

REVIEW ARTICLE

SOURCES OF AFRICAN ENGLISH IN NORTH AMERICA†

By Victor Manfredi

A review of:

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE OF AMERICAN ENGLISH. By Joseph E. Holloway and Winifred K. Vass. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. xxxviii, 193. \$24.95.

When I remember Dr. Clinton Jean,
Water run away me eye.

Demographics vs. Culture in Afro-Atlantic History

Among the historical questions posed by the Middle Passage is how diverse African linguistic communities on both sides of the Atlantic came to be "subsumed" or "amalgamated" into new identities.¹ Why, for example, did *Àkán* religion "modify, if not entirely obliterate" other African divinities in Jamaica,² while in Cuba, Haiti, and Bahia it was the *orisha* of Yorubá and Gbe-speakers that came to predominate? A possible answer is demographic: either absolute numbers over time, or relative numbers at a key moment. For the Jamaican case, Alleyne endorses LePage's view³ that *Àkán* religion exemplifies a "founder principle," to wit :

[A] set of features ... are attested in a particular population not necessarily because the features were statistically dominant where the population originated but simply because they happened to have been dominant among the original settlers [the founder population] of the colony and therefore had a greater chance of being transferred to the settlers' offspring.⁴

For Bahia and the Antilles, the opposite temporal causality has been posited: Yorubá and Gbe-speakers' ideologies became hegemonic because their arrivals clustered *later* than

† *Editors' Note:* This is a corrected republication of an article that appeared originally in volume 29, 1 (1996) of this journal. In the original version certain diacritical marks created by a special software program were misprinted from a computer not equipped to read the special formatting, and appeared as meaningless symbols. We apologize to Dr. Manfredi for this production error, and present here the correct text and symbols.

* *Aché* to 'W. Abimbólá, M. DeGraff, J. Hutchison, C. King, Y. Láníran, J. L. Matory, S. Mufwene, Q. Oyèlárán, G. Rolando, V. B. Thompson, Q. Yáí, *IJAHS* reviewers and editors, and participants at a colloquium at Leiden University on 26 May 1994 (kindly arranged by F. K. Àmèkà). The reader can now also consult S.S. Mufwene's review in *American Anthropologist* 96 (1994), 477ff.

¹ P.E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), 378.

² W.J. Gardner, *A History of Jamaica* (London, 1873), 184, cited by M.C. Alleyne, "Continuity vs. Creativity in Afro-American Language and Culture," in S. S. Mufwene, ed., *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens, Ga., 1993).

³ Alleyne, "Continuity," 178f.; R.B. LePage, *Jamaican Creole* (London, 1960), 75f.

⁴ Mufwene, *Africanisms*, 198.

other groups'.⁵ Supporting this "successor principle," Figures 1-2 suggest that the Yorùbá and Gbè-speaking share of Afro-Bahia increased nearly sixfold from the eighteenth century, becoming an outright majority by the nineteenth.

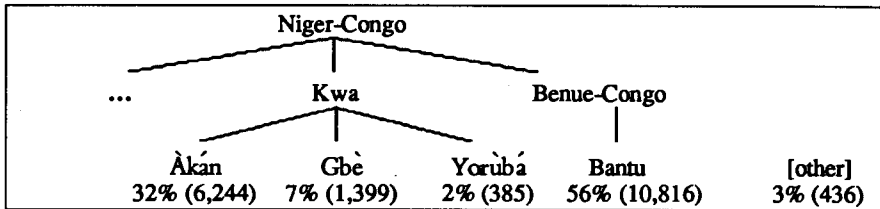


Figure 1 African Ethnolinguistic Identities in Bahia, 1741-1799⁶ (n=19,280 individuals)

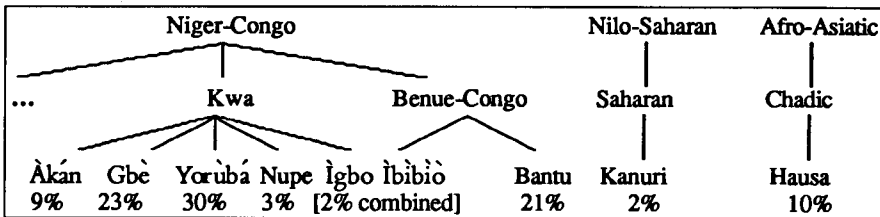


Figure 2 African Ethnolinguistic Identities in Bahia, 1819-1836⁷ (unweighted average, n=1054+1341 individuals)

In Haiti, neither a founder principle nor a successor principle seems to work, although available data exclude the latter less definitively. Figure 3 shows that Gbè and Yorùbá speakers combined were slightly less numerous than Bantu speakers, on average through most of the nineteenth century up to the Haitian Revolution.

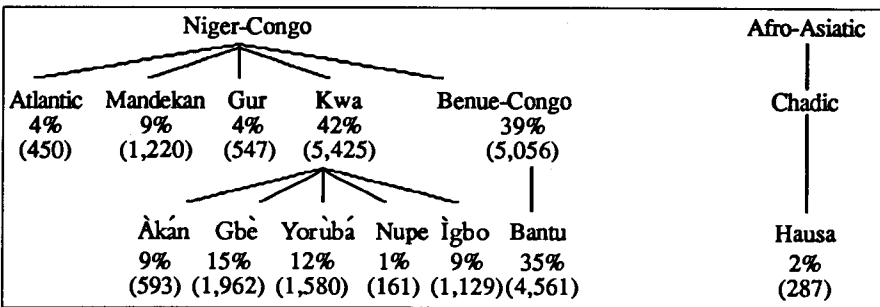


Figure 3 African Ethnolinguistic Identities in St. Domingue, 1721-1797⁸ (n=12,985 individuals)

Breaking down this period by decades, Curtin finds that the proportion of Gbè and Yorùbá-speaking arrivals peaked in the 1770s at over 40 percent, falling to 30 percent by

⁵ R. Bastide, *Les Amériques Noires* (Paris, 1967), 14; P.F. Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le golfe de Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du 17^e au 19^e siècle* (Paris, 1968).

⁶ W.W. Mengenny, *A Bahian Heritage: An Ethnolinguistic Study of African Influences on Bahian Portuguese* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1978), 82.

⁷ J.J. Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The African Muslim Uprising in Bahia, 1835* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1983), cited in Lovejoy, "The Impact," 379.

⁸ As cited by Lovejoy, "The Impact," 377.

the time of the Haitian Revolution.⁹ Filipovich summarizes Debien to the effect that the Bantu share was never less than a third.¹⁰ However, Curtin's figures—and perhaps Debien's—omit captives smuggled from British Dominica and Jamaica into French colonies as French sugar production expanded at the end of this period.¹¹ Thus the Kwa-speaking proportion of Africans arriving in St. Domingue may never have gone as low as Curtin's 30 percent, and may eventually have exceeded half, consistent with a successor-scenario. Even with this correction, however, the clandestine nature of smuggling excludes definitive proof of a late increase in specifically Gbè and Yorùbá speakers (e.g., as opposed to speakers of Àkán).

In any case, Baker shows that the pattern of cultural transmission in Haiti is more complex, since the Kwa-to-Bantu ratio is higher in religious vocabulary, cf. Figure 4.¹²

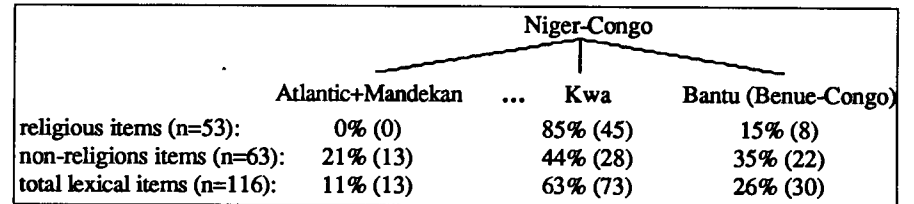


Figure 4 African Content of the Haitian Lexicon¹³

Nearly all religious items in this tabulation have a single source: the Comhaire-Sylvains' interviews with Vodun priests.¹⁴ This effect defies demographic reasoning: a few ritual specialists influence cultural outcomes, and our measurement of same, disproportionately to their numbers, or to overall shares lexical heritage.

In Cuba, the growth of African religious associations—*naciones* or *cabildos*—was documented, thanks to their legalization in the early 1800s, when the slaveocracy's self-interested tolerance coincided with increased slave imports, as the success of the Haitian revolution inspired new projects to control African mobility and expression. Originally promoted by urban slaveowners to divide African loyalties and to exclude people of dual heritage (*mestizos*), the *cabildos* became havens for African religious practice. By 1880, when Cuban slavery was abolished, they were flourishing centers for the African

⁹ P.D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969), 192-97.

¹⁰ S. Filipovich, "Le Peuplement d'Haiti," in C. Lefebvre and J. D. Kaye, eds., *Projet fon-créole haïtien: études syntaxiques, morphologiques et phonologiques* (Montréal, 1986), 39, summarizing G. Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1974).

¹¹ A. Spears, "Where Did Haitian Creole Come From? A Discussion of Hazël-Massieux's and Baker's Papers," in Mufwene, *Africanisms*, 163f., citing C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, 1938/1963), 53.

¹² P. Baker, "Assessing the African Contribution to French-Based Creoles," in Mufwene, *Africanisms*.

¹³ Compiled by Baker, *ibid.*, from A. Bollée, ed., *Dictionnaire étymologique des créoles* (Bamberg University, forthcoming).

¹⁴ S. Comhaire-Sylvain and J. Comhaire-Sylvain, 1955. "Survivances africaines dans le vocabulaire religieux d'Haiti," *Études dahoméennes* 14 (1955), reprinted in *Vodun* (Paris, 1993).

"transculturation"¹⁵ of Euro-Cuba. From evidence collected by Cabrera, at least some *cabildos* have preserved extensive African linguistic knowledge, including thousands of lexical items from languages of the eponymous source ethnic groups.¹⁶

That the mechanism of *cabildos* mediated between populations and collective beliefs, ensuring an outcome of Gbè and Yorubá predominance, appears plausible in view of their chronological distribution. Of the sixty-nine African-identified *cabildos* registered in Matanzas by 1880, Yorubá, Mandekan, and Bantu ethnicities tallied roughly equal shares overall (Figure 5).¹⁷ But viewed chronologically, ten out of the eighteen earliest *cabildos* were labeled either Arará-Mina (Gbè, Àkán) or Lucumí (Yorubá), with Lucumí having the largest single share by a 2-to-1 margin. Three-fourths of the *cabildos* of the other main *naciones* were founded only after 1840 (Table 1).

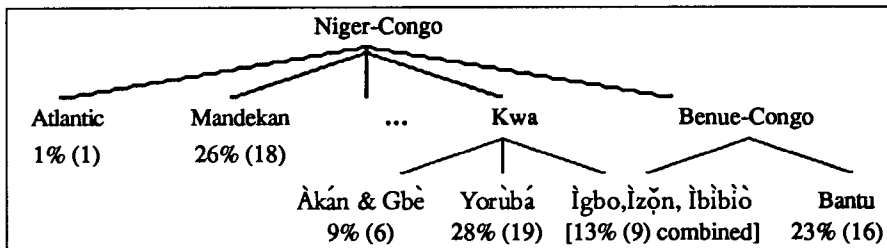


Fig. 5 African Ethnolinguistic Identities of *Cabildos* in Matanzas, Cuba, formed between 1790 and 1880 (n=69 *cabildos*); tabulated from Moliner, *Los Cabildos*.

	Mandinga, Gangá (Mandekan)	Arará-Mina (Gbè, Àkán)	Lucumí (Yorubá)	Carabalí (Ìgbo, Ìzõn, Ìbìbìò)	Congo (Bantu)
pre-1816 (n=18)	4	2	8	1	3
post-1840 (n=50)	14	4	11	8	13

Table 1 Foundation of *Cabildos*, by *Naciones*, Matanzas, Cuba¹⁸

Assuming that Gbè and Yorubá speakers were outnumbered in Cuba by their Mandekan and Benue-Congo speaking counterparts, Table 1 suggests that, in predicting the transmission of religion through time, one's arrival date mattered less than its proximity to the *cabildos*' formative period. In other words, for religion, the founder principle was in force, but it applied to certain strategic social institutions, not to populations as a whole.¹⁹

¹⁵ To use the anti-assimilationist term coined by F. Ortíz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Havana, 1940/63), 86.

¹⁶ L. Cabrera, *Anagó; Vocabulario lucumí; el Yoruba que se habla en Cuba* (Miami, 1970), and *La Lengua sagrada de los Nāhigos* (Miami, 1988) Even if *cabildo* members' current knowledge of Yorubá, Èfík-Ìbìbìò, etc., does not extend beyond textual formulæ and lexica to grammatical competence, study of the *cabildos*' African sources will bear on the amalgamation issue.

¹⁷ Setting aside three *cabildos* labeled *franceses* (Haitian and Louisianan) and six labeled *criollo*.

¹⁸ Tabulated from I. Moliner, "Los *cabildos* de africanos en la ciudad de Matanzas," unpub. MS., Matanzas, Cuba, 1992.

¹⁹ Similarly, individual ethnic *nations* in Haiti, and *batuques* in Bahia, came to be identified with particular African deities, Bastide, *Les Amériques*, 17. Bastide, 89, also mentions "Governor's" societies in

Moliner gives more evidence of ethnic amalgamation in Cuba. He distinguishes four sources of what can anachronistically be called Yorubá speakers in Cuba: (A)nagó (from Dahomey), Lucumí (from the Ògùn and Òşun River basins), Yorubá (from Òyó) and Iyesá (Ìjèşà). Eventually, all nineteen Yorubá-derived *cabildos* came to be identified as Lucumí.²⁰ Sugar planting having intensified in the early 1800s,²¹ the *cabildos* show ethnicity expressing segmentary incorporation in an expanding unfree labor market.²²

Another nondemographic factor was operating at the other end of the Middle Passage. Syntheses of Gbè, Yorubá, and Èdó religions existed already in Africa before most of the slave trade. Òyó influence took Ifá priests to the Fõn kingdom of Àgbómé (Dahomey) by the sixteenth century; Yorubá divinities were established there after 1732 by Òyó-educated King Tegbesu.²³ Before Tegbesu, each of these religions was a regional confederation of semi-autonomous shrine groups²⁴; Moliner insists that this pattern—which Yáì dubs "horizontal organization"—also characterizes the AfroCuban

New England, H.H.S. Aimes, "African Institutions in America," *Journal of American Folklore* 18 (1905). Other mediating collectives are attested elsewhere: LePage, *Jamaican Creole, 75f*, explains Àkán cultural predominance in Jamaica via early numerical predominance institutionalized in the Maroon communities.

²⁰ Moliner, "Los *cabildos*," 41f. The ethnonym *Lucumí* derives from the phrase *olukú mi*, "my friend," literally "owner-of-person-at my flank (*ukú*)" i.e., "my inseparable companion" ("W. Abimbòla, p.c.), cf. Igará *onúkú*, "friend," Q. O. Oyelárán, untitled handout on the *n-l* alternation in Yorubá, Department of Linguistics, Harvard University, 1981, and Ìgbo *úkúwù*, "hips." I know of just two recorded instances of this ethnonym outside Cuba. N.W. Thomas, *Specimens of Languages from Southern Nigeria* (London, 1914) gives an "Unukumi" wordlist; M.A. Ònwùjéjìogwù and N. Ò kó(h), *Distinctive Characteristics of Western Ìgbo Civilization: A Sociocultural Ideology for Ànìjõma State* (Benin City, 1981), 19, confirm that "Olukwumi" is spoken in Ùgbodu and some adjacent towns in northern Ànìjõcha Local Government Area of Delta State. Thomas classifies Unukumi as Yorubá, and Ònwùjéjìogwù and Òkó link Olukwumi to 16-17th century "Yorubá immigration" to the western Ìgbo-speaking area. On linguistic grounds, Thomas's forms could be intermediate between Yorubá and Igará; Igará is also spoken in northwestern Ànìjõcha L.G.A., H.B.C. Capo, "Defoid," in J. T. Bendor-Samuel, ed., *The Niger-Congo Languages* (Lanham, Maryland, 1989), 279. Either way, the AfroCuban ethnonym has no recorded correspondent where Moliner posits its Nigerian source: in the Ògùn and Òşun river basins. Adètùgbò characterizes the Ògùn and Òşun dialects (plus Òyó) as relatively innovative, correlated with "constant flux in populations and movements and migrations of peoples," A. Adètùgbò, "The Yorubá language in Yorubá history," in S. Bìobákú, ed., *Sources of Yorubá History* (Oxford, 1973), 193. One wonders if these dialects underlie AfroCuban Yorubá.

²¹ As portrayed in T. G. Alea's semi-documentary film *La Última Cena*.

²² E.R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, 1982), 300.

²³ M.J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston, 1941/1958); D.M. Dos Santos, and J. Elbein, *West African Sacred Art and Rituals in Brazil* (Ibàdàn, 1967); Q.B. Yáì, "From Vodun to Mávú; Monotheism and History in the Fõn Cultural Area," *Sapina Newsletter* 4.2-3 (1992), 10-29. Thus, Bastide's chart of twelve correspondences between major divinities of Àgbómé and Òyó is not all Bahian "syncretism"; some was Dahomean innovation, some missionary feedback and distortion; Bastide, *Les Amériques*, 139; Yáì, "From Vodun to Mávú."

²⁴ Standardly known in the Africanist literature as *cults*—a term now overripe for replacement.

cabildos, contra the hierarchical portrait painted by Ortíz.²⁵ Moreover, Gbè, Yorùbá, and Èdó oral civilizations had become urbanized by the sixteenth century, fostering elaborate, sacred textual systems such as the scrupulously memorized *ḙṣḙ Ifá* verses.²⁶ Ortíz recognized that these texts, the intellectual property of a specialized, full-time priestly cadre, were perhaps the heaviest cognitive baggage carried to the Western Hemisphere.²⁷

A final reason to concede culture some autonomy from demographics is that culture is not homogeneous; linguistic and religious outcomes need not match. To Baker's study of Haitian can be added Mengenny's of Bahian Portuguese, which finds roughly equal proportions of items from Benue-Congo languages (mainly Kimbundu-Kikongo) and from Kwa (mainly Yorùbá). As in Haiti, the picture diverges between religious and lexical spheres: "most [*candomblé*] deities are Yorùbá [and yet] the internal organization of the cult and the initiation structure and terminology are overwhelmingly Fón."²⁸ Such a discrepancy does not seem to be remotely traceable to demographic factors, even allowing for chronological trends. Thus, linguistic evidence lends force to Bastide's classic Weberian formula, "C'est-à-dire que les civilisations se sont détachées des ethnies qui les portaient, pour vivre d'une vie propre."²⁹

Summarizing, while both demographic and cultural explanations may converge in a given case, there is enough mismatch between populations and religious outcomes to rule out automatic appeal to demographic causality. Religion, in turn, was a mediating factor in determining resistance to slavery. Islam and African religion were crucial in revolts in Bahia, Haiti, and Jamaica.³⁰ At the other extreme, the Black Church which came to reign among African descendants in North America correlates with a relative "lack of a tradition of revolutionary violence."³¹

Turning now to Gullah-speaking North America, between a third and half of Africans brought to South Carolina in 1733-1807 came from the Congo-Angola region,³² and thus spoke Bantu (Benue-Congo) languages. In 1735-1740, the share of Angolans alone was as high as 70 percent,³³ and it is surely no accident that this clustering of compatriots directly preceded an insurrectionary outburst, the Stono Uprising of 1739-

²⁵ Moliner, "Los Cabildos," 6; F. Ortíz, *Los Cabildos Afrocubanos* (Havana, 1921), cited by Moliner, "Los Cabildos."

²⁶ W. Abimbólá, *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus* (Ìbàdàn, 1976)

²⁷ F. Ortíz, *Hampa Afro-Cubana: Los Negros Brujos* (Madrid, 1906).

²⁸ Yáí, "From Vodun," 24.

²⁹ Bastide, *Les Amériques*, 16.

³⁰ I. Étienne, "La Secte musulmane des Malès du Brésil et leur révolte en 1835," *Anthropos* 4 (1909), 99-105, 405-15; James, *The Black Jacobins* (1938/1963); P.D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955); V.B. Thompson, *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas 1441-1900* (London, 1987).

³¹ M. Marable, *Blackwater; Historical Studies in Race, Class Consciousness and Revolution* (Dayton, Ohio, 1981), 28.

³² P.D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969), 157.

³³ P.H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974), 335.

1740.³⁴ Yet, despite Angolan numerical prominence, the eighty-eight African lexical items in Gullah orature collected by Turner are *all* Mandekan,³⁵ even though the Kwa and Benue-Congo branches respectively contributed bigger shares of personal names and of general vocabulary (outside of traditional texts) than Mandekan did (see below). In the Gullah case, then, all the linguistic variables seem to be independent.

Recognizing these problems, which constitute a major theme in African diaspora studies, it is unfortunate that Vass and Holloway's book subscribes to an implicit biological premise that demography and culture necessarily correlate. The rest of this review critiques their misguided linguistics, chapter by chapter, and tries to show that their erroneous results are of more than arcane philological concern.

The Introduction: Afrocentric Gambits

Although the book doesn't defend an explicit linguistic method or theory, the Introduction ("The African Connection," pp. xiii-xxix) implicitly aligns itself with Afrocentrism—a high-profile philosophical stance. In content, most of the book is an extended commentary on L. D. Turner's study, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. By using Turner for both a frontispiece photo and a long "biographical dedication" (pp. ix-xi), the authors foreground the fact that Turner had African heritage, and they plainly wish to be seen as following in his footsteps. In substance as opposed to packaging, however, Vass and Holloway's book treats Turner more as a target than as a touchstone, making over his results to fit a conservative racial ideology which some Afrocentrists favor.

In the Introduction, a casual contradiction of Turner leads to broadside criticism of Herskovits "and others." The Introduction goes on to present an extended, imaginative reconstruction of the U.S. African heritage:

the majority of words Turner identified as other than Bantu are still in use in Zaïre (p. xii).

Herskovits's *Myth of the Negro Past* was pioneering in that it allowed detailed analysis of African survivals and retentions based on the West African cultural zones he outlined. However, the apparatus of only a West African baseline for Africanisms is no longer applicable for examining New World Africanisms. This book, unlike Herskovits's study and others, cites specific examples of linguistic Africanisms of Bantu origin. It uses two cultural baselines to assess linguistic Africanisms in North America, i.e. a West African baseline for assessing New World Africanisms among whites and a Central African baseline for assessing New World Africanisms among African-Americans (pp. xvif.)

African culture and linguistic retentions moved into American culture via the Mandé and the Bantu; the Mandé displayed the greatest influence on white American culture, the Bantu on black American culture. ... The Bantu formed the largest homogeneous group among Central Africans enslaved in South Carolina. ... What accounts for Bantu unity is common

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 301f.; Holloway and Vass (p. xxiv) trace the ethnonym *Gullah* (° ga la, ° gola, ° gula) to the Angolan ethnonym *ngola*; Turner (*Africanisms*, 194) chose a Liberian ethnonym (gola, gola, gula, gura, tones not indicated), which has a closer phonetic match.

³⁵ Turner, *Africanisms*, 205-208.

origin. ... While many of the Senegambians were enslaved as craftsmen and artisans, the field slaves were mainly Central Africans who, unlike the Senegambians, brought a homogeneous, identifiable culture. The Bantus often possessed good metallurgical skills. They had a particular skill in iron working, making the wrought-iron balconies in New Orleans and Charleston. But as field workers the Bantus were kept away from the developing mainstream of white American culture. This isolation worked to the Bantus advantage in that it allowed their culture to escape acculturation, maintain uniformity and flourish. The Bantus had the largest constituency in South Carolina and possibly in other areas of the southeastern United States as well.³⁶ Given the homogeneity of the Bantu culture and the strong similarities among Bantu languages, this group no doubt influenced West African groups of larger size (pp. xxivf.)

"No doubt," indeed no evidence, and not much logic. Did Bantu ironworkers make the balconies of New Orleans and Charleston while they were segregated in the fields? If Bantus were the "largest constituency" of Africans, which "West African groups of larger size" did they influence? How did Bantu "cultural homogeneity" differ from other ethnolinguistic groups? Or have the authors simply inverted Boer usage, using *Bantus* for the *real* Africans, as distinct from the "Wolofs [who] were primarily employed as house servants" (p. xx)? Although it is true that slaveowners created ethnic stereotypes,³⁷ it is not certain that they applied them consistently in allocating plantation labor;³⁸ so how do the authors know that Bantu-speakers had more or less contact with whites? Could it be that ethnic stereotypes are still in effect?

Already, the reader feels the magnetic thrall of Afrocentrism. Why else rewrite Turner, and why revisit the Bantu mystique, that staple of British colonialism and Bantustan apartheid? From the get-go, it is hard to reconcile overt pro-Turnerism with Bantu revisionism, at least at face value. Contextualization is required.

To begin with, Afrocentrism sees itself as a reply to mainstream "Africanist" approaches in African-American studies. Consider a recent, programmatic statement:

Africanists ... tend to be Europeans whose interest in Africa serves European studies. The Afrocentric method pursues a world voice distinctly Africa-centered in relationship to external phenomena. ... The fundamental assumptions of Africalogical inquiry are based on the African orientation to the cosmos. By "African" I mean a "composite African" not a specific discrete African orientation which would rather mean ethnic identification, i.e., Yorubá, Nuba, Zulu, etc.³⁹

³⁶A footnote here in the text reads: "We are aware of the ambiguity of the term *Bantu*. Afrikaners refer to white South Africans as 'Africans' and black Africans as 'Bantus.' For us, the term *Bantu* serves to describe the cultural homogeneity of Central Africans brought to the New World."

³⁷Thompson, *The Making*, 161f.

³⁸M.C. Alleyne, *Comparative Afro-American: An Historical-Comparative Study of English-Based Afro-American Dialects of the New World* (Ann Arbor, Mich, 1980), 141.

³⁹M.K. Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (Trenton, N.J., 1990), 6, 9.

Given the many unresolved questions about how African culture took root in the Americas, the assumption of a "composite African" identity is counterproductive unless it has a different use: to propel the dialectic between Afrocentrists and Africanists. Asante's *credo* reveals Afrocentrism as a variant of creolist discourse. But first some corrections. Few of the founders of the Africanist project in this hemisphere were European. Of course there was the German-American transplant Franz Boas, whose 1906 Atlanta University commencement speech typified a lifetime of antiracism, but many others were non-European. Nina Rodrigues, Fernando Ortíz, and Suzanne Sylvain, whose landmark works appeared in 1900, 1906 and 1936 respectively, were Bahian, Cuban, and Haitian. Africanist discourse took off between the end of Reconstruction and the 1930s Depression, not to advance European hegemony but to combat "Black inferiority" shibboleths which whites invoked in economic competition with black workers.⁴⁰

A focal question for North American Africanists is why there is so much less overt Africanity of language and religion here than in Bahia or the Caribbean. In debates between anthropologist Herskovits and sociologist E.F. Frazier in the 1940s and '50s, the issues boiled down to culture vs. demography. Americanists, whether Marxist⁴¹ or liberal,⁴² generally hold that demographic factors (among others) have guaranteed big losses of Africanity in this country. For example:

The character of the religious milieu, the number of slaves on plantations, and the number of Africans in the slave population were all factors in the survival or loss of African culture. In the United States these factors tended to inhibit ... survival...⁴³

Africanists—and, despite Asante's assertion to the contrary, especially African-American ones⁴⁴—have countered that statistics veil a resilient and reemergent African consciousness, "attitude, or stance" to which the dominant culture is predictably blind.⁴⁵

Afrocentrists, according to Asante, share this focus on "attitude," but instead of tracing its sources and historical vicissitudes in the Africanist way, they take a postmodern, reflexive tack and build it into the framework of their theory:

The leap of imagination one finds in the best Afrocentric scholars gets its energy from the African aesthetic sensibility. What one seeks in a study is the merger of facts with beauty. This becomes a creative quest for

⁴⁰M. Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*, rev. ed (Jackson, Miss., 1991), Ch. 1.

⁴¹O.C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (New York, 1948/1981); E. Genovese, "The Legacy of Slavery and the Roots of Black Nationalism," *Studies on the Left* 6 (1966).

⁴²S.W. Mintz, and R. Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture; an Anthropological Perspective* (Boston, 1976).

⁴³A.J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, 1978), 92.

⁴⁴Z.N. Hurston, *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley, 1981); L. Jones/A. Baraka, *Blues People* (New York, 1963); S. Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (Oxford, 1987); Marable, *Race*.

⁴⁵Jones/Baraka, *Blues People*, 152.

interpretation which "looks good" while it is explaining. Any time a scholar reaches a dead end in interpretation or analysis it is usually because he or she is utilizing the traditional methods. ... We are led to the African-centered idea of [h]olism, everything is everything, and we are part of the one and "the other is our own measure."⁴⁶

Asante's quest, to redeem a perfectly whole Africa from the remote "Kemetite" past, adapts Garveyite mysticism to the American "twelve-step" self-actualization culture of the 1990s. The philosopher Paul Gilroy critiques the logic in this way:

Afrocentricity names itself "systematic nationalism" (that's what Molefi Kete Asante calls it), but it is stubbornly focused around the reconstruction of individual consciousness rather than around the reconstitution of the black nation in exile or elsewhere. The civic, nation-building activity that defined the Spartan-style aspirations of Black nationalism in the nineteenth century has been displaced in favor of the almost æsthetic cultivation of a stable, pure racial self. The "ism" in that nationalism ... appears more usually as a set of therapies—tactics in the never-ending struggle for psychological and cultural survival. In some nonspecific way, then, a new idea of Africanness, conveniently dissociated from the politics of contemporary Africa, operates transnationally and interculturally through the symbolic projection of race as kinship. ... Marcus, Malcolm, Martin, Marley, Mandela and Me! The narcissistic momentum of that masculine list is another symptom of a cultural implosion that must work against the logic of national identity. The flow is always inward, never outward; the truth of radicalized being is sought, not in the world, but in the psyche.⁴⁷

In its ideological context, then, the Introduction to Holloway and Vass's book can be rephrased as a triple syllogism. Africanists have identified many West African sources for African culture in North America. Afrocentrists are committed to biological causality, a kind of cultural genetics. Gullah people are the most isolated from Euro-American culture, "therefore" they must be biologically the most African. A high proportion of Gullah-speakers have Bantu-speaking ancestors, "therefore" the Gullah lexicon must be shown to have mostly Bantu roots. Afrocentrists are also committed to biological causality in access to knowledge. Herskovits, a Jew, is "therefore" biased, and the bookish, black Turner must be dislodged from the Africanist bloc. Hence, the authors' efforts to "revise Herskovits's baseline" (p. xvi) and redeem Turner from West-Africanist deviation.

Gullah Lexicography

As it turns out, the Introduction is the book's newest and most original section. The five numbered chapters collect previously published materials, some with revisions or added commentary. Chapters 3–4 are reprints from Vass's *The Bantu-speaking Heritage of the United States*. (1979); Holloway contributes, presumably, to Chapters 2 and 5. Chapter 1, by far the longest, revises Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*.

⁴⁶ Asante, *Kemet*, 39.

⁴⁷ P. Gilroy, "It's A Family Affair," in G. Dent, ed., *Black Popular Culture: A Project by Michele Wallace* (Seattle, 1992), 305f.; emphasis in the original.

Chapter 1: How Much Bantu in Gullah?

Turner documented major African content in the lexicon, phonology, morphology, and syntax of Gullah (or Geechee), a language spoken on the sea islands of Georgia and South Carolina. His findings refuted contemporary Americanist views of African-American culture as a creolization of European sources following total rupture with Africa. For this purpose, it mattered little where in Africa the origins were: Turner's "West Africa" covers the entire Atlantic coast from Senegal to Angola.⁴⁸

Holloway and Vass have a different agenda. For them, it matters very much which languages account for Gullah's Africanness. They think that Turner overlooked Bantu origins for many Gullah lexical items, and consequently that he overemphasized the non-Bantu component. (Their "West Africa" excludes Central Africa, unlike Turner's usage.) To show this, Vass, a Christian missionary raised in Zaïre⁴⁹, hopes to boost the number of ChiLuba etymologies in Gullah to a level approaching Curtin's and Wood's statistics on the Angolan share of Gullah ancestry. Strictly, ChiLuba etymologies can't advance this goal, since it's spoken in eastern Zaïre (Congo) and not Angola, but Bantu languages are similar enough that most of the ChiLuba evidence would count, at least heuristically—that is, assuming that Vass's ChiLuba etymologies were credible. They're mostly not.

Chapter 1 ("The Bantu Vocabulary Content of Gullah") seeks to demonstrate the following claim: "Of the 3,938 Gullah terms that Turner lists, 1,891 are recognized by Vass [as being] in current Luba use today, giving Gullah a core Bantu lexicon of 35.2 percent..." (p. 1) This statement is incoherent in several ways. First, even if the numbers were correct as stated, the ratio of 1,891 to 3,983 is 48 percent, not 35 percent. A few pages later, their Table 2 shows a different calculation:

Grand Total of All African Language Meanings Given by Turner for 3,382
Gullah Words [=] 5,365 (p. 5)

Now we can interpret the first statement: the 35 percent ratio assumes the higher denominator of 5,365 "meanings." But what are these "meanings," and how can they be more numerous than lexical items? Why did Turner himself refrain from calculating percentages?

For each Gullah item he collected, Turner cited *all* potential African sources known to him.⁵⁰ Five or more languages are represented in some entries. Since Gullah's potential African source languages are themselves related, it is difficult to assign particular Gullah terms to an individual African source without further study. To calculate relative percentages of different African languages in Gullah, some additional assumptions are needed, and need to be justified. Historical linguists base an initial hypothesis of relatedness on criteria of similarity in both sound and meaning. This test, while subjective to a degree, is not arbitrary, because human languages display regular patterns of sound shift, and meaning shift, over time. The shorter the interval, the higher the probability of a match. The criteria are not infallible—chance matches can be expected, and the occurrence of near-universal words like *mama* and *papa* prove nothing⁵¹—but any attempt to partition

⁴⁸ Turner, *Africanisms*, 42, 7.

⁴⁹ Dust-jacket copy.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵¹ R. Jakobson, "Why 'mama' and 'papa'?", *Selected Writings I*. (Den Haag 1939).

Turner's Africanisms among the possible sources necessarily depends on it. Vass and Holloway seem not to appreciate this point.

For the counts summarized in Figures 6–7 below, I have avoided much indeterminacy by sorting the source languages into the major subgroups of Niger-Congo (Atlantic, Mandekan, Kwa, Benue-Congo). This procedure yields a Kwa-to-Benue-Congo ratio of roughly 2-to-1 for Gullah proper names vs. 1-to-3 for other lexical items. Given the large Angolan share of the population, Gullah names attest a sharp non-correspondence between culture and demography. A rational response to this problem is to imagine historical explanations, then seek evidence that bears on them. Vass and Holloway's response is to deny the problem by burying Turner's data in a mass of error.

Instead of treating each Gullah word in Turner as one lexical item, what Vass and Holloway have done⁵² is to count the gloss of each potential African etymon listed by Turner *as if it were a Gullah word*, i.e., as attesting one lexical link between the North America and Africa. But that premise is false; there aren't 5,365 items in Turner's lists of Gullah words (texts excluded, as their Mandekan source is not in doubt); there are only 3,846 (3,595+251). This discrepancy inflates the statistics by nearly 50 percent. Turner's book contains some 5,365 highly educated guesses as to the African sources of 3,846 Gullah words, but hypotheses are not the same as observations. Some guesses are more plausible than others, but Vass and Holloway objectify all into countable *data*.

A thought experiment shows the futility of the exercise. Using more consultants and better dictionaries, Turner might have found up to ten candidate African sources for each Gullah name in his list, yet it would be unreasonable to accept that 38,460 African words are represented in Turner's list—a conclusion which follows directly if Vass and Holloway's inference is valid. But a "meaning" is not a lexical item. A lexical item is a unique pairing of a phonetic form (concatenated speech sounds) with a denotational semantic content (one or more meanings). That most lexical items, especially names, contain multiple morphemes only strengthens the point. What is transmitted through time is *forms*: "the etymology of a speech-form is simply its history, and is obtained by finding the older forms in the same language and the forms in related languages which are divergent variants of the same parent form."⁵³ This applies no less to forms borrowed from one language to another than it does to forms inherited via succedent stages of the same language.⁵⁴ Etymologies have no guarantee of success; their plausibility depends on available evidence and on the insight with which defining criteria are applied to this evidence. Very rarely in the book does Vass refer to semantic matching criteria that would cause her to reject a historical link between Gullah and ChiLuba items, no matter how far-fetched; further, she seems unconcerned by major differences in syntactic categorization, and she allows phonetic form to differ very greatly, without comment.

There's another problem with the statistics in Chapter 1. Turner collected three kinds of Gullah lexical items: personal names, non-names found exclusively in orature,

and other non-names. He was careful to asterisk those comparisons that link a Gullah name to a known African name:

Those Gullah names that are not marked with an asterisk happen not to be known as personal names by my African informants. ... I originally planned to place these unmarked names in a separate group; but later decided that for the convenience of the users... it would be more desirable to arrange all the names alphabetically...⁵⁵

Most names in Niger-Congo languages being semantically analyzable—either by speakers or by linguists—the lack of an asterisk does not render a given etymology implausible. Conversely the presence of an asterisk in 2,041 out of Turner's 3,595 names—fully 57 percent—makes them particularly plausible.⁵⁶ Inexcusably, Vass suppresses this dimension of Turner's data when she retranscribes them in Chapter 1. The heading for the left-hand column in her long "Vocabulary List" fails to note that most of the Gullah items are *personal names*. Perhaps she does this because few of her ChiLuba etymologies are names; the reduction allows her to avoid telling us about the ChiLuba items.

Why would Vass delete Turner's asterisks? Missionaries have always misunderstood and mistrusted the meaningful component of African names. Despite nineteenth-century cultural nationalists like Edward Wilmot Blyden and James Johnson, and their successors, many christianized Africans do not employ African names for baptism.⁵⁷ Further, the difference between names and non-names has no place in Vass's doctrine of "meanings," but the distinction is fundamental. The Yorubá proper name *Adé* is a distinct lexical item from the homophonous common nouns *adé* 'crown' and *a-dé* 'arriv-er.' First, a name is definite, whereas in Yorubá (and perhaps all other Kwa languages) a bare noun is inherently ambiguous between definite and indefinite interpretations ('the crown in question' vs. 'some unspecified crown'). Second, a name like *Adé* in its citation form may abbreviate an entire phrase, such as *Adebó* 'The crown came back [into the family]' or *Adéníjì* (*àpata*) 'The arriver has a shadow' (+ epithet).⁵⁸

In another philological blunder, Vass deletes Turner's diacritics from her Gullah data list, even though word-stress is apparently unpredictable on Gullah-internal grounds. Remarkably, as exemplified below, Gullah stress appears to fit African tone patterns beyond chance frequency. It is unconscionable to destroy phonetic evidence, particularly as that is the only clue we have for semantically unanalyzable items.

Vass also mixes up semantic data. Her column two is labeled "Turner's English meanings for these words" (p. 9), but that's incorrect: Turner doesn't gloss Gullah proper names (apart from a few which turn up in the general lexicon, like *ago'go* 'cowbell' 1949: 190), and he was well aware of the impossibility of doing so in most cases: "my Gullah informants do not remember the meanings of these unmarked personal names (nor the

⁵⁵ Turner, *Africanisms*, 41f.

⁵⁶ The 57 percent name-to-name result is even more impressive because extant are weaker in onomastics than in "basic vocabulary." Turner went beyond the published materials of his day, employing twenty-seven African consultants and fifty-three Gullah consultants. Turner, *Africanisms*, 42, 291f..

⁵⁷ E.A. Àyáńdélé, *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836-1917* (London, 1970).

⁵⁸ Cf. R.C. Abraham, *Dictionary of Modern Yorubá* (London, 1958), 12.

⁵² Or rather what the epidemiologist W. S. Pollitzer of UNC Chapel Hill did for them (p. vii). An *IJAHs* reviewer notes that Pollitzer has published these materials in *Historical Methods* 25 (1993), 53-67.

⁵³ L. Bloomfield, *Language* (New York, 1933), 15.

⁵⁴ If indeed borrowing is the appropriate model to apply in the Gullah case, cf. S.S. Mufwene, "Starting on the Wrong Foot," *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 3 (1988), 109-17.

precise meanings of most of those that are marked...)"⁵⁹ In her column two, Vass puts the gloss of one of Turner's candidate African etymologies, creating the false impression that it is the "meaning" of the proper name in that line.

Before discussing Vass's doctrine of linguistic cognation, it is useful to consider the difference between her own results and what can be calculated from Turner on standard etymological criteria. Vass's Table 2 (pp. 4f.)—again compiled by W. Pollitzer and summarized with slight corrections here as Table 2—reports this ratio of sources, from various African language families, of Turner's total corpus of lexical Africanisms:

Atlantic	Mandekan	Kwa	Bantu	Chadic
5% (251)	23% (1,254)	31% (1,673)	36% (1,915)	5% (272)

Table 2 Summary of Table 2 from Vass and Holloway (4f.), n=5,365 "Meanings"

When I apply basic, impressionistic, cognation tests to Turner's data, the outcome is very different: the Gullah lexicon is both more and less Bantu in origin than Pollitzer/Vass/Holloway's statistics suggest. In keeping with Turner's practice and his express theory, I have disaggregated from the total set of Gullah personal names the asterisked subset whose African comparanda are themselves attested as names (Fig. 6*). Both of these are distinguished from non-names in Gullah vocabulary with African roots (Fig. 7).

Niger-Congo					Afro-Asiatic
Atlantic	Mandekan	...	Kwa	Benue-Congo (incl. Bantu)	Chadic
4% (126)	25% (909)		41% (1,467)	27% (972)	3% (121)

Figure 6 African Etyma of Turner's Gullah Personal Names, n=3,595 lexical items.

Niger-Congo					Afro-Asiatic
Atlantic	Mandekan	...	Kwa	Benue-Congo (incl. Bantu)	Chadic
4% (76)	31% (632)		42% (858)	21% (425)	2% (50)

Figure 6* Subset of Fig. 6, Turner's asterisked correspondences (names-to-attested names), n=2,041 lexical items.

Niger-Congo					Afro-Asiatic
Atlantic	Mandekan	...	Kwa	Benue-Congo (incl. Bantu)	Chadic
18% (44)	25% (164)		13% (34)	40% (100)	9% (4)

Fig. 7 Distribution of Turner's Gullah General Vocabulary with African Etyma, n=251 lexical items.

Juxtaposing these results yields three observations: (i) The African origins of Gullah names (Fig. 6*) differ markedly from those of non-names (Fig. 7): the Bantu share of Gullah non-names is roughly twice that of Gullah names (21 percent). The smaller total number of non-names cautions us not to overstate this difference, but there is reason to expect the transmission of names to differ. Because personal names are "attached" to their

referents, and are transmissible to new generations of speakers even after becoming semantically opaque,⁶⁰ non-English names from disparate sources can cumulate over a long period, hence their large number;⁶¹ but this transmission path is less likely for the general lexicon. (ii) For names, the Kwa proportion is double that of Benue-Congo, and hence at least double that of Bantu, since Benue-Congo includes some non-Bantu items (e.g., from Èfík-Ìbìbìò). For non-names, by contrast, the Kwa-to-Benue-Congo ratio is six times less, at roughly one-third. (iii) Discrepancies (i) and (ii) are invisible to Vass and Holloway, because of their careless appropriation of Turner.

After the statistics, Chapter 1 cites 1,891 Kasai ChiLuba morphemes which Vass believes to have Gullah reflexes. To evaluate all of these would require restoring Turner's more accurate Gullah data in Vass's column one, correcting the many typos (was the book proofread?) and completely disregarding Vass's column two. From a small sample, I am confident that few of Vass's etymologies have much plausibility. But before turning to examples, it is necessary to digress over a theoretical issue which is crucial to Vass's approach and on which she holds an entirely spurious doctrine.

"Multiple Etymologies"

Vass may have been able to find nearly two thousand ChiLuba roots in Gullah "by means of the superb tool of linguistics" (p. 1), because only she subscribes to an idiosyncratic notion of etymology. I have discovered that this notion, while absurd, is not completely unprecedented. Vass and Holloway refer several times to Wood (1970), who in turn cites a brief article by Cassidy on "multiple etymologies in Jamaican creole."⁶² Cassidy starts by observing that, if there are several potential sources for a given borrowed lexical item, all "very similar" in both form and meaning, it may be impossible to decide which source was the actual one. As an example, he gives the Yorkshire place name Greetland, which on its face could have come from either Old English or Old Norse. Cassidy continues:

It is impossible today to assign such names... to the one or the other language: they represent a kind of joint origin, or multiple etymology. ...It is true that if the historical facts could be recovered, we might find that one of these names was first used by a speaker of Old English or Old Norse, as the case might be; but it could equally well have been the other, and if it is equally understood by both when first used by either, the fact of literal priority would be trivial.⁶³

Keeping all the *if's* in view, Cassidy says that in a borrowing ("contact") situation, a claim of multiple etymology requires that two conditions be met: (i) Two or more potential source languages share a common protolanguage (in his example, both Old English and Old Norse originate in Proto-Germanic, respectively via the West Germanic and North Germanic branches). (ii) In consequence of the close linguistic relationship between the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ P.E.H. Hair, "Sierra Leone Items in the Gullah Dialect of American English," *American Language Review* 4 (1965), 79-84.

⁶² Wood, *Black Majority*, 183n.51.

⁶³ F.G. Cassidy, "Multiple Etymologies in Jamaican Creole," *American Speech* 41 (1966), 211-15.

⁵⁹ Turner, *Africanisms*, 41.

two sources, the relevant protoforms are so similar as to be indistinguishable in practice. In other words, the multiple candidate etyma do not *both* exist independently.⁶⁴

When Cassidy extends this idea to unrelated source languages, he adds a caveat that one necessary condition of multiple etymology—virtual identity of both form and meaning between competing source items—is much less likely, since "it will depend on sheer coincidence rather than on the presence of cognates."⁶⁵ Agreed; one could accept all eight examples that Cassidy found in the entire Jamaican English dictionary⁶⁶ without ever believing that "sheer coincidences" of this kind could have occurred 1,891 times in Gullah. In other words, if Vass did read Cassidy, she missed the point.

In practice, the multiple etymology problem arises just if the source languages are very closely related. A way to finesse the issue is to count as sources, not single languages but language groups at an appropriate scale. For example, Figures 6–7 above do not distinguish among Kwa languages or Benue-Congo languages, etc., as a finer level of detail is unnecessary for the problem of comparing Kwa and Bantu sources for Gullah.⁶⁷ What Vass and Holloway do is different: relying "no doubt" on "Bantu homogeneity," they use the terms *ChiLuba* and *Bantu* interchangeably, causing Mufwene to throw up his hands:

Things verge on the ridiculous when the authors... do not explain why they claim specific Tshiluba [ChiLuba] origin when a term, concept or structure could be shared by several other Bantu or Niger-Congo languages; why they claim general Bantu influence when a term, concept or

⁶⁴ There is another kind of multiple etymology, called "folk" etymology, whereby speakers link two historically unrelated words by reanalysis. In this way, English *wood* came to be a partial co-etymon of either Ojibwa *o(i)chek* (Antilla 1972: 92) or Cree *ochek* (*American Heritage Dictionary* [1973], 1473), or both (*à la* Cassidy), in American English *woodchuck*. However, this shows that folk etymology (*ochek* ⇒ *woodchuck*) differs from the lexicographic dilemma of deciding between Ojibwa and Cree: the former shows us something about the mental state of speakers of a language, but the latter tells us only about the mental state of the linguist. Another plausible example of multiple etymology also works because of an indispensable element of folk etymology: a Haitian friend wanted to give his son the famous Kenyan name *Kamau*, but changed it to *Kamawu* because "*Mawu* means God in Dahomey, where Haitians came from."

⁶⁵ Cassidy, "Multiple Etymologies," 212.

⁶⁶ F.G. Cassidy, and R. B. LePage, *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (Cambridge, 1966).

⁶⁷ Other strategies to sidestep the inherent indeterminacy of the sourcing exercise are utilized in two of the studies cited above: "At times, more than one tentative [African] source for the Bahian word has been recorded. This procedure was deemed appropriate since some of the words on the list were found to be similar both phonetically and semantically to utterances in several of the sub-Saharan languages. In many cases, this is due to the fact that the languages are genetically related. Of course, it would be impossible, in such instances, to know which language among the several possibilities was the one that did, in fact, contribute to Brazilian Portuguese." Mungeney, *A Bahian Heritage*, 123. "Most of the words in French-based creoles of the Caribbean area that can be reliably identified as being of Bantu origin are found in two languages... of the Congo-Angola area for which adequate dictionaries exist, namely Kikongo and Kimbundu. ... Dictionaries exist for more than a dozen languages of this region, and, because of the generally close relationships between neighboring Bantu languages, identical or near-identical forms are often to be found in several of these dictionaries. To save space, only one Bantu form per creole word is normally given in appendix 1, the plus sign (+) being placed after a language name to indicate that (near) identical forms occur in at least two other languages of the region. For example, Makuwa+ *kalipa* means that forms (nearly) identical to *kalipa* are found in at least two other Bantu languages of the area." P. Baker, "Assessing the African Contribution to French-Based Creoles," in Mufwene, ed., *Africanisms*, 129.

structure may simply coincide with Luba... As a speaker of three Bantu languages, I wonder how comfortably one can attribute to one particular group a feature that might be shared by more, or attribute to a whole family a feature that might be a peculiarity of one particular group.⁶⁸

Vass's use of multiple etymology departs from Cassidy's when she ignores his criterion of near-identity in *both* form and meaning between competing preforms. The authors choose this paradigm example:

Many words Turner listed have multiple etymologies. For example, the [Gullah] word *aba* is found in both Twi and Tshiluba. In Twi, *aba* is a day name given to a female child born on Thursday. In Tshiluba it is a verb. Twi is a West African language completely unrelated to the Bantu languages. This shows that it is quite possible for the same word to exist in one language as one part of speech and in another as a different part of speech and to have very different meanings (p. xiv)

Setting aside the astonishing idea that "Twi ... is completely unrelated to the Bantu languages,"⁶⁹ it remains that the ChiLuba etymology is semantically unlike the Twi, and on its own is implausible on phonetic grounds.

Turner cites Gullah **aba* (m.). Turner's asterisk marks the African comparandum as a personal name; his main stress mark (ˈ) means that the first syllable is prosodically prominent. (Vass erases both diacritics.) Turner's candidate *ába*⁷⁰ has a HH tone pattern, for which the closest prosodic match in English is initial main stress, thus making a near-perfect phonetic fit. Vass doesn't just wipe out Turner's diacritics, she omits the accentuation of the ChiLuba form *aba*, although elsewhere she acknowledges the importance of tone. A reviewer for this journal notes that ChiLuba *aba* is a "stem; its conjugated form will have included a prefix, thus changing it altogether to something like

⁶⁸ Mufwene, review of *The African Heritage of American English*, 477f.

⁶⁹ Even Guthrie (whom they do cite) recognized Bantu and Kwa as having *some* relationship, but he held massive borrowing responsible. M. Guthrie, "Bantu Origins: A Tentative New Hypothesis," *Journal of African Linguistics* 1 (1962), 9-21; *Comparative Bantu* (Farnborough, 1967). J.H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington, 1963) established Bantu's descent from a branch of Benue-Congo; P. Schachter, "The Present State of African Linguistics," *Current Trends in Linguistics* 7 (1971); Wm. E. Welmers, *African Language Structures* (Berkeley, 1973); the live issue is where the Kwa/Benue-Congo boundary falls (Williamson, "Benue-Congo Overview"). The sole Greenbergian work in Vass and Holloway's bibliography is a 1946 paper on Islam; Greenberg, *The Languages* (1963) is explicitly cited just in a map (p. xxi). "Greenberg's classification" does not mention in the heading of Table 4 (6f.), but this, like their Table 2, was "compiled by William S. Pollitzer." The Acknowledgements state: "Dr. Pollitzer approaches the search for the original African linguistic sources of Gullah from a biomedical standpoint. His special area of research is on the physical anthropology of the black people of coastal South Carolina and their African ancestors, including blood types and the sickle cell trait" (p. vii). Ironically, historical linguistics was founded on the twin models of genetics (August Schleicher, author of the 1862 *Stammbaumtheorie*, was a partisan Darwinian, cf. R.H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (London, 1967), 181) and epidemiology (Johannes Schmidt's 1872 *Wellentheorie*).

⁷⁰ From Fante, not Twi; it inspires no confidence that Vass garbles Turner's citation of the African source. Turner cites the Twi form *yaa* just to get the meaning of the Fante item. *Àkán*, the official hyponym, includes Asante, Fante, and Twi.

-*kwaba* (infinitive)." This implies that Bantu stems are not normally pronounceable words, so the bare stem cannot be the etymon for a name (but see below for a differing opinion).

Now to the other half of a lexical item: meaning. Turner's Gullah consultants could gloss few of the names, but his asterisk tells us that Àkán *ába*, like its hypothetical Gullah relative *aba* (m.), is "well known as a personal or other proper name" (1949: 41). Turner glosses *aba* (HH) as a Fante female name "corresponding to the Twi [item] *yaa* 'name given [to] a girl born on Thursday.'"⁷¹ The semantic match is not perfect, since the Fante item is the wrong gender, but what's the alternative? The ChiLuba item which Vass wants to connect to the Gullah name *aba* is a verb with a wide semantic range: "click, crack; feel grief, pain; divide, distribute" (p. 9). Anyone proposing this etymology has to suggest a plausible semantic path to a name (e.g., the cracking of a pillar, grief at a loss, distribution of bridewealth, and so on), and also has to overcome the morphosyntactic difficulty that a verb is not a name. On this point, the *IJAHS* reviewer cited above—who doubted the pronounceability of the stem *aba* in isolation—makes an apposite semantic observation, giving at the same time a contradictory opinion on the phonetic fit:

To the best of my knowledge medial /g/ drops out in Luba. In any case the P[roto-] B[antu] form of the root is *-*gába* (HL). The use of this verb as a name is quite common when referring to political leaders (givers/distributors of wealth). Its lack of medial /g/, as an African-American name, actually gives a Luba source for this etymology more than plausibility.

If a bare verb root can be a name, Vass's etymology is semantically plausible, but then the same reviewer's comment about *-kwaba* remains mysterious. Vass can settle the matter by saying whether the ChiLuba stem *by itself* is a possible name.

At best, both the ChiLuba and Àkán etymologies are problematic, though I find Àkán *ába* less so.⁷² What is not in doubt is that Cassidy's conditions for multiple etymology are nowhere near to being met.

Try again. Turner pairs the Gullah name **a^hlaba* (f.) with Fòñ *alaba* "Arabian, Arabic" (tone not indicated).⁷³ The asterisk shows that Turner verified the use of the Fòñ word as a personal name. Vass gives a singular ChiLuba noun *Alaba* (tone not indicated) with the meaning "Arab, Arabian." It is not clear if she spells it with upper case *A* to mean that the ChiLuba item is used as a personal name, or simply because it is a proper noun (as in standard English); let's assume the former for the sake of argument. Now what more do we know about Gullah? Without further information, we are in exactly the same position as Cassidy with his *Greetland* example: we cannot decide which African language was the source of the Gullah name. But here multiple etymology is particularly uninformative, since there must be hundreds of African (and non-African) lexicons that include a similar word. A quick trip to the Yorùbá dictionary yields a more promising candidate:

A male child born after *Ìdòwú* is called *Ìdògbé* and a female is called *Àlábá*.⁷⁴

Turner would certainly have listed this item next to his Gullah **a^hlaba* (f.). Observe two additional points of similarity: in meaning, there is a gender match; in form, LLH is not LHH as we might expect, but the fit could be much worse, out of the eighteen tone patterns that are possible on Yorùbá trisyllabic nouns (and see note 75 below).

Third try. For the Gullah personal name **anu* (m.), Turner lists *anu* "only" (ChiLuba) and *aanu* "regret" (Yorùbá). In this instance, an unguarded reader of Vass's list might think she has a solid case. Vass writes:

anu only anu adv. only (p. 9)

Things are less than they appear, however. For some reason, Vass's list gives the gloss of one of Turner's African comparanda in the second column (when she puts anything; see below), *as if* it were the gloss of the Gullah name in column one. Here, "only" = "only" and the semantic correspondence seems complete. However, what has happened is less sincere. The gloss in column two is from Turner's citation of the *ChiLuba* form, not the *Gullah* one. Why not choose the gloss of the Yorùbá item (which is a name)? Unless the ChiLuba form is a personal name, it is far less likely to be the source of the Gullah item, especially given the close phonetic match with the Yorùbá name.

Hiding pertinent data is bad enough; Vass sometimes also changes the data, and not just by omission. Turner lists the Gullah personal name **ashipa* (m.). This exactly matches Yorùbá *Aşípa*, which has the following entry:

(1) An Official Title; (2) [*cross-ref.*: The *Aşípa* is the *Ojúwá*, i.e., distributor of presents received by the *Ọyọ Misi*; ...the King of Benin appointed the Yorùbá named *Aşípa* as King of Lagos;... About the time of the son of *Aşípa*, the Portuguese settled in Lagos...; it was chosen for its suitability as a slave-depot.]; (3) name of place in *Ìlàaró*.⁷⁵

But Vass changes the Gullah form when she copies it out of Turner, from **ashipa* (m.) to "ashipe." Her motive can be guessed from the ChiLuba item she wants to equate it with:

ashipe accidental murder ashipe purp. let him kill (p. 10)

The gloss in Vass's column two is actually from Turner's *second* Yorùbá comparandum, the common noun *aşípa* "accidental murder" (in Turner's tone notation: a₁i₁kpa₂). Here, despite an effort to list every plausible cognate, Turner has failed to distinguish the MHH tone of the title/name from the LLM tone of the common noun. Strictly, he would have to transcribe the Yorùbá forms twice, the first time as a₂i₃kpa₂. However, the two items are still separated by a semicolon, so he leaves no doubt that they are distinct words, and Vass is wrong to list the gloss of "accidental murder" as the "meaning" of the Gullah name. She may have done so in order to make the ChiLuba verb "look better" in the Molefi Asante sense, having altered the spelling of the Gullah data with the same goal. That's cheating!

⁷¹ Turner, *Africanisms*, 43.

⁷² In Chapter 2 (84f.), the authors derive the female name *Aba* (from the *South Carolina Gazette*, 1732-55) from the ChiLuba verb *aba*, but in that case the Àkán etymology has no gender problem and so is obviously to be preferred.

⁷³ Turner, *Africanisms*, 49.

⁷⁴ R.C. Abraham, *Dictionary of Modern Yorùbá* (London, 1958), 266.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 22, 72f., 155. For all three examples so far, the main stress of the Gullah item corresponds to the last L before H in the Yorùbá form. This may bear on Mufwene's phonological findings.

Very occasionally, hindsight can improve on Turner. A case in point is the Gullah personal name **kuti* (m.) for which he gives only one African comparandum, a KiKongo common noun *nkuti* (no tone indicated), glossed as "a herd of wild pigs."⁷⁶ Had he possessed Abraham's then-unpublished Yorubá dictionary, or asked any of his Yorubá consultants, Turner would certainly have included the following datum:

Kùtì [*cross ref.*: male àbíkú name ("he did not fully die")]⁷⁷

Vass's practice of obscuring the name/non-name distinction is nowhere more damaging than when Turner's proposed African source for a Gullah name is itself a personal name, and Vass's source could never be. For example, Turner links Gullah **mise* (f.) to Bamanankan *mise* pers n. small, slender,⁷⁸ but Vass omits Turner's African gloss in her column two, giving only the following information:

mise [blank] misele n. pl. gonorrhea (p. 53)

A colleague in Leiden tells me that "herd of wild pigs" is an actual name somewhere in Africa, but I have my doubts about "gonorrhea."

I did not go out of my way to find the above examples; they suffice to prove that Vass is unreliable as a historical linguist, and that her book takes a big step backward from Turner's, in documenting and interpreting Gullah linguistic heritage. This negative result belies the authors' ingratiating show of homage ("This book is our gift to the Gullah people toward the restoration and preservation of the Gullah language," p. vii). The subsequent four chapters do improve on the unfortunate start, but only marginally.

The Lexicography of Mainland African-American English

It's not easy to disentangle Vass and Holloway's discussion of African-American English, in the U.S. sense of "Black English", from that of Gullah. Perhaps, for political reasons already described, the authors do not wish to distinguish the two linguistic systems. Their idea of "Black English" appears to cover Barbados English, Gullah, and the English spoken by U.S. citizens of African descent, all indifferently. Be that as it may, Chapters 2-4 present themselves as being primarily devoted to the last-named variety.

Chapter 2: "Black Names in the United States"

Chapter 2 is structured as a literature review on "the historical relationship between African and African-American naming practices." Some asides and sidebar lists propose ChiLuba etymologies for Gullah names and for names in Puckett's collection.⁷⁹ Some of these proposals are more credible than those in Chapter 1. In particular, the Bantu etymologies for six fully-glossed Gullah "basket names" (family "pet"-names)—as given in the fourth full paragraph on p. 86—meet the basic, twin criteria of phonetic and semantic closeness of match between the Gullah forms and their respective Bantu comparanda (exactly what Chapter 1 fails to do). Another six "basket names" in the same paragraph may have equally plausible Bantu comparanda, but Vass has unfortunately collapsed the Gullah and

⁷⁶ Turner, *Africanisms*, 119.

⁷⁷ Abraham, *Dictionary*, 7, 398.

⁷⁸ Turner, *Africanisms*, 32.

⁷⁹ N.N. Puckett, *Black Names in America: Origins and Usage* (Boston, 1975).

ChiLuba glosses together, so the semantic match has to be taken on faith. All twelve of these Gullah items are footnoted as coming from Vass's "unpublished material," possibly her primary notes from work with Gullah speakers. The lesson of these examples is that "basket names," like any other proper nouns, provide a favorable terrain for etymology if-and-when-ever speakers can provide a semantic interpretation, so that it can be compared with the potential etymon in meaning as well as form.

Other points in this chapter fall for the misplaced concretion fallacy (cf. Mufwene's comment quoted above). Just because Vass recognizes a close similarity to a particular Gullah naming practice in ChiLuba-speaking Zaïre, she cannot logically conclude that this practice observed in the Americas is a "Bantuism." The term "Bantuism" implies something that derives from Bantu-speakers, and that conclusion requires negative evidence as well: a finding that the same practice is not attested in other potential source areas, in Africa (or indeed elsewhere). For example, both community nicknames and pet names are probably universal human practices in small-scale ("face-to-face") society, and are not necessarily Bantuisms as Vass implies (86f.). In the same vein, "spirit names" (i.e., reincarnation names, p. 87) are certainly found throughout West Africa.

Chapter 2 concludes with an uninterpretable list entitled "Bantuisms... found in Puckett's Black Names in America" (pp. 87-92). What has been printed in Vass and Holloway's book is apparently just ChiLuba forms (some of which are asterisked as occurring in Guthrie, thus as "common to Bantu languages throughout sub-Saharan Africa").⁸⁰ Without Puckett's book⁸¹ there is no way to assess the phonetic or semantic match. The nearly 200 forms are listed in an order that is clearly nonrandom, but neither is there an obvious organizing principle. Perhaps it reflects the alphabetical listing of the forms in Puckett; only Vass knows. The presentation suggests a basic misunderstanding of historical linguistics: Vass seems to believe that all Bantuisms are self-evident, so there is no need to place the hypothetical source and recipient side-by-side. But the opposite is true. For example, the first item in this list is our friend "*aba* v.t." Vass doesn't tell us if the American correspondent listed by Puckett is the female name *Abby* (which Dillard long ago identified as of Àkán origin, as Vass and Holloway acknowledge in a different context on p. 81) or if it is a male name like Turner's Gullah form **aba* (m.). In the former case, the Bantu identification is dubious. In the latter case, the Àkán candidate suffers from gender mismatch, and the Bantu one is not unproblematic, but at least the reader would know what they are being compared to.

Chapter 3: Crossover Bantuisms?

Chapter 3 ("Africanisms of Bantu Origin in Black English") reprints seventeen pages of wordlist and six pages of footnotes from Vass's 1979 book, containing 245 items of "Black English" and positing a "Bantu" etymology for each. Judging from the evidence cited in the list, most of these English words seem close enough in both sound and meaning to the Bantu comparanda to be genuine Bantuisms. The problem here is a different one. Some twenty-one (8 percent) of the 245 items are not restricted to African-American English, as non-African-Americans can verify by correctly defining them. Vass

⁸⁰ M. Guthrie, *Comparative Bantu* (Farnborough, 1967).

⁸¹ I have not been able to consult it for this review.

and Holloway must know this, too, since fourteen of these (the ones underlined below) also appear in Vass and Holloway's Chapter 5 which treats general American English:

ballyhoo, banjo, boogaboo, boogie-woogie, bozo, caffuffle, flap-doodle, gaober, gumbo, jazz, jiffy, jive, kook, lallygag, mooch, moola, mosey, palooka, ruckus, yackety-yack, zombi (pp. 93-100).

If we accept the authors' introductory imperatives about using "a West African baseline for assessing New World Africanisms among whites and a Central African baseline for assessing New World Africanisms among African-Americans" (p. xvi), why should white people have even fourteen (or, as I think, more like twenty-one) of these Bantuisms in their mental lexicon? Since they evidently do, the authors should qualify their methodological strictures or else drop them.

Another issue is what the authors mean by "Black English". Their usage is apparently racial—the English spoken by any Black person—but this sweeping approach is of limited historical value since it aggregates linguistically heterogeneous materials. A question the authors might have asked in Chapter 3, but which they can't answer without more careful use of definitions and sources, is whether there is a higher proportion of Bantuisms vs. Kwa-isms in Gullah or in what I will call mainland African-American English. A quick check of the footnotes suggests that about fifty-three (22 percent) of 245 claimed Bantuisms listed in Chapter 3 are Gullah, and another twelve (5 percent) are from Barbados, leaving at most 180 (73 percent) from mainland African-American English ("U.S. Black English" in the narrow sense). To be sure, their footnote 7 refers to "the close relationship between Charleston, S.C., and Barbados" and states that "most of the words listed" in the Barbados English source "are also listed in South Carolina vocabulary lists" (p. 163), but this leaves us guessing How much is most? and Where precisely in the state of South Carolina: in the Gullah-speaking islands (as one might suppose) or on the mainland? Logically, all the Gullah material belongs in Chapter 1.

Chapter 4: Bantu Place Names in the Southern U.S.

Chapter 4 ("Bantu Place Names in Nine Southern States") reprints, with revisions, twenty-four pages of text and six pages of footnotes from Vass's 1979 book. Before reaching substantive material, the reader must plow through several nonhistorical arguments. I don't understand why an "African-American ... propensity to name all the places with which they associate" (p. 107) implies anything about Bantu origins, or indeed about the (non)existence of such a nomothetic impulse in the minds of other kinds of people. In the same vein the authors inform us that

Native American place names deal almost totally with nature, whereas African-American place names deal consistently with human or social situations. ... Rather than using objects of nature, society-oriented Africans name their towns verbs or verbal nouns commemorating significant human experience... (p. 108).

Letting these stereotypes alone, the reader can turn to a detailed, state-by-state survey accompanied by maps. Many place names that Vass regards as Bantu have been assumed in previous literature to have a native American origin (e.g., from Choctaw in Mississippi or from Seminole in Florida). The obvious challenge that this chapter could face, but doesn't, is to compare the Bantu and Native American hypotheses for each case (or is it multiple etymologies again?). In a few instances, Vass proposes Bantu sources for

place names that have never been claimed to derive from Native American sources. One of these seems plausible enough: Chumukla, Florida could derive from Bantu *chiumukila*, "a motive for ... moving on to another place" (p. 116). Of course, no one can doubt the Bantu origins of Angola (Louisiana and North Carolina). However, for most of the 200-plus Bantu etymologies of southern U.S. place names listed in Chapter 4, no one but Vass can judge the plausibility, since any alternative, Native American derivations that may exist in the literature are not mentioned, let alone critically discussed.

Chapter 5: U.S. Africanisms at Large, Mixed Together with Various Other Things

Chapter 5 ("Africanisms in Contemporary American English") compiles some 145 words of general American English that have received African etymologies in the literature, and adds to these another eighty-one items, most of which aren't relevant to this chapter, including:

- (i) items restricted to Gullah and hence belonging in Chapter 1;
- (ii) items restricted to mainland African American English and hence belonging in Chapter 3; and
- (iii) items comprising nonverbal things with African origins of greater or lesser probability, e.g., the cultivation of cow peas, dancing the Charleston, and "wearing of earrings by males" (p. 160).

Obviously, none of the items of type (iii) belong in a book on linguistic heritage, but equally obviously they serve a symbolic function for the authors and do less harm in Chapter 5 than they would elsewhere in the book. An editor (if there was one) should have advised the authors to put these items in an appendix or a different chapter on nonlinguistic Africanisms, which is certainly a deserving topic.

Excluding three misplaced categories (i-iii above), the remaining African etymologies in Chapter 5 are of uneven quality. There being no introductory or general comments, the material in this chapter only serves to extend Turner's Africanist thesis, repeating that U.S. language and culture owe much to Africa and African-Americans. Honesty, however, should compel the authors to admit that the presence of apparent Bantuisms in Chapter 5 makes nonsense of their talk about "baselines" in the Introduction.

What's Missing: African-American Grammar

Something big is missing from this book, something to which Turner devoted five detailed chapters.⁸² That thing is grammar, understood as the combinatory rules which extend human language from a dead-storage device of lexical lists to a creative instrument of unlimited thought and expression. Minimally, linguists distinguish three modules of grammar: syntax, morphology, and phonology, each closely linked to the others.

That historians of African-America cannot ignore grammar is made plain by Marable's eloquent remarks:

[T]he histories of the First and Second Reconstruction reveal that the slaves and their descendants never accepted the definitions of their oppressors. They saw themselves as a people to whom history had given a terrible burden—and a tremendous opportunity. They always looked backward,

⁸² Turner's Chapters 4-8 cover "Syntactical Features," "Morphological Features," "Some Word Formations," "Sounds," and "Intonation."

recalling their African roots, which were expressed in their language, syntax, verb tenses and idiomatic expressions. They forged within this bitter crucible a deep sense of cultural commonality and national identity as Americans of African descent.⁸³

Recent history bears out the truth of these points. During the 1960s and '70s, the language spoken by African-Americans was the subject of heated debate, related to contentious issues of schooling and examinations. Behind these public foci were thornier questions about the relationship between race and class. The most serious and consistent linguistic effort to intervene in these policy matters was the work of Labov and his collaborators. Labov argued in effect that African-American English is a variant of standard English, but not a random, chaotic one. Rather, Labov could account for a great deal of African-American linguistic data with phonological and morphological rules like "consonant cluster simplification"⁸⁴ and "elimination" of verb inflection.⁸⁵ A set of assumptions underlying Labov's work can be called "the creole paradigm": extreme cultural dislocation between generations yields linguistic forms that are "reduced" and yet systematic.⁸⁶ Creolist work nicely suits the Americanist position, as presented above: rupture with Africa was followed by creation of a "new" culture out of bits of old, available materials.

There is also an Africanist tradition of research on African-American grammar. Turner is the patron saint of this current, which has been extended by Alleyne, Baugh, Mufwene, and Green, among others.⁸⁷ These scholars, while far from unanimous, share the non-Labovian claim that the syntactic base of African-American grammar is structurally distinct from that of standard English. In effect, the formation of sentences by African-Americans is not to be understood as a departure from the standard language, but rather as the expression of an independent system. Some issues that Africanist theorists of African American grammar have addressed are: the relationship between verb aspect and verb tense, the role of grammatical agreement, the category of simple predicates, and the formation of complex predicates from simple ones. In each area, the evidence suggests

⁸³ Marable, *Race*, 229.

⁸⁴ W. Labov, "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability of the English Copula," *Language* 45 (1969), 715-62; W. Labov, "The Logic of Nonstandard English," in *Report of the Twentieth Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language* (Washington, 1969); W. Labov, "The Study of Language in Its Social Context," *Studium Generale* 23 (1970), 30-87.

⁸⁵ W. Labov, "On the Adequacy of Natural Languages 1; The Development of Tense," in J. V. Singler, ed., *Creole Tense-Mood-Aspect Systems* (Amsterdam, 1990); W. Labov, "Some Features of the English of Black Americans," in R. Bailey and J.L. Robinson, eds., *Varieties of Present-Day English* (New York, 1973).

⁸⁶ For an updated version of the creole paradigm, see D. Bickerton, "Creole Languages and the Bioprogram," in F. Newmeyer, ed., *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey*, II (Cambridge, 1988).

⁸⁷ Alleyne, *Comparative Afro-American*; J. Baugh, *Black Street Speech; Its History, Structure and Survival* (Austin, Texas, 1983); S.S. Mufwene, "Equivocal Structures in Some Gullah Complex Sentences," *American Speech* 64 (1990); L. Green, "Topics in African-American English Syntax: The Verbal System Analysis" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1992).

that African-American grammar has "Kwa-like features."⁸⁸ Mufwene's 1993 collection puts African-American grammar in a hemispheric perspective.

What Vass and Holloway's book has to say about grammar is precisely nothing. It's a pity they did not consider questions like the following. What is the relationship between Gullah and mainland African-American English? In what ways does modern Gullah resemble the lineal linguistic ancestor of the current speech of mainland Black Americans? How has African-American English kept a distinct identity despite the longstanding tendency—documented by Holloway and Vass, sometimes inadvertently—for lexical bits and pieces to cross over from African-America to "mainstream" U.S. English? Jones/Baraka asks parallel questions in *Blues People*. What is the relationship between African music, "Afro-Christian music," rhythm & blues, piano boogie and stride, swing, bebop etc.? How has African-American music maintained its autonomy when African-American musical ideas are continually lifted into mainstream commercial genres of "jazz," "pop," "rock," etc.?

Wordlists cannot answer these questions, because one is asking specifically about the transmission and transformation of larger organizing principles of creativity. Words, like other cultural things, can be borrowed—or swiped—piecemeal from "across the tracks," but a grammar can only be acquired among its speakers. The grotesque mass culture spectacle of Amos'n'Andy blackface minstrelry is the best evidence that only someone raised from childhood in an African-American community has the capacity to produce novel sentences that are convincingly African-American in structure.

Conclusion: Don't Buy This Book

Vass and Holloway's book is a travesty. Why was it published? The inescapable conclusion is that the project is a market-driven repackaging of Vass's 1979 collection, rushed to press to "diversify" the Indiana University Press list and cash in on Afrocentric dollars. Not since Norton derived Gullah from Canadian French has Gullah suffered such error in print.⁸⁹ The most constructive response is to see through the packaging and leave the book unbought.

I've suggested that more reliable work on African-American English, maintaining Turner's philological standards, is abundantly available, so why should it matter if a thoroughly retrograde book takes up some shelf-space? OK, let a hundred flowers bloom, but why exploit Turner's name along the way with flowery praise? Sadly, Turner's book went out of print about the same time that this latest version of Vass's oeuvre came off the presses. If Indiana University Press has a conscience, they should sponsor a real Turner memorial volume, with first-rate linguistic scholars from Africa and all the Americas, covering Gullah and beyond.

What makes Vass and Holloway possible? I have described how seeming philological minutiae have historical contexts and political consequences. One's politics informs—or deforms—one's scholarship in this research area to a great degree. The linguistic profession has let some of its responsibilities slide. Today, linguistics in North America is hypocritically segregated between descriptive and theoretical workers. Data

⁸⁸ S.S. Mufwene, "African Substratum: Possibility and Evidence," a discussion of Alleyne's and Hancock's papers, in Mufwene, *Africanisms*, 199.

⁸⁹ A.A. Norton, "Linguistic Persistence," *American Speech* 6 (1931).

from Niger-Congo languages have been at the heart of academic generative grammar for three decades, but dollar for dollar and page for page, the lion's share of African language description emanates from a handful of white fundamentalist-Christian missionary organizations. Language description, being expensive and laborious, has been gratefully privatized by a downsized academy.

The biggest of the private contractors in descriptive linguistics is Wycliffe Bible Translators of Dallas, Texas, a.k.a. the Summer Institute of Linguistics.⁹⁰ For grant-starved linguistic theoreticians, WBT/SIL is a cheap source of exotic facts harvested off the heads of remote Third World peasant converts. WBT/SIL managers attend academic conferences and send their more promising recruits to elite university departments, conveniently upgrading their technical skills and obtaining academic "cover" at the same time. Most WBT/SIL workers, no better-trained than Vass, are otherwise similar. They share her "missionary zeal", using blunt lexical counts to reclassify African languages for ideological convenience. WBT/SIL's reclassifications are a divide-and-rule technique, carving out ethnic niches where evangelists do their business sheltered from nationalist elites and indigenized "mainstream" churches. The divisive goal served by Vass's reclassification is biological reductionism spiced with cultural romance—the conservative side of identity politics. Vass and WBT/SIL both sell bad philology in shiny packages. Both demonstrate that African cultural heritage is not safe from evangelists, whether of the Christian or Kemetic variety. Until theoretical linguists get their praxis in gear, expect lots more of the same.

⁹⁰ Founded by an Arkansas door-to-door Bible salesman in 1934, WBT/SIL employed some 5,580 fieldworkers in 1988, by which time they had produced 271 New Testament translations. S. Diamond, ed., *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* (Boston, 1989), 28. Their eschatology expects the biblical apocalypse on the day they render their anticommunist-flavored gospel into the "last" human tongue. While hastening The End, they spread Disney-esque authoritarian social forms in Third World counterinsurgency zones. To paraphrase L.-J. Calvet, *La Guerre des langues* (Paris, 1987), SIL gives the CIA good value even if there is no direct CIA subsidy. Among the covert actions of WBT/SIL have been cited: counterinsurgency in Colombia (1950), the Philippines (1950s) and Indochina (1960s); cf. B. Wallace, "Missionaries With a Mission?" *The Nation* 31 (1981), 664; S. Hvalkof, and P. Aaby, eds., *Is God an American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Copenhagen, 1981), L. Wolff; "The Summer Institute of Linguistics," *Covert Action Information Bulletin* 18 (1983), and the documentary film entitled "Is God an American?" WBT/SIL has been expelled from Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, and most recently Colombia. Academic linguistic departments in North America with WBT/SIL presence include UTexas (Arlington), UPittsburgh and UBritish Columbia, Vancouver.