: A Study of Race Conflict in Bahia. Used with permission of the University of Chicago Press.

(see Pierson 1942:259).¹¹ Indeed, Sowzer is part of an impressive dynasty of Brazilian-Lagosian travelers and priests, beginning with his diviner grandfather, the aforementioned Manoel Rodolfo Bañgboşe, and ending with numerous priestly grandchildren in Lagos, Bahia, and Rio.

Perhaps the only transatlantic dynasty more famous than the line of Bañgboşe is the Alakija family.^{12a} Though they are not noted for any particular connection to the Candomblé, they are a central feature of latter-day memories about the relation between Bahia and the “Africa” from which Candomblé originated. Thus it is telling that numerous Alakijas in Nigeria and Bahia are Freemasons. Appearing in figure 5.2, Plásido Alakija (aka Sir Adeyemọ Alakija) was a district grand master of the Freemasons in Nigeria. His nephew and my main informant in the family, psychiatrist Dr. George Alakija, is also a Freemason.

It is further noteworthy that the Alakijas were involved in local Nigerian secret societies. One of the oldest and most widespread secret societies in Nigeria is called *Ogbóni*. Devoted to the worship of the Earth divinity (Onílẹ̀), it encompasses family heads, chiefs, and priests



FIGURE 5.2

Plasido Alakija (aka Sir Adeyemọ Alakija) of Nigeria, wearing his Masonic attire (probably 1930s or 1940s). Original photograph owned by Dr. George Alakija of Salvador, Bahia.

of various òrìṣà, and in many kingdoms it counterbalances the authority of the king. In 1914 Westernized Christians, attracted by Ogbóni ritual and undoubtedly motivated by a nativist response to mounting

British racism, founded the Reformed Ogbóni Fraternity. Paralleling the syncretic activities of nationalist bourgeoisies elsewhere, these bourgeois Lagosians aimed to systematize and "refine" the practices of their Ogbóni forebears. This process appears consciously to have entailed assimilating Ogbóni to Freemasonry in its beliefs and iconography. Sir Adeyemọ Alakija was the first "overall political head," or Olórí Olúwo, of the Reformed Ogbóni Fraternity, an office he occupied until his death in 1953.¹³

Equally important in positioning this transatlantic family in the formation of Yorùbá identity is the fact that Sir Adeyemọ served as the first president general of the Yorùbá nationalist organization Ègbé Qmọ Odùduà (Association of Odùduà's Children). Founded by Qbafemi Awolọwọ in 1945, the Ègbé seemed at least partly intent on resisting Igbo ethnic preeminence in the emerging independence movement (Akintọla 1992, especially 7; Anyebe 1989:108; Paul Lola Bamgboṣe-Martins, personal communication, 1995; Comhaire 1949:43; Fadipe [1939] 1970:248).¹⁴ Collectively, the Alakija family linked extraordinary success in West African British colonial society and culture, including Freemasonry, with the will to reshape indigenous religious institutions in the service of African nationalism. Yet as the North American case reveals, Freemasonry could also empower assertions of *independence* from the British overlords. Figure 5.3 depicts George Washington in his Masonic regalia.

In Bahia, too, the Western-style accomplishments of the Alakijas are extraordinary. The Bahian branch of the family includes a lawyer, an otolaryngologist, a psychiatrist, and a civil engineer (see Rotilu 1932). During his research in the Bahia of the mid-1930s, Donald Pierson was shown a feature article in the *Nigerian Daily Times* (on whose board of directors Sir Adeyemọ was the only African member) that documented the family's transatlantic success (see Rotilu 1932). Moreover, as in the case of Felisberto Sowzer, their membership in the Freemasons appears to have remained something of a support to their African-inspired religious commitments, although other peculiarly American ideological dynamics have shaped their participation in African-inspired religion.¹⁵ For example, my Bahian informant Dr. George Alakija, a Freemason and prominent psychiatrist, respects the Candomblé much as other highly educated Bahians do—that is, as a



FIGURE 5.3

George Washington in Masonic regalia. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

beautiful aspect of the national legacy. He is not a member of any temple, but as a Brazilian government representative at the 1977 World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, Dr. Alakija presented his writing on a theme that Brazilians recognize as typically African and that the psychiatrists of northeastern Brazil, ever since psychiatrist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues founded Afro-Brazilian studies as we know it, have made a major object of investigation: "The Trance State in the Candomblé" (Alakija 1977).¹⁶

The character of such families' cultural commitments in Bahia is distinctive in other ways as well. Whereas adopting "African" names became a focus of these transatlantic families' "culture-building"

(Caulfield 1969) in colonial Nigeria, Nigerian-associated English names and Anglicized Portuguese names became their trademark in Bahia. Throughout the generations of their twentieth-century residence in Bahia, the Brazilian branch of the family has borne English names such as *George* and *Maxwell* (see also Pierson 1942:243). Ironically, while the Anglo-Africanness of the Bahian family members facilitated their assimilation into the Euro-Bahian elite, their persons and activities lent to Yorùbáness an enduring symbolic power, even as the male-dominated Ifá priesthood died out and the female-dominated possession priesthood of Candomblé became the preeminent manifestation of that transatlantic nation in Bahia.

Memories of Africa in the Bahia from the late 1930s onward were not only shaped by the complex cultural hybridity of their bearers but also reinforced by the haughty defensiveness of elite Afro-Bahians in a racist time and place. Pierson (1942:272) recorded the remark of one Afro-Bahian as follows:

These people here in Bahia think Africans are all barbarous and uncivilized. They won't believe we write our language and that books are printed in it... They don't know that in Lagos there are good schools, better than they've got in Bahia. Look at this [photograph of a school in Lagos]! Is there anything in Bahia as fine as that?

This is a genre of recollection of Africa prominent in Bahia during the first half of the twentieth century. These memories are not of the pristine African, or Yorùbá, culture that the victims of New World slavery *remembered* well enough to *retain* and *preserve*. No, they are based upon the experiences, souvenirs, and photographs of a class of literate and well-traveled Africans who helped bring "Yorùbá culture" as such into existence, established its prestige around the Atlantic basin, and canonized it as the preeminent classical standard of African culture in the New World, notwithstanding the North American attraction of black nationalists to Islam and ancient Egypt.¹⁷ What many Bahians remembered was a nineteenth- and twentieth-century West African coast in which English language, Roman script, Masonic temples, and a lively press were among the stuff of daily life.

"Traditional religion" (*esin ibilẹ̀*) in the twentieth-century Yorùbá



FIGURE 5.4
Nigerian Sàngó possession priest from Òyó, in the attire of the Aborigine Ogbóni Fraternity of Nigeria, chanting before a Sàngó shrine in the city of Ìbàdàn. Photograph by J. Lorand Matory, 1986.

hinterland—often represented as the primordial origin of Candomblé’s and Santería’s “survivals” and “memories” of Africa—is deeply inscribed with evidence of this ongoing Afro-Atlantic dialogue. The Freemasonry-inspired iconography of the Reformed Ogbóni Fraternity has penetrated the òrìṣà priesthoods of even the “Yorùbá proper,” the Òyó-Yorùbá. The shrine room door of my friend from the town of

Ìgbòho, the Sàngó priest Adeniran, bears various insignia of his membership in a local chapter of the Reformed Ogbóni-style fraternity—three unblinking eyes on an inverted V and three vertical shapes within it. In 1986 I met another Sàngó priest in Ìbàdàn, who chose to pose for a photograph in a Masonic-inspired apron bearing again the inverted V and three vertical shapes within it. In figure 5.4, he poses before the Sàngó shrine in Ìdí Arere, Ìbàdàn. Despite his wifely coiffure and wrap skirt (marking his relationship to the god who possesses him), this priest thus bears an unmistakable resemblance to his African Brazilian Masonic antecedent, Sir Adeyemọ Alakija (known to my informant Dr. Alakija as “Uncle Plasido”), shown with an apron and inverted Vs in figure 5.2. The number 3 has long been a shibboleth in the unreformed Ogbóni Society. But, of course, syncretic reformulations are evident in this “ancestral” garb. The 1986 priest is no Freemason, nor a member of the Reformed Ogbóni Fraternity. Rather, the Masonic signs authenticate his membership in a later, explicitly nativist organization. His hand-painted membership certificate (figure 5.5) comes from the “Aborigine Ogbóni Fraternity [sic] of Nigeria,” with its secretariat at Ilé-Ifẹ.

CONCLUSION

The study of the African diaspora has generated a series of productive analytic metaphors, highlighting the cultural, historical, economic, and political dimensions of diaspora with increasing refinement over time. Yet, much that the existing analytic metaphors in Afro-Atlantic studies have led us to overlook is productively highlighted in a new metaphor—one that represents homelands not as the past but as the contemporaries of their diasporas, and diverse diasporic locales not as divergent streams but as interlocutors in supraregional conversations. Africa and its American diaspora reflect the effects of an enduring dialogue and a dialectic of mutual transformation over time.

The dialogue metaphor is not intended to posit equality of influence or power among the interlocutors, just their continuous and meaningful *presence* in one another’s cultural history and self-construction. Indeed, the two English-speaking imperial powers have furnished the means for certain black “interlocutors” to “speak” far louder than others.

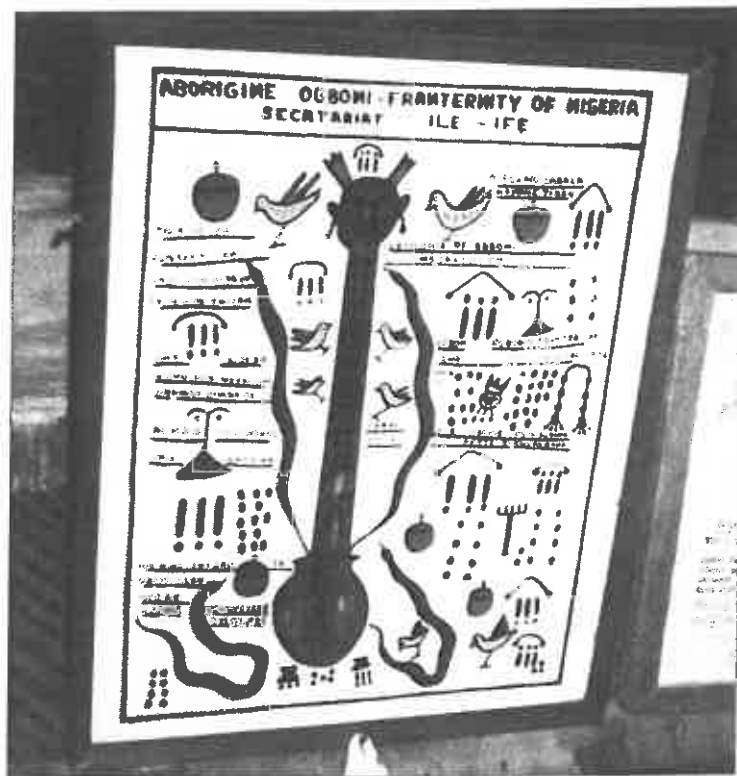


FIGURE 5-5

Close-up of the Šàngó priest's membership certificate from the Aborigine Ogbóni Fraternity of Nigeria. Photograph by J. Lorand Matory, 1986.

Though I question the likeness of Afro-Atlantic creole lifeways to quick-forming, bounded, and internally integrated “languages,” the analytic metaphor I propose builds on the legacy of the linguistic analogy. I must emphasize that “dialogue” is a metaphor and is not intended to suggest that all or even most aspects of Afro-Atlantic cultural exchange and reproduction are linguistic. Not all aspects of this exchange and reproduction are *like* language, but even the paradigmatic aesthetic forms of the Afro-Atlantic world—dance and music—bear traces of it and bear comparison to it. For example, Afro-Atlantic music regularly includes lyrics, imitates the tones and patterns of speakers’ mutual responsiveness, or is emically understood to “speak

to” people and to “call” gods. But, of course, music involves techniques and produces feelings beyond the range normally associated with speech.

Nonetheless, I am arguing that the cultural reproduction of dispersed ethnic groups, neighboring ones, and ones surrounding ocean perimeters regularly shares in the coeval and interactive qualities of dialogue and that those who dominate the imposition of *verbal* meaning on the gestures and artifacts of social life enjoy a *disproportionate* influence on the social consequences of those gestures and artifacts.

The image of oceans and seas as the foci and paradigmatic venues of intercultural dialogues is an opportune metaphor for a further revision of the anthropological model. Like other bodies of water, these circum-oceanic units have shores, but these shores shift. They are impermanent. And just as important as the shores, where a certain boundedness appears relatively enduring, every body of water flows from and into others and maintains a constant osmotic exchange with the surrounding air and land. Thus, flows, overflows, seepage, evaporation, wind, and precipitation continuously unite one body of water in exchange with others. Amid increasingly worrisome publicity, ocean-going vessels accidentally transport life forms previously common in one body of water into bodies of water where they had previously been unknown, radically altering not only the contents but also the ecosystem of the new habitat. Using dikes, dams, and canals, human beings have long engineered these processes, with intended and unintended consequences.

So for natural and human-made reasons, the “Seven Seas” seem more like one, the boundaries between them as imaginary, provisional, and contingent as the boundaries between cultures. Perhaps *culture* is better spoken of in the singular and regarded as a *process* than in the plural and as a discretely countable set of *things*.¹⁸ As countable and discrete things, cultures are but the provisional, debated, and evanescent assertions of political leaders, marketing experts, and unreformed anthropologists.

The Afro-Atlantic is one of the most important transnational cultural fields of the past five hundred years. Yet it has long engaged in a mighty dialogue with the Middle East and the Indian Ocean as well. Various Afro-Atlantic interlocutors have embraced and transformed

Islam (see, e.g., I. M. Lewis 1989; Lincoln 1973) and even Hinduism (see Rush 1999) for their own purposes. Cuban santeros employ Chinese porcelain vessels and "syncretize" the *orichas* with various avatars of the Buddha and the Chinese fertility goddess Kwan Yin. Moreover, this model of mutually transformative interregional communication in the genesis of culture is applicable to non-black subcultures of the Atlantic perimeter as well. Indeed, there is no natural reason to isolate the "black Atlantic" from the Atlantic world as a whole, any more than there is a reason to isolate the Atlantic perimeter from the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and Far Eastern regions with which it has long interacted. The field of Atlantic history has similarly examined the politics, economics, and ideas that have united the Americas with Europe, not the least of which constituted the slave trade (see Bailyn 1996). Like it, the "Afro-Atlantic" construct targets the politics, the economics, the ideas, and above all the *will* of a specific group of people to communicate and shape one another's lives. Hence, by the efforts of people who reason strategically about their sameness and their diversity—and therefore about the pasts that unite and divide them—the Afro-Atlantic world has always been *focused* instead of *bounded*.

Like Gilroy's "black Atlantic," the logic of the "Afro-Atlantic dialogue" highlights the underexamined mobility and agency of black people in creating this world and the specific role of black *consciousness* in the creative and historical making of black *distinctiveness*. Like Robert Farris Thompson's "black Atlantic," "Afro-Atlantic dialogue" restores Africa, Africans, African cultures, and Americans' vision of Africa to a central role in the making of the black Atlantic world. Borrowing Fabian's parlance, this model posits the "coevalness" of Africa and the Americas, rather than imagine present-day Africa as the past of the black Americas.

Closer to home, for example, the dialogue model requires us to reassess the *locus classicus* of African "survivals" in the United States, embodied, as it were, in the Gullah/Geechee people of the Georgia-South Carolina Lowcountry and Sea Islands. These people have long been the focus of scholarly investigation into what remains culturally African about black North Americans, despite what all agree is their generally high degree of acculturation to Western ways. Relative geo-

graphical isolation long kept the speech and lifeways of the Sea Coast Islanders distinctive. Various scholars have sought to explain that distinctiveness as a debt to the cultures of what are now the settler colonies of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the rice farmers of the Sea Coast Islands drew many of their enslaved workers from the rice-growing regions of Sierra Leone and Liberia. On one hand, the term *Gullah* might derive from the ethnonym of Sierra Leone's Gola people. On the other hand, African captives came to these islands from many other regions as well, and students of the local creole language, known as "Gullah" or "Geechee," have identified an extremely diverse set of African origins in its lexicon and in its justly famous basket-making tradition. Indeed, some identify the term *Angola* as the more likely source of the term *Gullah* (Rosengarten 1997; L. D. Turner 1949).

As African Americans have grown more willing to embrace Africa as a cultural model and emblem of collective identity, the decline of Gullah language and crafts has been reversed. Indeed, the "Africanness" of Gullah basketry has become its major selling point and a means of livelihood for many craftswomen in coastal South Carolina. However, it was Joseph Opala, a Euro-American anthropologist and former member of the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, who recently established the local conviction that Sierra Leone, in particular, was the source of the islanders' Africanness and the appropriate target of their "return" to the motherland (see the chapter by Sengova in this volume).

Indeed, the interest in this ahistorically specific tie was reciprocal. President Joseph Momo of Sierra Leone paid a highly public visit to the Sea Coast Islands in 1986 and encouraged the islanders to visit their "ancestral homeland," which a party of them did in 1989. President Momo continued the American tradition of attributing the islanders' linguistic distinctiveness to their African roots and identified the similarity of Gullah/Geechee language to Sierra Leonean Krio, or Creole, as proof (see the 1990 film *Family across the Sea* and the 1998 film *The Language You Cry In*).

In fact, both language varieties are predominantly English in their lexicons. Krio initially came about because of the interaction of African American returnees, diverse British-educated recaptives, British administrators, and Anglophone missionaries in Freetown. Thus the

Sierra Leonean and South Carolinian creole language varieties share features primarily on account of *the parallel circumstances of their genesis*, not on account of some shared, primordially African roots or of Gullah's having originated in Krio. In sum, the shared features of Gullah and Krio are highly ambiguous evidence of the Gullah people's Sierra Leonean or African "roots."

Nonetheless—and this is what makes the dialogue metaphor useful—a complex, politically, economically, and academically shaped dialogue has made the highly creolized Gullah dialect into emically persuasive grounds for a powerful new kinship—a web of living, albeit recent, social connections between Sierra Leoneans and South Carolina Gullah/Geechees.

The implications of this model should not be missed for regions other than the Atlantic perimeter, such as the Indian Ocean region (see also Chaudhuri 1990), the circum-Saharan world, and increasingly the Pacific Rim. And the analytic metaphor I propose also stands to highlight important but underexamined dimensions of smaller communities that have conventionally been called diasporas and transnational communities—such as the Jewish, Chinese, Irish, South Asian, and Lebanese diasporas, not to mention the countless transnational communities that have taken shape since World War II. Their future is likely to reflect much that the past and present of the African diaspora is already available to teach us. Diasporas and homelands continue to make each other over time, and they are shaped by a dialogue among numerous other coeval interlocutors of unequal power and unequal access to the means of communication.

Notes

1. See, for example, Otero 2000.
2. Consider Herskovits and his successors' study of "syncretism" and "creolization," both forms of cultural hybridity, as well as Eugene Genovese's seminal reflections on economic, cultural, and what James C. Scott would later call "everyday" forms of resistance (Genovese [1974] 1976; cf. J. Scott 1985). See Sally Cole (1994) on Ruth Landes's reflexive ethnography. Consider Roger Bastide's ([1960] 1978) early study of collective memory. Like Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Paul Connerton (1989), Herskovits and his followers have sought in learned motor

habits a central mode of sociocultural reproduction. See Matory (1999a, 1999b) for an examination of the nineteenth-century transnationalism documented early on by the likes of Pierre Verger ([1968] 1976). From the 1920s onward, Afro-Americanist anthropology has studied interregional and intercontinental links that defy the norms of area studies as conventionally constituted.

3. Note that the use of the syncretism trope links Herskovits and his followers to a rather different figuration of Africa's "ethnohistorical" links to the Americas. Herskovits's elder, Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, in Brazil; his contemporary, Fernando Ortiz in Cuba; his junior colleague, the French sociologist Roger Bastide; and their followers emphasized the consequences of "transculturation" (Ortiz), the "interpenetration of civilizations" (Bastide), and similar forms of Afro-European cultural hybridity in shaping whole national cultures rather than being merely the effects of an ironic African continuity on the black minority and its neighbors.

4. In an essay intended to challenge the positivist narration of "history," Trouillot presents, in passing, a similar challenge to the memory metaphor. Trouillot problematizes the assumptions that "memory" is like a storage-and-retrieval system of knowledge from the past and that history is merely the collective version thereof. Both memory and history, he argues, are produced and continually reshaped by the positionality of the present-day rememberer or historian (1995: especially 14–16). His notion of "silencing," whereby the political motives of present-day historians motivate their choices of which events to exclude from narrations of the past, is equally relevant to my doubts about the "memory" metaphor.

5. Of course, the literature addressing sociocultural reproduction *beyond* the African diaspora in terms of such tropes as cultural memory, social memory, and collective memory is also broad and deep, addressing agency and strategy to variable degrees. That literature addresses, among other themes, the political and technical conditions under which history is narrated and debated (e.g., Appadurai 1981; Malkki 1995); the rituals, bodily practices, and modes of dress that retain traces of past events (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1987; Connerton 1989; Stoller 1995); the marks that past crises have left upon our current vocabulary and legal procedures (Schudson 1997); the use of monuments in the selective commemoration of past heroes and the concomitantly selective authorization of present-day leaders (e.g., Werbner 1998); and the role of literal dialogue—that is, conversation among particular people—in shaping those people's recollection and articulation of past events (Middleton and Edwards 1990).

6. In my 1999 essay (Matory 1999c), I attempted to catalog the contexts and themes of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Afro-Atlantic dialogue with more of an eye toward empirical exhaustiveness than toward theory. I was concerned that a more selective manner of illustrating my point would allow some readers to believe that the phenomena highlighted by the dialogue metaphor are unrepresentative of and exceptional in Afro-Atlantic history. Readers of the present chapter are encouraged to review that essay for further illustrations of the Afro-Atlantic dialogue, which I *briefly* illustrate in this chapter.

7. Roach (1996) employs "dialogue" as an analytic metaphor in a sense quite different from my own. He briefly analogizes culture to a *scripted* dialogue, which is reproduced or "remembered" as each new actor replaces a deceased one in the same dramatic role. Though the performance is necessarily somewhat modified, the endurance of the role or space left by the dead or by the apparently forgotten constitutes a collective cultural memory. In contrast, the feature of "dialogue" I wish to highlight in my analytic metaphor is the fact of the interlocutors' coevalness and diversity of interests in the interpretation and reproduction of the past.

8. By most reports, Bañgboṣe came from Òyó. However, Aizinho himself identifies his grandfather's origin as Abêòkutà.

9. Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia (hereafter APEB), Registro de Entrada de Estrangeiros, 1855–56, Seção Colonial e Provincial (hereafter SCP), livro 5667 (January 9, 1855; March 21, 1855; November 20–21, 1855; January 11, 1866; January 28, 1856); APEB, Presidência da Província (hereafter Pres Prov), Polícia do Porto (hereafter Pol Por), Mapas de Saída e Entrada de Embarcações (hereafter Mapas) 1886–93, SCP, Maço 3194-5, file for 1889, June 12, 1869 (note, this 1869 item is out of place but was indeed found in the 1889 file); APEB, Pres Prov, Pol Port, Mapas, 1873–78, Maço 3194-3, see January 31, 1876. See also APEB, Pres Prov, Pol Port, Mapas 1878–85, Maço 3194-49, file for 1879, July 15, 1879; APEB, Pres Prov, Pol Port, Mapas, 1878–85, Seção Colonial e Provincial, Maço 3194-4, December 20, 1878; APEB, Pres Prov, Pol Port, Mapas, 1878–85, SCP, Maço 3194-5, file for 1889, June 4, 1889; APEB, Pol Port, Registro de Entrada de Embarcações, 1886–1890, Maço 5975, e.g., May 27, 1885 [sic]; October 22, 1885 [sic] and 1889–92, Maço 5976, e.g., p. 7, SCP; APEB, Livros da Inspeção da Polícia do Porto, Entradas de Passageiros, vol. 6, Anos December 4, 1891, to March 21, 1895, August 27, 1892, p. 80; APEB, Livros da Inspeção da Polícia do Porto, Entradas de Passageiros, vol. 8, Anos: January 2, 1896, to December 31, 1898, March 7, 1898; APEB, Polícia, Registros de Passaportes, 1881–85, Book

5909, and 1885–1890, Book 5910, SCP. Also see M. Cunha (1985:123, 125); Lindsay (1994:43–44); Moloney (1889:255–76); Olinto (1964:266–67); Pierson (1942:239); L. D. Turner (1942:65); and Verger ([1968] 1976:464). This theme was prominent in interviews I conducted in 1995 in Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia with Paul Lola Bañgboṣe-Martins of Lagos and Rio, Regina Souza of Salvador, Beatriz da Rocha of Salvador, Air José Sowzer de Jesús of Salvador, Albérico Paiva Ferreira of Salvador, George Alakija of Salvador, and Yinka Alli-Balogun of Lagos—all descendants of turn-of-the-century African Brazilian travelers and many of them travelers in their own right. For a complete list of sources, see Matory (2005).

10. The "compass" and "Great Engineer" iconography of Freemasonry also appears in the ground drawings of the Trinidad Shouters (see Simpson 1966:540, 543, 544, 547). See also Simpson's sketch of a Freemasonry-influenced "Trinidad ground-drawing" in R. Thompson (1983:112).

11. Sowzer's daughter Irene confirms that Pierson's depiction of the seal, which has now been painted over, was accurate (Irene Souza, personal communication, 1996).

12. Apparently of Ègbá origins, this dynasty of doctors, lawyers, and chiefs, some of whom conducted their professional studies in England, has appeared in newspapers, magazines, and books published in Brazil, Nigeria, and the United States.

13. Of lesser longevity, Dr. Abayomi Cole's West African Psychical Institute-Yorùbá Branch, founded in 1901, appears to represent another neotraditional, nationalist religious development by coastal and culturally creole Africans (see *The Lagos Standard*, April 17, 1901, p. 3).

14. Mr. Bañgboṣe-Martins normally resides in Lagos, but I met him first on one of his many extended sojourns in Rio. He identifies Adeyemọ Alakija as the last president of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity. On the contrary, Anyebe (1989:108–113) identifies Sir Adeyemọ Alakija as the first president, and his nephew, Nigerian chief justice Sir Adetokunbọ Adegboyega Ademọla, as the second.

15. On the other hand, existing studies of Brazilian returnees to West Africa emphasize their tendency to avoid African-inspired religious practices and to emphasize their Catholicism (M. Cunha 1985; J. M. Turner 1974).

16. The community linking Cuba to Lagos in this cycle of African American return also boasted some extraordinary Anglophone figures. For example, the Cuban-born Hilario Campos "returned" to Lagos, where he reportedly became

the "mayor." Despite the denials of Campos, Fernando Ortiz reported that Campos had been a *babaláwo*, or diviner. Andrés Muñiz was born to freeborn parents in Cuba in 1894, and the whole family "returned" to Lagos at the turn of the century. After earning his bachelor's degree in England, Muñiz returned to Cuba in 1919 as an employee of a British firm. He continually corresponded with his family in Lagos, as did his children after his death in 1944. His family denies that he professed Yorùbá religion but admits that he believed "in the power of the eyes." According to some friends, "when his opponent in a dispute over the job at the sugar mill appealed to 'witchcraft' in order to intimidate Andrés...Andrés reacted by dissecting the *majá* (a large snake) and the owl that appeared in his quarters on the plantation" (Sarracino 1988:70).

17. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with similar creativity, black North American Protestants also identified strongly with Ethiopia as their biblical counterpart and exemplar.

18. Consider also the useful suggestion by Appadurai (1996:12-13) that we emphasize the adjective *cultural* over the noun *culture*. He argues that culture is too often regarded as a substance rather than as the aspect of social conduct and self-representation intended to distinguish one's own group from other classes, genders, roles, nations, and so forth. Indeed, this Barthian *differentiating function* of culture is also what unites apparently diverse peoples in what I have called "superregional dialogues."

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