

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA: NEW DIRECTIONS OF STUDY

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*Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil.* Edited by KRISTIN MANN and EDNA G. BAY. London: Frank Cass, 2001. Pp. 160. \$64.50 (ISBN 0-7146-5129-X); \$26.50, paperback (ISBN 0-7146-8158-X).

*The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities.* Edited by ISIDORE OKPEWHO, CAROLE BOYCE DAVIES and ALI A. MAZRUI. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp. xxviii + 566. \$59.95 (ISBN 0-253-33425-X); \$22.95, paperback (ISBN 0-253-21494-7).

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RECENT studies addressing the 'African diaspora' have sought to provide global context for the experience of people of African descent. The two books under review – each a major contribution to studies of the African diaspora – provide an opportunity to take stock of the emerging genre of historical and cultural studies of which they are a part. The perspective of the African diaspora has the advantage of locating movements and connections of Africans around the world, and in so doing has the power to inform and sometimes surprise. From such a perspective, for instance, Alberto da Costa e Silva notes that during the 1860s a French bookseller in Rio de Janeiro sold a hundred copies of the Qur'an each year, mainly as clandestine sales to slaves and ex-slaves. This evidence confirms the continuing significance of Islam in Brazil, and raises the possibility that the religious practice was sustained through continuing contacts with West Africa. Over a century later, novelist Alice Walker launched a headline-grabbing campaign against female circumcision in Africa. As Joseph McLaren shows, Walker's campaign reflected not the shock of an African-American's initial encounter with the complex social practices of the African continent, but her considered judgment after decades of visits to East Africa.<sup>1</sup> These examples suggest the range and interest of linkages across wide distances that may be elicited through studies of the African diaspora. They reflect the contributions of an academic enterprise that is apparently settling into a permanent place on the scholarly and curricular scene.

The vantage point of this review is the comparison of scholarship in African studies with this emerging field of intercontinental study. The new field has not really named itself, so I offer a provisional name – 'Africa-diaspora studies'.

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<sup>1</sup> Alberto da Costa e Silva, 'Buying and selling Korans in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro', in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 83; Joseph McLaren, 'Alice Walker and the legacy of African American discourse on Africa', in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 530–5.

As I will argue below, both African studies and Africa-diaspora studies face continuing debates on the scope of their analysis and on the historical dynamics explored by specialists in each field. The two fields overlap with each other and with other fields of studies, including Latin American studies, Black studies, imperial and colonial studies, world-system analysis and studies of the Islamic and Christian worlds.

These scholarly fields may be distinguished, for purposes of this comparison, from their historical objects of study. The 'African diaspora', as an object of study, centers first of all on populations descended from and at a distance from populations of the 'African continent' or 'African homeland', the latter being the object of African studies. The point of these definitions is to make explicit the distinctions between 'homeland' and 'diaspora' as objects of study and between 'African studies' and 'Africa-diaspora studies' as scholarly fields. Combining the terms enables us to discuss the interplay of homeland and diaspora, African studies and Africa-diaspora studies.

The two collections under review display the strengths and the dilemmas of current efforts in Africa-diaspora studies. In addition, they open a space for posing some broader questions about this expanding field of study. I propose three basic issues for discussion in that broader evaluation. First, what is the scope – geographical, temporal and topical – of the African diaspora as a historical phenomenon and of Africa-diaspora studies as a body of scholarship? Second, what are the contributions, strengths and weaknesses of Africa-diaspora studies, especially as seen from the vantage point of African studies? Third, what are the implications of Africa-diaspora studies for the historical analysis of the African continent?

As I will argue, recent work in Africa-diaspora studies has produced insightful advances in the historical study of interregional connections. Africanist scholars would do well to emulate certain habits of Africa-diaspora scholars: to read more widely on both Africa and the diaspora, to explore comparisons and linkages within the African continent and with the diaspora, to draw on evidence from the African diaspora to answer questions about the homeland and to write for audiences beyond other Africanists. Yet there is an ironic blind spot of Africa-diaspora studies: the African continent itself is presented too often in oversimplified terms as an undifferentiated homeland. While diaspora scholars can be blamed for inattention to African detail, there is also the possibility that Africanists have failed to summarize their analyses convincingly. I suggest, therefore, that Africanists, by adopting more of the interactive and transregional approach of Africa-diaspora scholars, might clarify the contrasts and linkages among African regions sufficiently to permit a more specific reflection of those patterns in studies of the African diaspora.

#### FORMULATIONS OF AFRICA-DIASPORA STUDIES, C. 1960–90

The term 'African diaspora' developed in the 1960s, according to George Shepperson and Joseph E. Harris, the two scholars most responsible for the propagation if not the coining of the term. Shepperson mentions the 1965 international conference of African historians at Dar es Salaam as one venue in which the term developed. Both Shepperson and Harris utilized the notion of the diaspora in their contributions to the 1968 volume resulting from that conference.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Terence O. Ranger (ed.), *Emerging Themes in African History* (Nairobi, 1968); George Shepperson, 'Introduction', in Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (eds.), *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays* (Cambridge MA, 1976), 2; Joseph E. Harris, 'Introduction', in Joseph E. Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*

The Shepperson–Harris notion of the African diaspora echoed earlier formulations of the world populated by black people, yet added an original emphasis. Eighteenth-century writers on the links between Africa and the Americas had tended to focus on the difference between slavery and freedom.<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writers on Africa and the Americas accommodated to the racial essentialism that dominated the intellectual life of the Atlantic region. Black writers expressed their broad historical statements in terms of ‘the Negro race’, even as they contested the hierarchy inherent in racialist ideology. The titles and analyses of Alexander Crummell, Martin Delany and especially E. W. Blyden rely on racial terminology to convey the vision of cultural unity of Africans on the continent and in the Americas.<sup>4</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, in the second decade of his participation in the pan-African movement, wrote an overview of the African continent and diaspora entitled *The Negro*. Thereafter Marcus Garvey circulated copies of *The Negro World* as widely as possible throughout Africa and the Americas in the 1920s; the cultural movement of Négritude relied on racial terminology to convey the cultural unity of black people in Africa and the Caribbean; and anthropologist Melville Herskovits relied on a similar framework in his 1941 study of transatlantic cultural continuity, *Myth of the Negro Past*. These writers used the language of race to write positively of the experience of black people, though in doing so they risked association with notions of racial hierarchy.<sup>5</sup>

After World War II, however, racial categorization of the world gave way to area-studies analyses, in a sea-change of framework that had political and intellectual roots in both the cataclysm of war and the prewar critique of racism.<sup>6</sup> Du Bois was quick to identify the postwar emphasis on region rather than race and entitled his updated, 1946 continental review *The World and Africa*.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter African studies emerged in the 1950s as social-scientific analysis within the geographic limits of the African continent. African studies applied to Africa the civilizational framework of studies developed earlier for Eurasia. African studies

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(Washington DC, 1982), 3. Kristin Mann argues, however, that the concept of the African diaspora (quite aside from the specific term) ‘developed first among Africans and their descendants’. Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 3–4.

<sup>3</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Peterborough, Ontario, 2001); Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (2 vols.) (London, 1793–4).

<sup>4</sup> Gregory U. Rigsby, *Alexander Crummell: Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Pan-African Thought* (New York, 1987); Martin R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1852); Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (London, 1887).

<sup>5</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (New York, 1915); Robert A. Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers: Sept. 1920–Aug. 1921* (Berkeley, 1984); Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York, 1941). See also J. E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound* (London, 1911). It may be argued that these authors had little choice, in their time, but to use the term ‘Negro’ and write in terms of racial categories; my point is to observe that later, beginning with the era of decolonization, other language and hence other frames for the diaspora were available.

<sup>6</sup> John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986); Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Bloomington IN, 1998); Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists’ Account* (Cambridge MA, 1999). The latter includes a review of anthropological critique of racialistic ideology.

<sup>7</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (New York, 1946).

also applied modernization theory to studies of political mobilization within the boundaries of nations clearly designated as African. Overall, place superseded race as the prime basis for categorization of the human experience. Ethnicities (including racially defined ethnicities) were recognized and even emphasized in this regional framework, but these ethnicities tended to be defined within national boundaries rather than across them. African studies led rapidly to successful interpretation of the integrity of African cultures and civilizations, analysis of African agency in encounters with European power and assessment and critique of European colonial rule.<sup>8</sup> But this scholarship tended to cut Africans off from their cousins beyond the limits of the continent.

The vision of the African diaspora arose in the 1960s as an attempt to reconnect Africa to expatriates of African origin. The originality of the notion lay in its emphasis on historically created populations rather than racial essences or regional continuities. The idea of the African diaspora echoed transatlantic studies of 'the Negro', yet differed from a racial organization of study by emphasizing historical and cultural connections more than genetic connections. It relied on the contemporary expansion of African studies, but differed from a regional or continental organization of study by focusing on movement of populations and on issues of heritage and cultural change. Scholars of the late twentieth century, in privileging this historical approach to the African diaspora, gave attention to the repeated migrations and renewed connections in black political community and cultural identity. In these and other ways, those who raised the banner of Africa-diaspora studies foreshadowed the rise of global approaches to history, exploring the connections of populations across geographic and cultural boundaries. They were early – perhaps too early – in articulating a transregional framework for historical analysis.<sup>9</sup>

Yet as the basic logic of Africa-diaspora studies became clear – the study of political, social and cultural connections among historically constituted communities of African ancestry – alternative views on the scope of such studies rapidly emerged. The initial vision of the African diaspora, stated in its strongest terms, implied a frame of analysis beginning with the history and society of the African continent and extending this frame outward, encompassing in its purview any regions and societies including significant numbers of people of African heritage. The first volume to bear the term 'African diaspora' in its title appeared in 1976, edited by Martin Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg, with an introduction by Shepperson.<sup>10</sup> The topics ranged from Ethiopians in the Graeco-Roman world through medieval Islam, the Atlantic slave trade, the Indian Ocean and included twentieth-century cultural and political affairs in the Americas. The strength of this collection was the range of topics that it showed to be linked by the framework of the African diaspora. Following this approach, and at its maximal breadth, the scope of Africa-diaspora studies might have included migrations of free Africans in many eras; slave trade (especially across the Atlantic but also in other directions); slavery and emancipation in the Americas; the formation of cultures among

<sup>8</sup> K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885* (Oxford, 1956); Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946–1960* (London, 1966); Jan Vansina, *The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples* (Madison, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> William H. McNeill's *Rise of the West* (New York, 1963) was a pathbreaking contribution to global studies in history, but only in the 1990s did such analyses become organized into an institutionalized field of study.

<sup>10</sup> Kilson and Rotberg (eds.), *The African Diaspora*. For Shepperson's most noted work, see George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915* (Edinburgh, 1958).

African peoples of the continent and the diaspora; precolonial and colonial politics and society on the African continent; the impact of colonialism in Africa; studies in anthropology and sociology of African culture and its transformation; and studies of early African civilizations.<sup>11</sup> By the same token, however, the encompassing approach of the Kilson–Rotberg volume presented the difficulty of an exploratory coverage: it was difficult to sustain discourse and interpretation across such a range of topics.

At much the same time, a parallel discourse on intercontinental dimensions of black history had developed: studies of pan-Africanism. These studies addressed the political expressions of national projects in Africa and the diaspora and the underlying cultural expressions of black identity. They focused on the English-speaking Atlantic. With time, these studies of pan-Africanism expanded their scope forward in time to encompass the politics of independent Africa. They also stretched backward in time to encompass social movements of antislavery and patterns of cultural identification with a larger black unity.<sup>12</sup> Both pan-African studies and Africa-diaspora studies were encouraged by the changing social situation of the 1960s and 1970s: decolonization, civil rights advances and political mobilization of black people in Africa and the diaspora. Yet an underlying difference persisted between the specifics of political community (for pan-African studies) and the broader patterns of African influence in the world (for Africa-diaspora studies). The proponents of the two frameworks had to decide on their relationship.

One approach was to subsume studies of pan-Africanism within the wider context of Africa-diaspora studies. Shepperson, taking this approach in 1976, argued that 'it is no exaggeration to call pan-Africanism the latter-day ideology of the African diaspora'.<sup>13</sup> Another approach was to narrow the practical emphasis of Africa-diaspora studies until it focused on the framework of pan-Africanism. The latter approach tended to dominate, at least for a time.

The strongest and most effective statement of an Africa-diaspora framework, in this formative era, appeared in the volume edited by Joseph E. Harris of Howard University. *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, an ambitious and prescient collection, reflected an even more ambitious 1979 international conference.<sup>14</sup> The effort of the conference and the volume were sustained by a curricular program at Howard: a survey of the African diaspora became a major introductory course at the university. While the net of the conference was cast at considerable topical breadth, the scope of the published volume was more restricted than that of the Kilson–Rotberg volume. Certain chapters supported a long-term scope for Africa-diaspora studies, but the balance of the contributions accepted a focus that

<sup>11</sup> For long-term interpretation of African culture, see Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et culture* (Paris, 1954); Diop, *Civilisation ou barbarie* (Paris, 1981). For pan-African cultural studies, see Society of African Culture, *First World Festival of Negro Arts, Colloquium on Negro Art* (Paris, 1968). UNESCO supported a 1978 conference in Port-au-Prince leading to a publication bridging slave trade studies and African diaspora studies: UNESCO, *The African Slave Trade from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century: reports and papers of the meeting of experts* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> American Society of African Culture, *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered* (Berkeley, 1962); Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (New York, 1962); Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa*, trans. Ann Keep (New York, 1974 [first published 1968]); J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900–1945* (Oxford, 1973); P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement 1776–1963* (Washington DC, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Shepperson, 'Introduction', in Kilson and Rotberg (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions*.

coincided substantially with pan-Africanism.<sup>15</sup> That is, articles concentrated principally on postemancipation societies in the Americas, on 'assimilation and identity' and on 'return' migration to Africa. St. Clair Drake, in an extensive concluding chapter, addressed the overlap between diaspora and pan-Africanism as frameworks.<sup>16</sup>

In particular, Africa-diaspora studies, as presented in *Global Dimensions*, focused on the reproduction and transformation of the diaspora, but not on its creation. Meanwhile, two major topics on the creation of the diaspora – the documentation of the Atlantic slave trade and the debate over the origins of culture among people of the diaspora – were addressed separately. The division reflected a rather striking ethnic division of labor. Black scholars were most prominent in studies of the post-emancipation diaspora and pan-Africanism, as indicated in the contributions to *Global Dimensions*. White scholars, in contrast, were most prominent in studies of the slave trade<sup>17</sup> and of cultural foundations in the diaspora. The issue of the formation of culture among descendants of Africans in the New World, conducted outside the framework of Africa-diaspora studies, was usually characterized in terms of the debate between E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits, then linked to the analysis of 'creolization' developed by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price.<sup>18</sup> In addition, studies of life and developments on the African continent itself came to be left outside the scope of Africa-diaspora studies and treated as the preserve of African studies.<sup>19</sup> The resulting vision of Africa-diaspora studies, while narrower in practical scope than the initial suggestions of Shepperson and Harris, represented a broad and systematic attempt to link the history of the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora. Thus, while a virtually comprehensive list of potential diaspora topics was proposed for inclusion in the Kilson–Rotberg volume, a narrowed though still capacious vision of the diaspora came to dominate the Harris volume.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Oruno D. Lara, 'African diaspora: conceptual framework, problems and methodological approaches', in Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions*, 54–68.

<sup>16</sup> St. Clair Drake, 'Diaspora studies and pan-Africanism', in Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions*, 341–402.

<sup>17</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969); Joseph C. Miller (ed.), *Slavery and Slaving in World History: A Bibliography* (Armonk NY, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Frazier argued that African-American culture of the United States developed out of the experiences of slavery and emancipation and owed little to African heritage; Herskovits used diaspora-wide comparisons to argue that there were significant survivals of African traditions in the USA and especially in the Caribbean. Mintz and Price argued that an eclectic mix of African, European and Amerindian traditions emerged in societies of the African diaspora. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago, 1939); Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*; Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (Philadelphia, 1976). See also Jahnheinz Jahn, *Muntu, the New African Culture*, trans. Marjorie Grene (New York, 1961 [first published 1958]); and Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> The ethnic division of labor for studies of the African continent was not so sharply defined. This era also saw the divergence, in the United States beginning 1969, between the African Studies Association and the African Heritage Studies Association. Among their differences were that the latter gave substantial attention to the African diaspora, while the former focused principally on the continent.

<sup>20</sup> Harris's contribution proposed 1787 as the 'key year' for African diaspora history (because of the 1787 US decision to halt slave imports as of 1807, and because of the movement of 400 African settlers from England to Sierra Leone). In addition to the Atlantic narrative, he added a summary of diaspora history for the Indian Ocean in this

The early interpretive statements of Africa-diaspora studies, while they have become steadily more influential over the course of decades, gained only modest reinforcement in the short term. The Howard-based program, for all the energy and imagination of its early days, did not lead to widespread emulation. The 1979 conference at Howard was not repeated on such a grand scale and the university's publication programs turned in different directions, though a second edition of the Harris volume in 1993 indicated both continuity and change in the project: it extended its scope to give more attention to slavery and to earlier times.<sup>21</sup> The vision of the African diaspora had gained a place on the map, but did not achieve wide recognition as long as historians generally remained reluctant to surmount the national framework. Diaspora-wide and pan-African studies, in their transnational orientation, appeared to be audaciously broad in days when the only transnational studies achieving any recognition were those of empires.<sup>22</sup>

#### THE 1990S: BLACK ATLANTIC AND AFRICAN DIASPORA

In the 1990s the framework of the African diaspora became appealing to a wider audience. The steady increase in contact among regions around the Atlantic, along with the development of global thinking more generally, provided new encouragement for studies of connections across the African diaspora. By that time, however, the term 'Black Atlantic' had arisen to contest some of the same terrain.<sup>23</sup> Paul Gilroy's focus developed out of the experience of blacks in Britain and centered on identifying 'a counterculture of modernity' – that is, the place of black

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time frame, and also noted that the Indian Ocean history of the African diaspora went back nearly two millennia further. Overall, however, Harris's contribution to this collective volume deemphasized the earlier stages of the African diaspora that he had emphasized in his earlier volume on Africans in Asia. Joseph E. Harris, 'A comparative approach to the study of the African diaspora', in Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions*, 112–13, 116; Harris, *The African Presence in Asia: Consequences of the East African Slave Trade* (Evanston, 1971). See also Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism* (New York, 1970); and Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas, 1441–1990* (New York, 1987). Thompson notes that he taught a course on 'Africa and the Black Diaspora' at the University of Nairobi between 1971 and 1975.

<sup>21</sup> Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions*, 2nd ed., 1993. The second volume has 25 rather than 23 chapters; 14 chapters remain the same. Half of the new chapters addressed the era of slavery, for instance in Brazil and the Mediterranean; several of the deleted chapters addressed literature or were written by francophone authors. The section on 'assimilation and identity' became 'settlement, identity, and transformation'. Harris, meanwhile, gave an Africa-diaspora dimension to historical conferences held in Nairobi in 1982 and in Colombia in 1985.

Harvard University, following publication of the Kilson–Rotberg volume, showed little activity in Africa-diaspora studies until the 1990s. Kilson and Rotberg (eds.), *African Diaspora*; Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (eds.), *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> The *Journal of World History*, for instance, was founded only in 1990.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge MA, 1993). The critique, while it had wide resonance, was aimed particularly at Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity* (rev. ed., Trenton NY, 1989); and Molefi Kete Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* (Trenton NJ, 1990).

intellectuals as creators and critics who contributed crucial elements to the broader British and Western culture of modernity.<sup>24</sup> His initial point was a critique of the national framework within which British cultural studies were constrained. This transnational part of his outlook was easy to accept for those with a diaspora-wide perspective. But Gilroy encountered more controversy in criticizing US-based scholars for 'essentialism', by which he meant that they preferred connection with an unchanging African past to involvement in the complexity of modernity.<sup>25</sup> Gilroy's desire to break free from the shackles of African 'tradition' made it difficult for him to connect to modern Africa. Except for brief appreciations of Alioune Diop's launching of *Présence Africaine* and the music of Fela Ransome Kuti, Gilroy did not envision Africans as contributing to the construction of modernity. Gilroy's concluding chapter focused on the notion of diaspora, yet his analysis of West-Indian-cum-Liberian scholar Edward Wilmot Blyden centered more on Blyden's ties with Jewish colleagues than on his African connections. For Gilroy, the African diaspora is 'the history of blacks in the West'.<sup>26</sup> In African studies, Gilroy's work therefore elicited only faint commentary at first. In Africa-diaspora studies, however, *The Black Atlantic* brought resounding reverberations of both praise and critique, and these eventually reached Africa.

Colin Palmer was among those responding critically to Gilroy's analysis and framework. For Palmer, a historian of Africans in Spanish and British colonies and in the United States, the term 'African diaspora' applied to both the continent and the diaspora over a long period of time and addressed the gamut of issues from migration to cultural continuity to modern politics. In his view, an expansive scope of Africa-diaspora studies thus presented a framework of greater validity, because of its greater breadth and depth, than the black Atlantic.<sup>27</sup> Palmer thus reasserted and made more explicit the comprehensive vision of the African diaspora proposed in the 1976 volume of Kilson and Rotberg.

Meanwhile sociologist Robin Cohen, whose initial work was on Africa, had written an insightful review of diasporas in general, beginning with a detailed and critical review of the Jewish diaspora in which he contrasted the Jewish diaspora (a 'victim diaspora') and the Greek diaspora of colonization. While Cohen's treatment of the African diaspora was concise rather than extensive, he was effective in noting the variety of ways of studying diasporas, distinguishing those for which the homeland is excluded from the analysis (such as the Armenians) from cases in which analysis of the homeland is treated as central to explaining the diaspora (such as the Sikhs).<sup>28</sup> These alternative choices in the geographic scope of the African diaspora can be labeled as the 'diaspora apart' model and the 'homeland plus diaspora' model.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For instance, Gilroy argues that Martin Delany anticipated the need to assign a male gender to the African continent. Robert Campbell, Delany's companion on the 1859–60 voyage to Abeokuta, labeled Africa as 'motherland' but Delany labeled it as 'fatherland'. Africa is thus included in the analysis, but Gilroy makes Delany the center of discussion, not his Egba hosts. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 25–6. <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 195–9, 208–10, 218, 223.

<sup>27</sup> In emphasizing the importance of a diaspora-wide framework for the era of slavery and the slave trade, Palmer chose to give less emphasis than Gilroy to the culture of modernity. Colin Palmer, 'Defining and studying the modern African diaspora', *Perspectives* [American Historical Association], 36, 6 (Sept. 1998), 1, 22–5.

<sup>28</sup> This clarifies without resolving the framework of the African diaspora. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Thus Harris (ed.), *Global Dimensions* (1982), formally adopts a 'homeland plus diaspora' model, but a number of the contributions in the volume follow the 'diaspora apart'



Michael Gomez, an Africanist historian, took a step in the direction of wider scope in 1998, as he published a social and cultural history of enslaved Africans in the southeast of North America up to 1830.<sup>30</sup> This book, while focusing on a single geographic segment of the diaspora, expanded the scope of Africa-diaspora studies in two directions. It extended the temporal scope from the nineteenth-century era of emancipation to include the era of enslavement during the two previous centuries; and it adopted a 'homeland plus diaspora' approach, in that it paid close attention to specific African regional origins of captives brought to North America and sustained a transatlantic vision of the creation of African-American culture. Gomez's work, while it, too, elicited significant debate, signaled a wave of new energy in Africa-diaspora studies. To galvanize this expanded activity, Gomez organized a major conference and, in its wake, launched an organization for study of the African diaspora.<sup>31</sup> The framework of the African diaspora had won its recognition, and the term appeared in a rapidly increasing number of titles.<sup>32</sup>

As the twenty-first century opened, even more books on the African diaspora appeared. The two books under review here focus, in different fashions, on the interaction of the African homeland and the overseas diaspora. The Mann-Bay book, which first appeared as a special issue of *Slavery and Abolition*, includes articles divided about equally between a focus on the Bight of Benin and on Brazil (and within the latter, on the regions of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and Maranhão). It adopts what may be called a 'targeted' approach, fixing on certain issues in geography and analysis; it fixes firmly on the nineteenth century and its contributions mostly adopt the 'homeland plus diaspora' model. The volume edited by Okpewho, Davies and Mazrui takes an approach that is topically exploratory but temporally targeted. Its contributions mostly follow the 'diaspora apart' model; they range widely across geography and themes and as a result allow for little dialogue among the articles. The majority of the thirty-three chapters in this volume, however, center on the twentieth century.

#### CONTINENT AND DIASPORA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Mann and Bay, in their brief introduction, argue that 'Earlier generations of scholars had posited a unidirectional movement of enslaved persons stripped of identity and culture, or they looked for possible "retentions" of Africa among descendants of slaves in the Americas'. In contrast, the results of the UNESCO-supported project on the Slave Route 'dramatically revise scholarly

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model. Gilroy follows a 'diaspora apart' model, except that he also treats the Caribbean as a secondary homeland for settlers in Britain. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 81-2.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> The conference, 'Crossing Boundaries', took place in New York in September 2000; it was followed by creation of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora. <http://www.aswadiaspora.org/home.html>. The acronym ASWAD is also the Arabic word for the color 'black'.

<sup>32</sup> As is usual with such terminological shifts, however, some adopted the term and not the meaning: especially in the United States, for some authors 'African diaspora' became a new synonym for the more localized 'Afro-American'. See, for instance, Charles Green, *Manufacturing Powerlessness in the Black Diaspora: Inner City Youth and the New Global Frontier* (Walnut Creek CA, 2001).

interpretations of the cultural impact of transatlantic contacts'.<sup>33</sup> These results show that 'a dynamic and continuous movement of peoples east as well as west across the Atlantic forged diverse and vibrant reinventions and reinterpretations of the rich mix of cultures represented by Africans ... on both continents'.<sup>34</sup> Kristin Mann articulates the detail of this approach with a chapter on shifting paradigms in cultural analysis, arguing that 'the opposition that has emerged between proponents of the Africanist and creolist models has reached the limits of its usefulness'.<sup>35</sup> She makes an effective call for inclusion of this longstanding debate within the scope of Africa-diaspora studies. Yet even in her call for combining the various traditions of Atlantic studies into a more nuanced study of cultural change, she gives more emphasis to arguing that study of the diaspora should begin in Africa than to arguing that it ought also to trace the continuing changes in Africa of influences from the diaspora.

Edna Bay contrasts collective memory and historical documents in assessing the past and the influence of slave trade. For the kingdom of Dahomey, Bay associates memory with *bo* and *bocio*, ritual objects described by Herskovits and later analyzed by Suzanne Blier, that might protect their creators from the dangers of enslavement. Bay then associates history with the accumulation of stories about the fates of individuals in the hierarchy of Dahomey, who faced exile, execution, enslavement and occasional reinstallation in positions of power: she gives a fine summary of what is known of Agontime, the exiled throne-mother of King Ghezo. Bay finds historical documents to be more dependable than memory, but concludes that the analyst needs both to reconstruct the past. Blier's earlier analysis, in contrast, emphasizes the difference between *bo* (magical charms of relatively constant form) and *bocio* (mud statuary created as an expression of one's feelings), and argues that the slave trade era saw a marked expansion in the latter, reflecting an increase in social insecurity and personal anxiety. In sum, Bay's analysis brings to the eastern coast of the Atlantic an effort to distinguish between memory and myth. The details of the difference between Bay and Blier show in addition that one may be able to extract new insights in history from evidence of memory.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The UNESCO Slave Route project is based in Bénin, and has been supported most actively by the Nigerian Hinterland Project, directed by Paul Lovejoy at York University in Toronto. An additional discovery in African diaspora connections resulting from this collaboration is now in print: Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.), *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America* (Princeton, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay, 'Introduction', in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 1. Unfortunately, the same page lists the number of forced migrants from the Bight of Benin to Brazil as 2 million. This figure is closer to the total of forced migrants from the Bight of Benin in all directions across the Atlantic.

<sup>35</sup> The Africanist and creolist models of cultural change in the diaspora stemmed from those of Herskovits and Mintz and Price. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*; Mintz and Price, *Anthropological Approach*; Mann, 'Shifting paradigms in the study of the African diaspora and of Atlantic history and culture', in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 6. For a more recent defense of the notion of 'survival' in transatlantic cultural change, see Olabiyi Yai, 'Survivances et dynamismes des cultures africaines dans les Amériques', *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 1 (1996), [www2.h-net.msu.edu/~slavery](http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~slavery).

<sup>36</sup> Edna G. Bay, 'Protection, political exile, and the Atlantic slave-trade: history and collective memory in Dahomey', in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 42–60; Suzanne Preston Blier, *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power* (Chicago, 1995). Bay's analysis of history and memory is an extension of the work of Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950). Blier's analysis is open to the argument that *bocio* were more open

Olabiyi Yai pursues Mann's vision of nuancing the analysis of transatlantic cultural change with a defense of survival rather than syncretic creolization as the mechanism of cultural transmission. For the religion of the Aguda (Brazilians) in West Africa, he argues that the Catholicism of the Aguda was a social device that could gain higher status for those who professed it, but that it was otherwise a front, and that the tradition of the vodun was the actual faith of those families.<sup>37</sup> More broadly, Yai emphasizes the uniqueness of the Aguda in identity, religion and language, as compared with such parallel groups as the Krio, Saros and Americo-Liberians.

Robin Law demonstrates the intricacy of detail available on the evolution of the Brazilian or Aguda community in Ouidah and traces the dilemmas of their successive political links with Brazil, Dahomey and, briefly, Portugal. Elisée Soumonni is able to use the overlapping identities of Yoruba, Aguda and Dahomeans to argue cases for the coalescence of revised and expanded identities on both sides of the Atlantic in the course of the nineteenth century. For the twentieth century, Soumonni makes the case for the successful integration of the Brazilians into the nation of Bénin.

The volume's studies on the western side of the Atlantic reveal details that raise new questions about life on both sides of the ocean. Alberto Da Costa e Silva demonstrates both cultural continuity and links with Africa for Islam in Brazil. The substantial commerce in Qur'ans in Rio, fueled by the migration of numerous slaves from Bahia to the south, demonstrates not only the continuing prestige of Islam but also the maintenance of Islamic practices in Brazil to the end of the nineteenth century. The end of direct connections to West Africa seems to have caused a fatal shrinkage in the Muslim community.<sup>38</sup> Luis Nicolau Parés, in contrast, shows that the cult houses of the Jeje nation reveal both continuity from their eighteenth-century origins and patterns of local innovation. Comparing the Jeje houses of São Luis de Maranhão with those of Cachoeira and Salvador in Bahia, Parés notes that they celebrated distinctly different deities. He proposes a comparative ethnography, on both sides of the Atlantic, to clarify the patterns of persistence and innovation in vodun religion.<sup>39</sup>

João José Reis makes the case for creolization and for ethnic and racial mixing as dynamics underlying the nineteenth-century development of Candomblé in Bahia. Through individual-level social historical analysis of leaders and, to a lesser degree, of their followers, Reis notes the formal affiliation of each house with a 'nation', yet

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to modification in an era of anxiety brought by threats of enslavement. For insights on the Bay-Blier debate, I am indebted to Stacy Tweedy.

<sup>37</sup> In the same African, Brazilian and Caribbean regions as those populated by exiles from the Bight of Benin, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Iberian exiles shifted among religious affiliation with Christianity and Judaism. I have seen no suggestions that the result was Judeo-Christian syncretism. Of course the parallel is not exact, but it nonetheless suggests that there may have been less voduno-Christian syncretism than is sometimes thought. Yai's argument notwithstanding, a genuinely Catholic community did ultimately develop in coastal Bénin. Following Yai, however, we must reconsider when and how it emerged.

<sup>38</sup> Da Costa e Silva, 'Buying and selling Korans'.

<sup>39</sup> Parés dates the term 'Jeje' as far back as 1739 in Maranhão (it refers to people of Gbe-speaking ancestry). His analysis serves as a reminder that the term 'Candomblé', while often treated as a generic term for Afro-Brazilian religion, refers more precisely to certain houses of Bahia. Luis Nicolau Parés, 'The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão and in the Candomblé of Bahia', in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 91–115.

shows the remarkably eclectic origins of the actual participants within each house.<sup>40</sup> Kim Butler emphasizes selectiveness more than eclecticism, showing how the community of Ilê Iyá Nassô developed with ‘the mission of faithfully recreating ... the traditions of the African nation of Ketu’. This became the most prestigious Candomblé house in Bahia, though people from Ketu formed a very small proportion of the Yoruba either of Africa or Brazil.<sup>41</sup>

Overall, this collection makes substantial progress toward applying a ‘homeland plus diaspora’ model to the study of the African diaspora. It highlights discussions, linking both sides of the Atlantic, of cultural issues that are usually discussed only on one shore. Comparisons of maroon communities in Africa and the Americas are an additional possibility.<sup>42</sup> Still, the progress in expanding transatlantic studies of African society is not yet rapid: it was Pierre Verger and Roger Bastide, half a century ago, who actually conducted field work on orisha, vodun and candomblé on both sides of the ocean.<sup>43</sup>

#### THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Isidore Okpewho introduces *The African Diaspora* with a brief and somewhat turgid statement of the scope of Africa-diaspora studies. In it he at once claims the maximal terrain for diaspora studies and restricts the scope of the volume sharply. He argues that the contributors chose ‘to examine the ways in which these transplanted Africans and their progeny confronted the host environment and built a life for themselves, and especially the ideologies of selfhood that have guided these efforts of adjustment to the world in which they find themselves’. In so doing, he emphasizes the ‘diaspora apart’ model.<sup>44</sup> Okpewho locates most of the studies in the book according to their placement along the interpretive continuum separating ‘essentialism’ and ‘anti-essentialism’ – that is, assumptions that cultural practices in the African diaspora drew substantially on surviving African practices, as opposed to the assumption that diaspora cultural practices grew overwhelmingly out of life experience far from the homeland. While this distinction evokes the differences between Herskovits and Frazier, it refers all the more to Gilroy. As Okpewho puts it, “‘Essentialism’ has emerged in recent diaspora discourse as an ugly label for any tendency to see the imprint of the homeland or ancestral culture – in this case, Africa – in any aspect of the lifestyles or outlook of African-descended peoples in the western Atlantic world’.<sup>45</sup> Further on, Okpewho argues against Gilroy’s ‘postmodernist disdain for the idea of “nation”’. Okpewho labels

<sup>40</sup> João José Reis, ‘Candomblé in nineteenth-century Bahia: priests, followers, clients’, in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 116–34.

<sup>41</sup> Kim D. Butler, ‘Africa in the reinvention of nineteenth-century Afro-Bahian Identity’, in Mann and Bay (eds.), *Rethinking*, 135–54. As Butler notes, a later breakaway house of the Nagô tradition, Opô Afonjá, was formed by Eugenia Anna dos Santos, born in Brazil of Gurunsi ancestry, but educated in the Nagô tradition. For another treatment of the Opô Afonjá house, see Yai, ‘Survivances’.

<sup>42</sup> On maroons in Africa, see for instance Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730–1830* (Madison, 1988), 134, 385.

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Verger, *Dieux d’Afrique: culte des Orishas et Vodouns à l’ancienne côte des esclaves en Afrique et à Bahia, la baie de tous les saints au Brésil* (Paris, 1995); Roger Bastide, *Le candomblé de Bahia (rite nagô)* (Paris, 2000 [1st ed. 1958]).

<sup>44</sup> Okpewho, ‘Introduction’, in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, xiv. The justification for neglecting changes in Africa is ‘that African societies had attained *some* level of stabilization, in terms of lifestyles and outlooks, before their sons and daughters were forcibly seized and settled in Western societies’. *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

'this flight from the idea of "home"' as 'an obsessive phobia against all forms of essentialism'. In the last section of the introduction, Okpewho introduces the remaining chapters of the volume with reference to the concepts of 'positionality' and 'identity', of which the former if not the latter emerges from the pen of Gilroy.<sup>46</sup> The differences between Okpewho and Gilroy derive significantly from the context in which each wishes to place his analysis of the African diaspora: Okpewho wants to refer to Africa while Gilroy wants to refer to the West.

Several chapters provide original and effective arguments, two of them concentrating on the issue of slavery. Peter Ekeh offers an insightful generalization on state and kinship models of society, exploring J. D. Fage's well-known argument that slave trading was not severely hurtful to African societies. Ekeh shows, with skillful use of quotations, that Fage explicitly treated the slave trade as a force for African progress because it brought substitution of state-ordered society for kin-ordered society. Ekeh argues that, on the contrary, slavery expanded African reliance on kinship structures and also argues that Africans in the diaspora relied on kinship structures. After these useful observations, Ekeh then goes a bit far and seeks to attribute a 'primordial consciousness' to each side of the Atlantic: a primordial ethnic consciousness in Africa and a primordial racial consciousness in the Americas. Ekeh's attempt to generalize at this level risks creating an 'essentialism' of his own.<sup>47</sup> In the other study addressing slavery, Joseph Inikori explores servile labor on the African continent in the nineteenth century, asking whether the African underlings were slaves or serfs. His argument for the widespread frequency of serfdom, which is plausible on numerous points, serves to counter the notion that slavery in Africa became as severe as that of the Americas and reaffirms his argument that slavery developed late in Africa.<sup>48</sup>

Four further articles provide insights in cultural studies that reflect new directions of study. Sally Price, in a study of women's cultural production in Suriname, demonstrates examples to argue that innovations in fashion migrated from the edge of a creation to the center of the work for two media – capes for Saramanka men and carved calabash containers. In each case it appeared that sewing or carving began at the center of the piece and that innovations appeared at the fringes, though once they appeared they gradually worked themselves, in subsequent creations, to the center. Price asks whether this process might serve as a metaphor for cultural change more generally and relies on this insight to propose a research agenda in culture.<sup>49</sup> Nkiru Nzegwu, in a chapter of exceptional depth, notes that shifting meanings attributed to cultural terminology can lead to bias and discrimination. She argues that art critics tend to treat recent Nigerian art as an extension of European practice yet define 'modern' differently for Nigeria and for

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi–xxii.

<sup>47</sup> Peter P. Ekeh, 'Kinship and state in African and African American histories', in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 89–114; John D. Fage, 'Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African history', *Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), 393–404.

<sup>48</sup> Inikori launches his argument by citing Claude Meillassoux in his call for a rigorous definition of slavery and his noting that serfdom was an extant and available institution of servility. Inikori then neglects to cite Meillassoux more fully on the extreme conditions of slavery as they developed in the nineteenth-century Western Sudan; Martin Klein has further documented the severity of these conditions. Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l'esclavage: le ventre de fer et d'argent* (Paris, 1986); Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> Price pursues this point with a critique of simplifications of Saramanka textile work in Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*. Sally Price, 'The centrality of margins: art, gender, and African American creativity', in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 224.

Europe. She shows the implications of the resulting confusion for the assessment of the painting of Aina Onabolu (1882–1963). Onabolu's realist portraits of the Lagos and Ijebu elite are taken to be 'modern' and hence divorced from Yoruba cultural tradition rather than 'contemporary' and linked to forces of social change. On the contrary, she argues, Onabolu's portraits of independent-minded Yoruba-speakers can also be seen as images of resistance to colonialism.<sup>50</sup> Keith Warner provides a good summary of the impact of American film in the Caribbean up to the 1970s and makes the case that the brilliant 1972 Jamaican film, 'The Harder They Come', was a flash in the pan. In asking the hard questions about the future of cinema in the Caribbean, Warner provides a good example of global-to-local connections.<sup>51</sup> Alvin B. Tillery, Jr., provides a well-argued summary of the US Congressional Black Caucus and growth of its impact on US policy in Africa. He concludes by describing the dilemma facing the caucus and its supporters in the late 1990s: caucus members decided to challenge the reluctance of African governments to hire black American lobbyists and risked weakening diaspora-wide solidarity in order to insist that African governments provide support for African-American professionals.<sup>52</sup> Several further chapters in *The African Diaspora* serve as concise reports on larger studies.<sup>53</sup>

Most of the contributions to this volume employ a 'diaspora apart' model, tracing the experience of African-descended people in the Americas. Some contributions, however, focus on Africa or employ the 'homeland plus diaspora' model: those of Inikori, Ekeh, Nzegwu, Tillery, Elliott Skinner in an essay on the restoration of African identity and Joseph McLaren in his analysis of Alice Walker. The overlap of the two frameworks introduces a tension into the volume, but the editors do not make the distinction explicit nor suggest how it might be resolved or lead to productive discussion. Throughout the volume, however, Africa remains an explicit reference point in the interpretation of life in the diaspora.

#### AFRICA-DIASPORA STUDIES: CHOICES IN FRAMEWORK AND SCOPE

The principal emphasis in Africa-diaspora studies has been a thematic focus on what I would call postemancipation studies analyzed for the diaspora apart. That is, the problematic has been based on the struggles of those in the Americas who have gained citizenship but an inferior sort of citizenship.<sup>54</sup> If Africa-diaspora studies were to be organized within more strictly chronological limits, the results

<sup>50</sup> Nkiru Nzegwu, 'The concept of modernity in contemporary African art', in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 391–427.

<sup>51</sup> Keith Q. Warner, 'Caribbean cinema, or cinema in the Caribbean?', in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 469–84.

<sup>52</sup> Alvin B. Tillery, Jr., 'Black Americans and the creation of America's Africa policies: the de-racialization of pan-African politics', in Okpewho *et al.* (eds.), *African Diaspora*, 504–24. This chapter serves as an effective sequel to Ronald W. Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> These include studies by Antonio Benítez-Rojo, David Evans, Richard Price, Jack Blocker, Laura Pires-Hester and Maureen Warner-Lewis.

<sup>54</sup> Recent studies in this tradition include Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London, 1998); Nemata Amelia Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808–1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, 2000); and Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship In Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill, 2000).

would give attention to the interactions between slave and free populations, and between populations of the continent and the diaspora.<sup>55</sup> In fact, studies of politics in postemancipation society, long the mainstay of publications on the African diaspora, have appeared with decreasing frequency in recent years, as if the studies completed up through the 1980s had been accepted as definitive.<sup>56</sup> In their place, studies of gender, social and cultural affairs have expanded dramatically. The specific focus on politics has faded, but the temporal and geographic focus of Africa-diaspora studies remains centered on the postemancipation situation.<sup>57</sup>

In sum, Africa-diaspora studies have developed substantially enough to be worthy of a firm critique. As a contribution to such a critique, I offer a list of unresolved problems in place, time and analytical framework as these are handled by analysts of the African diaspora. Problems in the handling of place center on two questions of geographic imbalance in interpretation of the African diaspora. First is the shortage of analysis of the African continent. While the vantage points of Africa and Africans appear episodically in each of the volumes, and usually from the pens of African-born authors, references to the continent are located usually in introductions and rarely in conclusions. Africa, then, appears as a place from which people departed, the memory of which becomes progressively more generalized, rather than as a diverse and changing continent whose inhabitants participated at every stage in creating the world of today. Second is the excess of attention to the United States. The emerging metropole appears to exert an irresistible pull, so that authors from every region of the African continent and diaspora privilege its developments. The United States, the African-American discourse and Harlem itself thus assume a place that is parallel to the role of imperial metropolises in earlier days. Does there exist a way to acknowledge the social concerns and the intellectual and cultural achievements of American blacks and still give substantial attention to the people of the Caribbean, Brazil, Africa and elsewhere? One of the great benefits of including the African homeland in Africa-diaspora studies, in my opinion, is that the continent is big enough and varied enough to balance the gravitational force of the North American portion of the diaspora.

The problems in the handling of time in Africa-diaspora studies are those of insufficient attention to long-term periodization and change. The Mann and Bay volume centers on the past rather than the present – all the chapters address the nineteenth century and only Yai and Soumonni approach the present in discussing the contribution of the Aguda to the politics of contemporary Bénin. The

<sup>55</sup> For recent studies extending the geographic study of the diaspora to the north and east of sub-Saharan Africa, see John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, 2002); and Shihan De S. Jayasuriya and Richard Pankhurst (eds.), *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean* (Trenton NJ, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> For some recent examples: Walters, *Pan Africanism*; and Kim D. Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick, 1998).

<sup>57</sup> Verene Shepherd (ed.), *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora* (Kingston, Jamaica, and Oxford, 2002); Ingrid T. Monson (ed.), *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective* (New York and London, 2000); Sally and Richard Price, *Maroon Arts: Cultural Vitality in the African Diaspora* (Boston, 2000); Guthrie P. Ramsey, *Race Music: Migration, Modernism, and Gender Politics in Black Popular Culture* (Berkeley, 2003); Jane Atwood, *Capoeira: A Martial Art and a Cultural Tradition* (New York, 1999); Carol Tulloch, *The Birth of Cool: Dress Culture of the African Diaspora* (Oxford, 2002); Sheila S. Walker (ed.), *African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas* (Lanham MD, 2001). The latter volume includes several chapters on the era of slavery.

Okpewho *et al.* volume centers on the present more than the past. In addition to the problem of clarifying the selection of time frames, there is the question of how to connect the various time periods under study. The era before slavery and the era of slavery have tended to receive relatively schematic analyses within the framework of Africa-diaspora studies. The issue of emancipation, while it has been a benchmark in study of the diaspora, has not benefited from sustained temporal scrutiny. The focus on free people of color underplays the historical role of the numbers – declining but still in the millions – who remained in slavery. Africa-diaspora studies thus have focused not precisely on a time frame but on a developmental stage and on a segment of the diaspora's population. The great emancipation of the 1790s in Haiti was preceded by several smaller emancipations.<sup>58</sup> The emancipations of independent Spanish America, Britain and France came in the first half of the nineteenth century, while those of the Dutch, the United States, Cuba and Brazil came in the last half of the century. Emancipation for most of Africa came later – as late as the 1930s – but the dramatic changes brought by imperial conquest in Africa are not always reflected in studies of the diaspora in the Americas. For the early twentieth century, one needs clearer ways of connecting the impact of industrial capitalism (and of colonization in the era of capitalism) to the various regions of continent and diaspora. To return to the long-term periodization of Africa-diaspora studies, Joseph E. Harris has recently proposed a promising terminology, distinguishing studies of 'the historical diaspora' from studies of 'the modern diaspora'. The former addresses the era of slave trading and slavery, while the latter addresses the nineteenth century and especially the time since the beginnings of colonialism in Africa.<sup>59</sup>

The problems in the handling of analytical frameworks in the study of the African diaspora may be posed as three questions. First, what type of dynamic is to be emphasized in studying diaspora communities? One faces the choice of whether to seek out the dynamics of change within communities of Africa and the diaspora, or whether the source of change is to be sought in other communities, especially those of whites. The Mann and Bay volume mostly addresses connections within communities of the diaspora. Many of the contributions to *The African Diaspora* focus on dealing with dominant or external white communities. Both are necessarily of importance, but it seems that more effort should go into discussing their relative priority and their balance.<sup>60</sup> Second, how can one get beyond the pattern of referring to Africa in generalized fashion? While the view of Africa from the diaspora requires generalizations at the continental level, it need not presume a continental unity. If authors were to be more explicit in addressing multiple regions of Africa along with various regions of the diaspora, readers would get a sense of contact and interaction on the continent as well as in the diaspora. Third,

<sup>58</sup> In several states of New England and also (in 1793) in Upper Canada. Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967).

<sup>59</sup> Joseph E. Harris, 'The African diaspora in world history and politics', in Walker (ed.), *African Roots*, 104–17.

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Walters, in his detailed exploration of the notion of 'community' in the African diaspora, distinguishes between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' relationships when discussing links beyond the local community. I have preferred to phrase the distinction as that of linkages within the community (at whatever breadth one defines it for the moment) and linkages without the community. The differences are not simply racial, which is one reason I prefer to distinguish between 'inside' and 'outside' the community. Thus, relations among Ghanaians, Senegalese and Jamaicans might be seen as across national communities, as West African vs. West Indian communities, as anglophone vs. franco-phone communities, or as part of an African diaspora. See Walters, *Pan Africanism*, 13–53.



how is one to choose between analyses targeted on specific topics and studies ranging across the full scope of Africa-diaspora history? Both the targeted and exploratory approaches to collections on Africa-diaspora studies turn out to have their advantages. The benefits of a targeted discussion of closely related issues are evident, as in the studies of pan-African politics and the Bénin–Brazil connection. Yet the exploratory approach provides reminders of transcontinental connections over a long time frame. In either case, however, both the authors of individual studies and the editors of collections could do more to articulate the range of frameworks employed and the specific comparisons and connections identified. Paul Gilroy's vision of the black Atlantic has provided a greater challenge to implicit assumptions than any other recent analysis and encourages authors to become explicit about their vision of the African diaspora.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINENTAL AFRICAN STUDIES

The growing literature on the African diaspora intersects necessarily with the literature on the African continent. The rise of a robust field of African studies from the 1950s was a precondition of the development of Africa-diaspora studies; now that the two fields exist, one may ask how they can strengthen each other. What sort of analysis in African studies can best contribute to understanding the African diaspora, or can best draw on Africa-diaspora studies to expand knowledge of Africa? Monographic studies of African societies have been a particular strength of Africanist scholarship.<sup>61</sup> Localized studies, however, have yet to be linked and compared sufficiently to provide convincing comparisons or linkages among the various regions of Africa. This problem is highlighted most clearly in studies of the diaspora that treat Africa as the generalized place from which expatriates came. One may complain about such oversimplification by analysts of the diaspora, but a more proactive response would be for Africanist specialists to provide scholars of the diaspora with a stronger set of interregional interpretations on which to draw.<sup>62</sup>

Africanist scholarship does of course include some works of broad scope and interregional linkage. There have been some admirable efforts at continental synthesis, for instance in the writings of John Iliffe and Bill Freund, though these are commonly treated more as textbooks than as part of the scholarly discourse. These and a number of thematic analyses provide a tradition of cosmopolitan studies on Africa to which one can turn for models.<sup>63</sup> It may now be time to give a

<sup>61</sup> For examples of major recent monographs, see Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1936* (Cambridge, 1993); Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550–1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford, 1991); Jonathan Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast 1856–1888* (Oxford, 1995); Sandra E. Greene, *Gender, Ethnicity and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast: A History of the Anlo-Ewe* (Portsmouth NH, 1996).

<sup>62</sup> My thoughts on this point have developed not only by reading on the African diaspora, but also through work with teachers of world history. The latter have overcome the prejudices of earlier decades and are now willing to treat Africa as a region parallel to all others. While they are able to make comparisons and even connections of Africa with other world regions, they do not have materials that enable them to show comparisons or connections of regions within Africa. John Thornton's analysis offers much specificity on early modern Africa, but at the same time argues transhistorically that Africans had no landed property and held large numbers of slaves. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1600* (New York, 1992), 72–97.

<sup>63</sup> John Iliffe, *The African Poor: A History* (Cambridge, 1987); Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800* (2nd ed.,

higher priority to this approach within African studies. That larger-scale analysis is feasible is suggested by the prominence of scholars with Africanist training and research concentrations in the expanding field of world history, where they have shown how the literatures on African and Africa-diaspora history can contribute significantly to the practice of analyzing regional interactions.<sup>64</sup>

But most scholarship in African studies works within localized and monographic approaches. If the monographs are the building blocks of Africanist scholarship, one may suggest that it is time to reconsider the balance, and to put more effort into building larger structures with them. The historical interplay of the African continent and the African diaspora provides an exceptional opportunity to locate historical connections. In the reconsideration of this balance, in my view, the best lesson that scholarly specialists on the African continent can take from the growth of Africa-diaspora studies is that there are substantial advantages to adding more cross-references, comparisons and connections to studies conducted within the continent. African area studies developed out of a tremendous need for studies addressing the specifics of the many regions of an immense continent. While that need is by no means satisfied, the level of achievement in monographic African studies has become high enough that it is now appropriate to put more effort into comparisons and linkages of the existing fund of scholarship.<sup>65</sup>

Africanists have gained sufficient confidence in their work to suggest that social-science disciplines generally would benefit from greater attention to Africanist scholarship.<sup>66</sup> Within this framework, Steven Feierman has been forthright in criticizing the tendency among world historians to make statements that are too general, and to make global generalizations that leave out Africa.<sup>67</sup> Effective participation in this debate about the revision of world history in terms of African experience, however, requires fitting African data into broader

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Boulder, 1998); V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington, 1988); Jan Vansina, *Art History in Africa: An Introduction to Method* (Madison, 1984); Ibrahim Sundiata, *From Slaving to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po in the era of abolition, 1827–1930* (Madison, 1996); Christopher Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (Charlottesville VA, 2002).

<sup>64</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1989); David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, 1995); Ross E. Dunn (ed.), *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion* (Boston, 2000); Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (ed. with an introduction by Edmund Burke III) (Cambridge, 1993); John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (2nd ed., Syracuse, 1994); William Kelleher Storey (ed.), *Scientific Aspects of European Expansion* (Aldershot, 1996). For a review of the field of world history emphasizing the strength of African studies as a model for developing world history, see Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York, 2003), 156–60.

<sup>65</sup> For a study of migration that is at once monographic and revealing of inter-regional African connections, see Dennis D. Cordell, Joel Gregory and Victor Piché, *Hoe and Wage: A Social History of a Circular Migration System in West Africa* (Boulder, 1996).

<sup>66</sup> Robert H. Bates, V. Y. Mudimbe and Jean O'Barr (eds.), *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Chicago, 1993).

<sup>67</sup> Steven Feierman, 'African histories and the dissolution of world history', in Bates, Mudimbe and O'Barr (eds.), *Africa and the Disciplines*, 167–212.

statements. The strength of Feierman's intervention in this chapter is that he offers statements of patterns and links in African history at a broader and more connected level than he has done in the localized, monographic studies for which he is best known.<sup>68</sup>

The larger context for African studies is at once geographical and thematic. Much of African studies has been organized in terms of the context of empire and European rule, giving prominence to economic and political studies; another framework has been that of ethnographic (or alternatively civilizational studies) emphasizing autonomous developments within Africa.<sup>69</sup> Thus, taking the African diaspora as a context for African studies provides an opportunity for different emphases, giving prominence to social and cultural studies of movement and interchange. That is, attention to links with the African diaspora provides an alternative to interpreting modern Africa mainly through its interaction with colonialism.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, studies of the African diaspora can be set in various contexts: as noted earlier, Gilroy treats the African diaspora in the context of the West, while the authors in the Mann–Bay and Okpewho *et al.* collections treat the diaspora in the context of Africa.

Africa-diaspora studies can provide useful support for African studies in several ways. Documenting African heritage and connections overseas is the obvious place to begin: data on Africans abroad may reveal lost detail about life on the continent.<sup>71</sup> In addition, studies on the diaspora may reveal changes on the African continent that are brought from overseas, and may reveal connections among African regions.<sup>72</sup> Diaspora studies (especially those employing a 'homeland plus diaspora' model) may also assist Africanist historians in developing a longer time perspective. Such a statement may appear contradictory, in that the history of Africa is necessarily longer than that of the diaspora. But the recent historiography of Africa focuses heavily on the twentieth and nineteenth centuries, so that addressing connections with the diaspora can help draw the attention of Africanists to times before the nineteenth century as well as to recent times.

Finally, scholars in African studies should take as their own the dilemma of determining the place of continental studies in analyzing the experience of the diaspora. Studies following the 'diaspora apart' model have failed to achieve adequate precision in their representation of the variety and dynamism of life on the

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 188–98; Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom: A History* (Madison, 1974); Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, 1990).

<sup>69</sup> Other possible contexts for African studies include those of Islam, Christendom and the global economic system.

<sup>70</sup> Thus, for southern Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the important recent work of the Comaroffs on the imperial impact might be set in comparison with studies of diaspora contacts of the region. John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> For the use of data from the Americas to document, respectively, the nineteenth-century history of Djougou (in northern Bénin), sex ratios in West African societies and the ethnic distribution of slave exports from the Bight of Benin, see Law and Lovejoy (eds.), *Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua*; David Geggus, 'Sex ratio, age, and ethnicity in the Atlantic slave trade: data from French shipping and plantation records', *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 23–44; and Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960* (Cambridge, 1982), 335–43.

<sup>72</sup> For a study of the interrelation of Brazil and Angola in early modern times, see Luiz-Felipe de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Videntes: Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul* (São Paulo, 2000). For the impact of the Caribbean in Brazzaville, see Phyllis M. Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge, 1995).

continent. The adoption of a 'homeland and diaspora' model by Africanists should provide an opening for significant studies in social and cultural history.<sup>73</sup> I believe there is promise in the proposition that Africanists, by paying more attention to the diaspora, will also develop more articulate statements about the patterns and dynamics of society on the continent. Just as analysts of the African diaspora will benefit from including detailed study of Africa in their investigations, so also will analysts of the African continent benefit from careful attention to the African diaspora. The results in each case will be better and more connected scholarship for each region, and also scholarship that will be more readily comprehended and appropriated by researchers and teachers seeking to understand the place of Africa and the African diaspora in the world more broadly.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph E. Harris reemphasizes the relevance of this model for contemporary times in 'The African diaspora', 115.