Activating the Past

Activating the Past:
History and Memory in the Black Atlantic World

Edited by

Andrew Apter and Lauren Derby

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Activating the Past: History and Memory in the Black Atlantic World,
Edited by Andrew Apter and Lauren Derby

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1638-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1638-0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Tables

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like many edited volumes, the one we offer here took longer than anticipated in its attenuated journey from conference to book. Its genesis dates back to the spring of 2005, when we organized a conference at UCLA on embodied forms of historical recollection, emphasizing Latin America and the Caribbean in Black Atlantic perspective. Building on new approaches to ritual that illuminate repressed memories and hidden histories, our goals have been both methodological and substantive, extending historical analysis beyond written sources to what we call "the voodoo archive"—those Atlantic arenas of ritual performance and spirit possession where the past is both activated and repossessed. It is one thing to identify those forms of mystification that distort the past to retrofit the present, and another to *use* those mystifying logics as interpretive keys for unlocking the past. The latter approach is far more difficult and rewarding, and represents the challenge that we collectively address.

Our thanks extend to both the James S. Coleman African Studies Center and the Latin American Institute at UCLA for cosponsoring the original conference on "Activating the Past," and to the Burkle Center for International Relations for providing a Global Impact Research Grant (2004–2006) with which our Black Atlantic framework was initially conceived and pursued. The Latin American Institute provided generous Title VI conference funding and for this support we are grateful. And very special thanks go to Ms. Sana Zaidi and Dr. LaRay Denzer for their Herculean labors in preparing the manuscript for publication.

If our project builds interdisciplinary bridges between anthropology, history, art history, and cultural studies, it has done so within the collaborative environment of UCLA's International Institute, where lively exchanges between area centers encourage comparative analysis and theoretical debate. It is our hope that the present volume embodies the spirit of such exchange by extending the very horizons of Atlantic historiography beyond the institutional confines of written sources and into the ritual shadowlands of the voodoo archive, or what Ricoeur has called in a more philosophical register: "memory, history, forgetting."

INTRODUCTION

ANDREW APTER AND LAUREN DERBY

We begin with a tale of two ritual encounters at distant reaches of the Black Atlantic world. The first involves the destruction of a "fetish house" by Captain A. A. Whitehouse, travelling commissioner of southern Nigeria, whose 1904 campaign against human sacrifice and cannibalism sent him up the mangrove creeks of the Niger Delta, where he confronted Africa's heart of darkness. The second recalls Katherine Dunham's lifelong affair with Haitian Vodou, starting with her 1937 initiation into the cult of Dambala on the floor of Madame Téoline's *houngfor* (Vodou temple).

For Captain Whitehouse, "pulling down the idols" represented the endgame of a British policy that began in the mid-nineteenth century with missionaries saving souls and accelerated with the firepower of the Royal Niger Company in its hostile takeover of hinterland trade. By 1904 the company's royal charter had been revoked, and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was taking shape. Unlike the missionaries and merchants who preceded him, Whitehouse was an officer of the British crown, and perceived the iniquities of "fetish-houses" in political terms, as instruments of chiefly oppression and obstacles to the very rationality of an emerging colonial administration. After burning down a central fetish-house in Allabia, the seat of the Andoni chieftaincy, Whitehouse learned of another such "Juju" deep in the bush, and returned days later to finish the job:

> Embarking in small canoes we paddled for some distance up a narrow and tortuous channel in the Mangrove swamp, landing finally in a gloomy grove, a narrow pathway leading to the place we were in quest of… In this hut were found many skulls and bones of victims, and all the paraphernalia used in the Juju ceremonies, consisting of ivory tusks, an ivory horn with five human skulls attached, the swearing-pot, emitting a frightful stench when broken, copper spears and swords, a bronze man from the lower Niger, a stool decorated with the heads of dogs, goats, and pigs, sacrificial

> pots, copper coils, large manilas and other old forms of Native currency, and many other objects of interest… One of the most interesting finds was a ship's bell, which evidently at one time belonged to an old Dutch slaver—being inscribed OTTO BAKKER ROTTERDAM 1757 (1905:411–12).

What follows is an ethnographic account of the meanings, beliefs, and cannibalistic customs associated with these objects, replete with linguistic glosses, photographic documentation, and the acknowledged assistance of a native informant. And in keeping with the spirit of scientific inquiry, the contents of the destroyed bush-shrine, including "a length of drain pipe of European manufacture" (Nicklin 2002:47) were sent to the British Museum, where they remain today as the "Andoni hoard" in the ethnography department.

Much can be made of the narrative registers of Whitehouse's discourse: one sensational and moralistic, depicting the "dense scrub," "ghastly skulls," and "terrible rites" of a hidden hinterland; the other sensible and scientific, with religious beliefs and marriage ceremonies fleshing out an emerging field of knowledge. For our purposes, however, we emphasize the fetishized forms of history that Whitehouse's expedition unwittingly exposed. First, there are the "objects" themselves; skulls—both human and animal, bone and bronze—as well as a bronze male sculpture "of an Ijo man" (of the Lower Niger Bronze Industry), a swearing pot, spears, swords, canoe paddles, tusks, bones, carved sticks, a drum made from human skin, Portuguese manillas, and to Whitehouse's surprise, the ship's bell from a Dutch slaver, dated 1757 (Fagg 1960). Clearly some of these objects and sacra are very old. They date from at least the mid-eighteenth century, combining sacrificial items and ritual paraphernalia with potent icons of the slave trade.[1] Second, as objects of concentrated power and value, the "fetishes" embody historical relations in their very materiality; in the case of Portuguese manillas, as commodity forms—indeed money forms—that evoke the first European "wave" of the Atlantic slave trade. As for the bronze skulls of leopards and the human skulls of sacrificial victims not directly implicated in economic exchange, they congealed ritual relations of political domination over vassal villages, prisoners of war, exposed witches, and domestic slaves who were "slain in the annual sacrifice to the gods" (Whitehouse 1905:416). And finally, we note the logic of attraction and incorporation so characteristic of enshrined ritual sacra. Like the ship's bell, the Portuguese manillas, and even the European drain pipe, potent ritual icons in Africa often fetishize the foreign, bringing the outside in through ritual exchange or mimetic appropriation, thereby tapping into external sources of power and value to

revitalize kingdoms and communities.[2] Shrines become sacred sites of a ritualized mode of space-time compression. As privileged repositories of sacred objects, they convert external commodities into ritual resources, "archiving" congealed temporalities within their walls.

How do we "read" such "fetish-archives," unpacking the hidden voices, repressed memories, and compressed temporalities so enshrined? What kinds of histories can be reconstructed, what interpretive methods effectively deployed? We could invoke a range of approaches in Marxist, hermeneutical, and Freudian registers, but we prefer to prepare the ground gradually—by following Katherine Dunham.

For Katherine Dunham—anthropologist, choreographer, and dancer extraordinaire—marriage to Damballa, Vodou deity of the Rada line, was part personal quest and part professional vocation, bringing together the many worlds that she navigated in her remarkable career. In her *lavé tête* (washing of the head), the first stage of initiation in Haitian Vodou, the body is ritually prepared to receive the *lwa* (deity), particularly the head, through which the devotee is "mounted" or possessed.[3] Dunham's initiation structures the narrative of her ethnographic memoir *Island Possessed*, weaving back and forth between Haiti and Chicago, past and present, religion and science, peasants and elites. It is her critical passage from *bosalle* (untamed outsider) to *hounci* (servitor of the gods); however, that evokes a much greater historical transformation, one that gave birth to the Black Atlantic world[4]:

> We were lying on a dirt floor spoon fashion, well fitted into each other, nine of us, ranging in age from seven to seventy, both sexes, all of us candidates for initiation into the cult of Rada-Dahomey… This was the second of three days' isolation on the floor of Téoline's houngfor, temple of the vaudun gods…set apart as the period of head cleansing or lavé-tête... The white curtain dividing us was thrown aside by the priestess Téoline. Ason in hand, she stood majestically in the doorway. 'Hounci lavé-tête,' she said, 'rise up and turn.' We sat and turned to the other side, as we had done every few hours since our confinement. As we settled on the other side Téoline moved toward us… Then she was at the head of the woman in my lap… 'Alliance,' she said, 'open up and let Papa Guedé come in'… Then I too jerked convulsively and must have turned red in the darkness, not because of a visitation, but in simple surprise, then in a quick succession of anger, frustration, and annoyance. In releasing her mait' tête…or in the purging of bosalle, unclean qualities, which must be done in order to open up and receive her god, Alliance had lost control of her bladder and the hot stream of urine spread over my new baptismal nightrobe from crotch to knee…Téoline was watching and no extra movements were allowed. Her hard knuckles pressed my shoulders back

> into position against the damp floor. I held my breath and concentrated on following the entrance of Guedé in Alliance (Dunham 1994:60–64).

What we glimpse in this extraordinary passage is nothing less than the Middle Passage, a ritualized palimpsest of the transshipment of slaves, packed "spoon fashion" in the fetid holds of slavers carrying their cargoes to the Americas. Confined and compacted on the floor of the houngfor, the neophytes must "rise up and turn" on command of the priestess, just as slaves, similarly arranged, were ordered to turn at given intervals by their overseers. As in a polluted hold beneath the deck, Dunham is soaked by the urine of a fellow initiate who is entered by her god. Ritually immobilized, enduring "the odors of evacuation already heavily mingling with sweat [and] bad breath," the connection with the Middle Passage is not entirely lost on Dunham: "There we lay, scarcely breathing, waiting, listening, senses alert, packed like sardines much as the slaves who crossed the Atlantic, motionless as though chained, some of us afraid" (ibid.:79). But the allusion immediately vanishes, a fleeting moment of quasirecognition scarcely registered in the text.

There are other significant histories memorialized in Haitian Vodou, ranging from explicit incarnations of Haitian revolutionaries and United States Marines to the development of class relations marked by ritualized repertoires of social distinction—fine foods, powders, and perfumes for Ezili; rags, rum, and tobacco for the *guedes* (spirits) (Derby 1994; Dayan 1995:3–74; Apter 2002). Dunham's initiation can also be taken further, establishing specific homologies between social and ritual categories of bosalle, the former referring to slaves just off the boats, before they were baptized as Christians, or to slaves who came directly from Africa, as opposed to Creoles who were born in the Americas, and were thus more assimilated to European ways. In ritual terms, bosalle refers to the non-initiate, one not ready for spirit-possession and whose head must be "baptized" to receive the power of the gods. Ritual baptism (*lavé-tête*) thus recapitulates the formal incorporation of Africans into New World societies, as slaves acquired new names and identities within a developing field of status distinctions. But whatever specific histories we might further explore, at this point we simply wish to highlight the general features of a fetishized past, one that is congealed in objects, housed in shrines, and activated by the esoteric arts of spirit possession and sacrifice. Where Whitehouse's fetish-house revealed a restricted archive of hidden histories, Dunham's initiation illustrates how such histories are repossessed through ritualized forms of embodiment.

* * * * * * *

Our project builds on an important paradigm shift in African Diaspora Studies. The first wave of these studies—beginning with Fernando Ortiz in Cuba, Gilberto Freyre in Brazil, and the pioneering frameworks of Melville Herskovits and Roger Bastide—sought cultural "survivals" and their "tribal" origins in West Africa to grasp the dynamics of acculturation in the New World. Drawing on history, ethnology, and sociology, as well as social psychology and criminology, this literature has been criticized for its essentialized African baseline, its static retentions, and its unwitting conflation of racial ideologies with ideas about cultural purity (Apter 1991). If the second wave of African Diaspora Studies has attended to these limitations, recognizing the class relations, social frameworks, and nationalist projects in which Africanity has been reinvented, it has nonetheless held to a "dispersal" model, more regional than ethnic, in which the black Americas came "out of Africa" (Mintz and Price 1992).

By the early 1990s a new paradigm emerged under the rubric of the Black Atlantic. Largely inspired by Paul Gilroy's timely intervention, the shift can be described as one from "roots" to "routes." Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (1993) identifies the generative role of ships as crucibles of creolization during the Atlantic slave trade and throughout the subsequent development of maritime markets, emphasizing the fundamental modernity of the Black Atlantic as a historical and cultural community. Africa shifts from a primary "baseline" to a coterminous zone of "historical conjunctures" (Brown 2003:273) characterized by ethnic mixing and hybrid forms from the very beginning of the triangle trade. As European ports and capitals, Caribbean plantations, American shipyards, and African cities became coeval sites in an emerging Atlantic field, so trade-union politics, plural societies, Pan-African movements, and expressive musical hybrids developed as hallmarks of a distinctive "counter-modernity." Black Atlantic Studies does not disavow the African diaspora, but incorporates it within a triangulated field of "transverse dynamics" and coextensive horizons.

Gilroy's innovative study evokes earlier frameworks of Atlantic history, such as Pierre Verger's (1968) monumental study of black Brazilians returning to West Africa, Philip Curtin's (1969) global synthesis of the Atlantic slave trade, John Nunley's (1987) study of Creole masquerades in Freetown, and the more general Atlantic Studies purview developed at Johns Hopkins University. It is in many ways incomplete, focusing exclusively on the Anglophone Atlantic and curiously silent about Africa itself (Piot 2001). Posed more as a project to be pursued than a finished work, however, it frames fresh approaches that can be extended to studies of creolization in West and Central Africa as well as French,

Hispanic, and Portuguese contexts; circuits of migration and cultural exchange between the Caribbean and the continental United States; new demographic data on transatlantic slavery (Eltis et al 1999); performance genres of ritual, carnival and memory; and changing patterns of racial and ethnic stratification, to name a few. Important new studies that deepen and broaden the Black Atlantic in such directions include Stephan Palmié's *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (2002), J. Lorand Matory's *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (2005), Linda Heywood and John Thornton's *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (2007), Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), and the valuable edited volumes of Heywood (2002), Yelvington (2006), and Kristin Mann and Edna Bay (2001).[5]

The essays assembled in the present collection focus on the dialectics of memory and countermemory (Davis and Starn 1989; Stoller 1992) within the Black Atlantic world, offering multiple perspectives on a fetishized past that is congealed in ritual objects, reconstructed on altars, and embodied by practitioners and devotees. This is not the place to discuss the substantial literature on history and memory—one that has already gone through several iterations—save to mention that much of the debate concerning accuracy and distortion, favoring official archives or collective representations, rests on slippery epistemological distinctions.[6] Suffice it to say that as anthropologists we know that all pasts are culturally configured (Sahlins 1985) and politically motivated, and as historians we also realize that however it may be apprehended, the past occurred and can be illuminated through a variety of interpretive methods. Such tensions between constructivism and positivism dog all historical interpretations, and it took no less a neo-Kantian than Ernst Cassirer (1944:171–206) to realize that even the most "objective" archival records are symbolic forms that are never simply "given." We thus reject hard and fast distinctions between authentic history and collective memory, and those between the "modern" and "archaic" societies with which they are characteristically associated, in favor of a more critical method that subsumes them dialectically. History and memory are co-implicative, as are the invented and recovered aspects of the past (McNeal, this volume). We are not offering an antidote to "verificationist" genealogies of an invented Africa, as Scott (1991, 1997) advises, by rejecting all appeals to "authentic" pasts, nor are we promoting a subaltern Atlantic historiography that subverts official history and its imperial archive. Rather we are broadening our concept of verification to include modes of activating and

repossessing the past that are generally excluded as primary sources, just as we are opening up the idea of the archive to embrace ritual associations and performative genres.[7] We concur with Roach (1996:xii) that "the pursuit of performance does not require historians to abandon the archive, but it does encourage them to spend more time in the streets." And, we might add, the trails and groves of the bush.

The idea of mining West African rituals for historical memories of the slave trade dates back to at least 1933, when Melville and Frances Herskovits published a popular piece in *Opportunity* (the progressive black journal of the National Urban League) describing a Dahomean ritual of appeasement for royal ancestors who had been sold into overseas slavery.[8] This historical approach to ritual was soon derailed by functionalist reductions of mythohistorical charters to the maintenance of political authority, continually revising the past to justify the present.[9] Thus the historicism of ritual symbolism remained methodologically repressed until the 1980s and '90s, with the development of an historical anthropology that privileged historical consciousness and the poetics of the past in contexts of colonization.[10] By the turn of the twenty-first century, a cluster of important monographs emerged rather rapidly, examining West African memories of Atlantic slavery in social landscapes and sacred rites. Robert Baum's *Shrines of the Slave Trade* (1999) provides extraordinary insight into the transformation of *hupila* (lineage spirit shrines) as the Diola of the Casamance region in Senegal sold captives and even neighbors into the lucrative slave trade. In his penetrating account, based on years of research, Baum broached the taboo subject of slavery to learn how the antisocial secret of kidnapping and selling a neighbor's child was ritually sanctioned by a hidden shrine in the household granary, fetishizing the very locus of the victim's concealment.[11] His study not only illustrates how ritual associations mediated the impact of slavery on a local society, but provides a rare inside glimpse into the widespread connection between secret societies and the abduction of slaves throughout West and Central Africa, such as the Nyigbla and Yewe shrines in Ghana (Bailey 2005; Akyeampong 2001), the Arochuku oracle and Ekpe society of eastern Nigeria (Dike 1956; Dike and Ekejiuba 1990; Palmié, this volume), and the Ndua poison oracle in Angola (Miller 1988).

If Baum's study unfolds within a western viewpoint of history in which religion responds to changing conditions, Rosalind Shaw (2002), developing new directions adumbrated by Blier (1995), Rosenthal (1998), and Piot (1999), examines religious ritual and embodied registers as alternative *forms* of historical consciousness—not recognized as history by Sierra Leoneans but fetishized in idioms of mystical agency. Her focus on

spirit raiders, divination techniques, social landscapes, and witchcraft idioms discloses "an alternative history of the slave trade—a history of moral imagination…told primarily in the language of practical memory through places and practices, images and visions, rituals and rumors" (Shaw 2002:22). Crucial to Shaw's interpretive method is the identification of "palimpsest memories" (ibid.:15) that represent a layering of historical templates in which prior conflicts and encounters shape the apprehension and recollection of subsequent events. As Piot (1999) has shown for the Kabre in Togo, and Jean Allman and John Parker (2005: 14–15) for the Tallensi in Ghana, popular accounts of colonial conquest are framed "by older memories of eighteenth century slave raiding," generating a chain of embedded encounters in which historic actors adapt prior scripts. The concept of "palimpsest memories" is important because it allows us to get beyond the idioms of collective recollection to the actual pasts that they codify and invoke, explaining how repressed historical memories can actually return, even if dimly apprehended or "fetishized" as sorcery. Against the presentism of political revision in oral history and ritual reproduction is the historicism of prior rupture and conflict as invoked to address and inform the present. As Shaw (2002:200) points out, such traumatic encounters were tragically resurrected in Sierra Leone during the rebel war of the 1990s through its permutations of "rape, enslavement, and mutilation."

We can locate the pioneering studies of Baum (1999) and Shaw (2002) within a wider range of similar cases that excavate memories of slavery and colonization in ritualized arenas of spirit possession and sacred space. Rosenthal's (1998) brilliant exposition of Gorovodu ritual among the Ewe of Togo reveals the intimacies of historical entanglements that inform the possession of adepts by the spirits of their ancestors' former slaves. Here we find an ethnohistorical embodiment of internal or "domestic" slavery that was linked to its Atlantic coastal counterpart, in which the southern acquisition of northern slaves is condensed within the sacred geography of a modern regional cult. What is so extraordinary about this study from a narrowly historical perspective is how the very form of spirit possession "records" hinterland slave routes that in some cases have no other documented counterpart. In *Dancing Histories: Heuristic Ethnography with the Ohafia Igbo*, John McCall (2000) similarly illuminates performative genres of embodying the past, linking the taking of heads and the evolution of the war dance to contemporary commentaries on politics and personhood. Histories are not only transmitted through "complex performances including music, dance, singing, costume, and masks" (ibid.:158), but also "dance" through multiple bodies and locations,

resisting official codification and narrative closure thanks to the active intercession of ancestors. Related logics of mimetic appropriation and the ritual recoding of sacred space apply to colonial encounters as well. Paul Stoller (1995) offers a dazzling analysis of the Hauka cult in Niger and beyond as it redeployed figures and icons of colonial power to resist domination and domesticate the state. In more measured tones, Sandra Greene (2002:4) reveals the nuanced transformations of "place, space and the body" as Anlo-Ewe negotiated successive waves of European missionaries and colonial regimes. And like the Hauka cult, which followed the routes of migrant labor from Niger to Ghana, spirit complexes often traveled south from hinterland savannas to coastal forests during the colonial period. Where Allman and Parker (2005) follow the "Tong Fetish" from Taleland to the southern coast as it morphed into a mobile witch-cleansing movement, Richard Fardon (2006) recovers the genealogy of a Cameroon grassland festival that moved south with nineteenth-century slave raiders and was later incorporated into colonial durbars and festivals of arms.

If each of these studies offers comparable insights into the historicity of West African ritual associations and ensembles, taken together they represent the historic topography of an Atlantic ritual field. Shrines and spirits of the slave trade, incarnations of colonial officers, ancestral intercessions by former captives, or the defensive architecture of domestic space, speak not only to local meanings and memories, but to the regional dynamics of commodification as Africa entered the Atlantic world. On one level we are simply connecting the dots. The dominant regional axes in West Africa designate a lateral west-east coastal crossroads that mediated African-European encounters, and a vertical continuum into the northern hinterlands linking domestic slavery and the politics of raiding to Atlantic ports of embarkation. The "dots," however, hardly stop at the coast, but enjoin cognate ritual complexes in the plantation societies and maroon communities of the Americas, through the circulation of slave bodies, the institutionalization of religious brotherhoods, and the dialectics of creolization more generally. Here, as in Africa, we find the return of the repressed in the countermemories and hidden histories of Haitian Vodou (Dunham 1994, Dayan 1995, Cosentino 1995), the cryptic mythopoetic utterances of Saramakan "first time" (Price 1983), the forms of ritual servitude within Cuban Palo Monte (Palmié 2002, Routon 2008), or the Congadeiros associations of Minas Gerais in Brazil (Kiddy 2005). And within their associated ritual geographies, regional contrasts between coastal and hinterland communities juxtapose Africans with more creolized figures of the *montero*, the *jíbaro*, the *indio* and the *caboclo*.

It is not enough, however, to plot the coordinates of a transatlantic ritual field, since our goal is to explore the historical memories that it effectively archives and activates. How do we understand the very connections that developed between Afro-Atlantic bodies, performance genres, and ritual associations? First, we must emphasize that we are *not* suggesting a simplistic genealogy of ritual transmission in which "original" memories are faithfully reproduced by subsequent performances in perpetuity. If the ideologies of ritual specialists assert faithful adherence to the ways of the ancestors, we know well enough that such claims of ritual orthodoxy fly in the face of innovations and regional variations that both shape and reflect the historical conditions in which they are embedded. What the West African ethnohistorical record does reveal is how ritual associations and their performative genres are constantly changing in dynamic contexts of fission, conquest, exchange, and migration that rearrange local pantheons, introduce new deities, revise sacrificial protocols, and invoke alternative memories (Apter 1992). If ritual associations reenact sacred histories through praises and processions, they also have their own institutional histories of territorial expansion, political engagement, or demographic decline. These types of history need to be distinguished in order to be compared and correlated. Nor is the association between a specific group and its deity fixed, or even tractable, as gods, icons, and choreographies can be appropriated by rivals, refashioned by outsiders, or exchanged through networks of ritual reciprocity, crossing the very sodalities that they initially inscribed.

What are the transatlantic implications of such dynamic flexibilities? When white Cubans suddenly flocked to the "African" Abakua society in the 1860s, did they disrupt an ethnic chain of ritual transmission or simply manifest a principle of flexible recruitment (Palmié, this volume)? When a white Argentine *curandero* (folk healer) embodies a Congo ancestor, is he falsely claiming the voices of others by poaching ritual resources from Congo descendants, or is his action a contemporary variation on the manipulation of genealogical charters (Cosentino, this volume)? To resolve the apparent tension between authentic versus illegitimate spirit possession and ritual transmission, we must confront a deeper paradox of displacement and substitution built into the logic of ritual empowerment and consecration, one that establishes a space of indeterminacy and alterity within its very core.

In place of a naïve or essentialized historicism that posits fixed chains of ritual transmission from ethnic kingdoms and cultures in Africa, we adopt Roach's concept of ritual "surrogation," one that deconstructs the "blood-lines" of circum-Atlantic ritual genealogies while illuminating

their forms of historical memory. Central to this concept is a Hegelian dialectic in which group identity is established through a kind of performative negation (and thus mimetic appropriation) whereby who "we" are rests on who "we" are *not* (Rosenthal in this volume). The ritual paradox of origins demands that what is socially or politically "other" or marginal becomes symbolically central to the constitution of the group. This theme has many variations: the stranger-king who comes from the outside, but whose very body constitutes the sanctified center of the body politic through royal consecration and rites of renewal (Sahlins 1985); the sacrificial victim who, as slave or vanquished prisoner, is fed to the gods and literally incorporated by the devotees serving the community; or as a ram or goat serves as a surrogate for the human offering; or again those ritual sacra that fetishize the foreign—such as the imported velvet of Yoruba kingship, the Birmingham steel of an emir's Lugard sword, or the European thrones and mirrors that supported and reflected the king's body. We can also recognize variations of this theme in royal Ashanti regalia iconic of northern slavery (Kramer 1993), the representations of "others" (e.g. Muslims or anthropologists) in parodic Gelede masquerades (Drewal and Drewal 1983), and, echoing the early days of European contact, the appearance of white gods in Cape Coast (Tabir) and the Niger Delta (Adamu).

For Roach, the dialectics of surrogation performed double-duty in Europe and the Americas, informing the emergence of creole societies as "an oceanic interculture:"

> The key to understanding how performances worked *within* a culture…is to illuminate the process of surrogation as it operated *between* the participating cultures. The key, in other words, is to understand how circum-Atlantic societies, confronted with revolutionary circumstances for which few precedents existed, have invented themselves by performing their pasts in the presence of others. They could not perform themselves, however, unless they also performed what and who they thought they were not. By defining themselves in opposition to others, they produced mutual representations from encomiums to caricatures, sometimes in each another's presence, at other times behind each other's backs (1996:5).

There are many important implications that follow from this model of core substitutions, including anxieties of racial displacement manifest in minstrelsy and illicit desire, but three are particularly relevant to questions of historical interpretation. First and foremost is the built-in logic of "performing their pasts in the presence of others," establishing recognized arenas of circum-Atlantic memory in Europe, Africa, and the Americas

that warrant serious investigation. If Africa assumes a place in this triangulated field, it is not privileged as the origin of diasporic dispersion, but rather "receives" as much as "confers" through circuits of cultural transmission and exchange that linked capital markets (Nunley and Palmié in this volume). Secondly, following surrogation and the sociology of its substitutions, the descent lines of performed histories and memories are productively destabilized, allowing the putative memories of one group or ritual association to cross social boundaries, change collective bodies, or generate new chains of "displaced transmission" (Roach 1996:28). As Roach (ibid.:5) maintains, "performances so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions—those that were rejected and, even more invisibly, those that have succeeded," thus tracking how a Yoruba god became a Congo spirit in Brazilian Candomblé, how a Congo deity became an Indian in Cuban Espiritismo (Bettelheim and McNeal in this volume), how some African deities became surrogates for alternative sexualities in the Caribbean or how "European" and North American spiritists channeled African revenants provides significant insights into the spectral past (Polk, Viarnes, and Cosentino in this volume). Finally, given the unspeakable secret of the sacred origin—that it is predicated on difference, absence, and alterity—we can appreciate how embodied memories are themselves repressed and unspeakable, returning through fetishized forms of repetition to defer what cannot be told, such as the trials of enslavement, the horrors of the Middle Passage, the eradication of Amerindians, the transgressions of interracial domination and desire, as well as the aesthetic pleasures and lighter ironies of misrecognized exchange. Memories at the center are never fixed or safely lodged, but occupy labile repositories of multiple events and collective traumas, wrapping such repressed histories as the slave trade in Senegambia, colonial overrule in the French Sudan, or the U.S. occupation of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the same ceremonial cloth.

* * * * * * *

The essays that follow explore various geographies of historical memory in the Black Atlantic world, from different disciplines, time scales, and analytic vantage points. They present not a unified theoretical perspective but a range of innovative interpretive strategies in which such hidden substitutions, embodied historical memories, and unofficial pasts are gradually brought to light. The first four chapters are Atlantic in scope, framing Africa and the Americas in relation to macrohistorical patterns of migration and circulation. Palmié's focus on the Ekpe/Abakuá relationship

not only illuminates the intimate connections between capitalist modernity and the development of "traditional" African cults, but inaugurates a methodological revolution in the very construction of diasporic object-domains. New World creole religions, he argues, are not "secondary" elaborations of original African ritual complexes; rather, both belong to the same historical trajectories linking transatlantic societies through production and exchange.[12] Nunley's chapter on the Jolly masquerade of Freetown (Sierra Leone) beautifully instantiates this methodological move with reference to the creole histories of West African aesthetic forms, emphasizing the importance of West Indian soldiers and Kru sailors as agents of circum-Atlantic cultural circulation. And where Palmié restructures the historic relations between Ekpe in the Niger Delta and Abakuá on the docks of Havana, Parés compares initiation rites in Benin and Bahia, showing how memories of warfare and enslavement in Vodun were superseded by ritualized references to emancipation in Candomblé. Like Parés, Lovejoy emphasizes the significance of *forgetting* in understanding new patterns of ethnoracial stratification in the Americas, focusing on the loss of scarification as ethnic status markers and the emergence of new registers of interaction and differentiation. And in methodological counterpoint to Palmié's macrohistorical illuminations, Lovejoy engages Black Atlantic dynamics through the microcontexts of individual biographies.

Chapters five through fourteen present more localized case studies of ritualized complexes on both sides of the Atlantic. In chapters five and six, Baum and Rosenthal explore West African "fetishes" of Atlantic slavery and modernity, and of the violence underlying figurations of the sacred. Baum extends his earlier work on the Hupila shrines of the Diola in Senegambia, examining how hidden histories of complicity controvert official accounts of victimization during the slave trade. Enshrined memories not only serve as a corrective to one-sided historical narratives, he argues, but point to contemporary conditions that keep the memories alive. Echoing Palmié's focus on the modernity of Ekpe/Abakuá, Rosenthal explores the development of Gorovodu as a modern regional cult among the Ewe that spread through Ghana, Togo, and Benin, activating a range of hinterland entanglements through the Hegelian dialectics of spirit possession. Here we see a clear demonstration of core substitution through ritual surrogation, as ethnic others—indeed former slaves—empower the bodies of devotees through symbolic transpositions of personhood and place.

In chapters seven through fourteen, we shift to the Americas, drawing on material from Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Brazil, Cuba, and the United

States. If these studies are grounded in specific societies, they by no means reify fixed legacies or traditions but emphasize the movements of peoples and practices through travel, migration, and commodity exchange. McNeal's rich and rigorous study of "ecstatic" religions in Trinidad and Tobago—one of the most multiethnic and historically layered of Caribbean nations—reminds us that the African-identified Shango-Orisha ritual complex cannot be grasped in ethnoracial isolation, but developed contrapuntally with the East Indian-identified Shakti Puja cult in "comparable trajectories of consolidation and marginalization." Focusing on the processes of pantheonization within, and indeed between, both creolized complexes, he extracts histories of class stratification and racial segmentation from "archives" of symbolic and institutional remodeling that include Afro-Indian forms of hybridity. Desch-Obi turns to more militant forms of embodied memory in the Haitian stick-fighting techniques of *tiré bwa*, a ritualized and commemorative martial art that condenses West and Central African fighting genres to evoke ceremonial spaces of slave resistance that fed into the Haitian revolution. His innovative multisited Atlantic research enables him to distinguish ideologies of African origins professed by practitioners from the historical trajectories and stylistic evolutions of the stick-fighting techniques themselves. Brazeal illustrates similar processes of spatiotemporal displacement and condensation through the value transformations of sacrificial exchange in the Bahian interior, where an entire regional history of commercial relations motivates the symbolic economies of sorcery and healing. Mirroring Rosenthal's coast-hinterland axis in West Africa, here we see ritual transpositions of the Bahian port and the inland *sertão* from the standpoint of the backcountry.

The final four chapters chart the sociohistorical topographies of espiritismo and North American spiritualism, where ritual systems, class relations, and racial taxonomies regroup and converge among clusters of practitioners who conjure the dead. Tracing influences from Haiti as well as regional Caribbean figures in Cuba, Bettelheim discloses the historical metamorphosis of Congolese avatars into Native American spirits, highlighting an implicit logic of indigenization that explains their associated powers and iconographies on espiritismo altars. Her judicious photographic ratiocination underscores the importance of material objects and visual sources in revealing the histories of ritual relations. Viarnes extends this approach to the process of constructing and consecrating *muñecas* (spirit dolls) in Cuba today, bringing an evocative poetics of historical memory to a rich ethnographic documentary base. Specific references to former slaves who were practitioners of Palo, Ocha, and

Espiritismo establish ritual genealogies that harness the power of the past through preparations in making and "re-membering" the dolls. Polk and Cosenstino explore related systems of channeling the dead in mainland contexts of North America. Polk further complicates the genealogical waters, showing how the "African" spirits of runaway slaves may well have derived from nineteenth century white literary sources, underscoring implicit connections between abolitionism and spiritualism that recapitulated the "darker" dialectics of minstrelsy. The neglected history of popular cultural production and performance that he engages speaks not only to repressed anxieties about slavery in the liberal establishment of the day, but also to the pseudoscientific registers through which whites and blacks alike were "redeemed."

And finally, turning to one of our own intellectual curanderos, we listen to Charley, channeling Congo Manuel, as he and Cosentino discuss the eschatology of bones, combining New Age wit with Old World wisdom—via Buenos Aires—in East Hollywood; a fitting reminder that even as the global pathways of the Black Atlantic expand (Clarke 2004; Capone 2005), they continue to animate our lives.

Notes

1. We know from Nicklin and Fleming (1980:105) that the clay cores of two bronze leopard skulls were TL (thermoluminescence) dated to 1665 C.E. +/- 40 and 1680 C.E. +/- 40 respectively.
2. For a powerful conceptualization of "fetishizing the foreign" with respect to history, agency, and gift giving among the Biak of Indonesia, see Rutherford (2003). For related insights into the congealed historicities of fetishized objects and their varieties of exchange value, see the excellent introduction and edited collection of Spyer (1998). For an extended case study along similar lines, see also Spyer (2000).
3. Dunham's transcription appears to confuse the verb *lever* as in "to raise" or "to turn" with *laver* (to wash), an ambiguity that may well be embedded within the ritual command itself. Cf. Desmangles (1992:87).
4. We are keeping with Dunham's orthography to be faithful to her text, although the conventions for Haitian kreyol (creole) have since changed.
5. See also Sweet (2003), Young (2007) and Desch-Obi (2008). Even this new literature reflects an emerging methodological tension between Atlantic circulation and Congo origins.
6. In addition to the now canonical invocations of Halbwachs (1992), Yates (1966), Nora (1989), and Connerton (1989), we highlight the valuable discussions of Bay (2001:43–49), Cole (2001:22–29), Prager (2001), Shaw (2002:1–24) and Yelvington (2002).

7. One could argue that the idea of verification which Scott (1991, 1997) rejects is simply a western cultural construct, but we eschew such historical relativism as well, recognizing the tension between the past as represented and the past that occurred. For innovative reconceptualizations of the archive, see James (1988), Trouillot (1995), Hamilton et al (2002), and especially Taylor (2003), whose dialectic between "archive" and repertoire," taken together, informs our approach to the "voodoo archive."
8. See Herskovits and Herskovits (1933). This description and other passages were reprinted in Herskovits and Herskovits ([1938] 1967:63–69). I thank Kevin Yelvington for bringing this material to my attention.
9. See Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940:16–22) for a classic statement of this position.
10. See e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 1992, 1997) for Africa, Price (1983, 1990, 1998) for the Caribbean, and Taussig (1987) for Latin America.
11. See also his chapter in the present volume.
12. For a prescient rethinking of African witchcraft along these lines, see Austen (1993).

References

Akyeampong, Emmanuel. 2001. History, memory, slave-trade and slavery in Anlo (Ghana). *Slavery and Abolition* 22:1–24.

Allman, Jean, and John Parker. 2005. *Tongnaab: The history of a West African god*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Apter, Andrew. 1991. Herskovits's heritage: Rethinking syncretism in the African diaspora. *Diaspora* 1:235–60.

—. 1992. *Black critics and kings: The hermeneutics of power in Yoruba society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

—. 2002. On African origins: Creolization and *connaissance* in Haitian Vodou. *American Ethnologist* 29:233–60.

Austen, Ralph. 1993. The moral economy of witchcraft: An essay in comparative history." In *Modernity and its malcontents: Ritual and power in postcolonial Africa*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 89–110. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bailey, Anne C. 2005. *African voices of the Atlantic slave trade: Beyond the silence and shame*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Baum, Robert M. 1999. *Shrines of the slave trade: Diola religion and society in precolonial Senegambia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bay, Edna G. 2001. Protection, political exile, and the Atlantic slave-trade: History and collective memory in Dahomey. *Slavery and Abolition* 22:22–41.

Blier, Suzanne P. 1995. *African Vodun: Art, psychology, and power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brown, David H. 2003. *Santería enthroned: Art, ritual, and innovation in an Afro-Cuban religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Capone, Stefania. 2005. *Les Yoruba du nouveau monde: Religion, ethnicité et nationalisme noir aux États-Unis*. Paris: Éditions Karthala.

Cassirer, Ernst. 1944. *An essay on man: An introduction to a philosophy of human culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Clarke, Kamari. 2004. *Mapping Yoruba networks: Power and agency in the making of transnational community*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Cole, Jennifer. 2001. *Forget colonialism? Sacrifice and the art of memory in Madagascar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff, 1991. *Of revelation and revolution.* Vol.1: *Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

—. 1997. *Of revelation and revolution.* Vol. 2: *The dialectics of modernity on a South African frontier*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff. 1992. *Ethnography and the historical imagination*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How societies remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cosentino, Donald, ed. 1995. *Sacred arts of Haitian Vodou*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

Curtin, Philip. 1969. *The Atlantic slave trade: A census*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Dayan, Joan. 1995. *Haiti, history and the gods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Davis, Natalie Zemon, and Randolph Starn. 1989. Introduction to special issue, *Memory and counter-memory*. *Representations* 26 (Spring):1–6.

Derby, Lauren. 1994. Haitians, magic and money: Raza and society in the Haitain-Dominican borderlands, 1930–1937. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36:488–526.

Desch-Obi, T. J. 2008. *Fighting for honor: The history of African martial arts traditions in the Atlantic world*. Columbus, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Desmangles, Leslie G. 1992. *The faces of the gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Dike, Kenneth Onwuka. 1956. *Trade and politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Dike, Kenneth Onwuka, and Felicia Ekejiuba. 1990. *The Aro of south-eastern Nigeria 1650–1980*. Ibadan: University Press.

Drewal, Henry John, and Margaret Drewal. 1983. *Gelede: Art and female power among the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Dunham, Katherine. 1994. *Island possessed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eltis, David; Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds. 1999. *The trans-Atlantic slave trade: A database on CD-ROM*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fagg, William. 1960. *Nigerian images*. London: Lund Humphries.

Fardon, Richard. 2006. *Lela in Bali: History through ceremony in Cameroon*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Fortes, Meyer, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, eds. 1940. *African political systems*. London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute.

Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Greene. Sandra E. 2002. *Sacred sites and the colonial encounter: A history of meaning and memory in Ghana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On collective memory*. Trans. Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hamilton, Caroline; V. Harris, J. Taylor, M. Pickover, G. Reid, and R. Saleh, eds. 2002. *Refiguring the archive*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Herskovits, Melville J., and Frances S. Herskovits. 1933. A footnote to the history of Negro slaving. *Opportunity* 11:178–81.

—. [1938] 1967. *Dahomey: An ancient West African kingdom*. 2v. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. First published New York: J. J. Augustin.

Heywood, Linda M. 2002. *Central Africans and cultural transformations in the African diaspora*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heywood, Linda M., and John K. Thornton. 2007. *Central Africans, Atlantic creoles, and the foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

James, Wendy. 1988. *The listening ebony: Moral knowledge, religion, and power among the Uduk of Sudan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kiddy, Elizabeth W. 2005. *Blacks of the rosary: Memory and history in Minas Gerais, Brazil*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Kramer, Fritz. 1993. *The red fez: Art and spirit possession in Africa*. Trans. M. R. Green. London and New York: Verso.