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Cuban Performances of Blackness as the Timeless Past Still Among Us

"Congo" spirits, "black witches," African slaves, and maroons are ubiquitous historical figures in religious and folklore performances of eastern Cuba, where they are represented through collocations of Bozal *speech register, stereotypical "African" vocal and bodily mannerisms and dance forms, and distinctive uses of deictics that present first-person, historical-present accounts of past events. I trace an interdiscursive web across which these racially marked semiotic forms constitute a Cuban racializing discourse that makes blackness highly salient and highly marked by emphasizing a chronotope of blackness as "a timeless past still among us." This racial chronotope, re-enacted through different performance genres with diverse purposes, contributes to multiple projects of historical subjectivity.* [interdiscursivity, historical subjectivity, racialization, folklore, performance, Cuba]

En la loma he cimarrón / Yo taba ya / Hay un congo que se esconde / ¿Qué congo e?
On the hill there is a maroon / I was there / There is a congo hiding / Which congo is it?
–Song performed by Grupo 1802 de Orozco (Bahía Onda, Pinar del Río) for the Festival del Caribe in El Cobre, 6/8/06

Yo soy africano/ Desde Nigeria soy yo / Vengo a integrar mi cabildo / Olugo me llamo yo.
I am African / I am from Nigeria / I come to join my cabildo / My name is Olugo.
–From Cabildo Carabalí Olugo song "Oye Oye" (2006) by Benito Ramirez Soulary, recorded in interview 8/16/08 (Hear recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/soulary_oye_oye.mp4 and see video recording of performance at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/yo_soy_africano.mp4)

In Cuban folk religious and folklore performances, a set of stereotyped historical "African" figures circulates widely, condensing notions of blackness, history, and identity. These performances mobilize an array of linguistic and nonlinguistic indices of "blackness" that comprise a tacit but powerful racializing discourse, one that makes blackness highly salient and highly marked. The figures of slaves, maroons, and "black witches" convey a distinctive chronotope (spatio-temporal frame) that enacts Cuba's colonial past through a *bozal* lens. *Bozal* was the colonial-era derogatory label for African-born slaves and their nonstandard register of Spanish, and the term remains in use to describe these figures from the past (Castellanos 1990; Wirtz 2007). As is typical of marginalized speech registers, the "Bozal" label can index both negative attributes of brutishness, primitiveness, and superstitiousness and, through tropic usages of these negatives, more positively valenced attributes of authenticity, earthiness, rebelliousness, and spirituality, all products of its enregisterment across a long history of performance events in religious and folklore-artistic settings. "Bozal" figures thus contribute to projects of racialized and national identity in Cuba.

Their very recognizability, iterated across different genres and modalities of performance, indicates the extent of interdiscursive connections among these performances through which a distinctive Bozal "voice" and embodied characterological type have become enregistered. I suggest that attending to chronotopic cues conveyed in and across performances reveals the workings of a sleight of hand that equates blackness with Bozalness, neatly casting the former into a nostalgia-inflected re-imagining of Cuba's colonial past while making the latter ever immanent in the present.

The performances considered here include ritual songs from the Afro-Cuban religion Palo Monte and a closely-related Spiritist/Palo ceremony performed for a folklore festival, as well as songs and performances by a "cabildo carabalí" folklore society and a professional folklore ensemble that incorporates Palo and Carabalí material into a work called "African Trilogy." Because the prevalent metaphor of "speech chains" conveys a sense of linearity or unidirectionality in the resulting interdiscursive relationships among these performance genres, I substitute the more fitting metaphor of "speech webs." These performance settings represent the range of genres in which African figures appear in my research site, the eastern Cuban city of Santiago de Cuba, forming a tight interdiscursive web in which professional folklore performers look to "authentic" religious and neighborhood settings for material and amateur performers imitate the "authoritative" and commercially successful stylizations of professional ensembles. In state-sponsored folk festivals, amateur and professional ensembles often perform alongside one another. Moreover, some of the same people are involved in religious activities, neighborhood groups, and professional ensembles, and, indeed, professional ensembles often recruit new musicians and dancers from the other settings.

I aim to unpack the semiosis of blackness at work across these performances in order to show how "Bozal" figures operate at a conjunction of racializing and temporalizing processes. Discourses invoking race are strands in interdiscursive webs that comprise discourse histories of race as a concept (Mirón and Inda 2000). The historical resonances of locally relevant concepts of race may be highlighted or elided in different kinds of racializing discourses. Thus, at the reflexive or metapragmatic level, discourses of race are also discourses of history because the construction of race in the present relies upon the semiotic cues of temporality, including temporal transcendence, that frame it or fail to frame it as an historically contingent concept.

Thomas Holt argues that a "seeming atemporality [has] characterized race and the racial for a very long time—perhaps even since its inception" and may even "explain much of its staying power" (Holt 2000:8–9). I take Holt's use of "atemporality" to mean that the concept of race appears to transcend historical contingency so as to seem universal, timeless, and natural. Tracking how this happens is a semiotic question. My purpose here is more modest and more specific: to show how one particularly dramatic type of Cuban racializing performance transmits a distinctive chronotope of blackness through interdiscursive links that create a temporally transcendent connection between Cuba's era of slavery and its present. What are the consequences of these interdiscursive constructions of a spatio-temporality of blackness for the alignments created among performers, audiences, and the figures performed? These alignments, reinforced across an interdiscursive web of performance events, produce racializing effects by linking blackness to colonial history and "folkloric" cultural practices, thus giving this subject position contemporary relevance primarily as a marker of the past.

Racializing discourses, it has been shown, are often below the radar of denotational explicitness, which allows them to circulate robustly while their racializing effects remain deniable (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Hill 2001; Myers 2005; Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk 1988). Studies of racializing discourses that adopt Toni Morrison's concept of "racetalk" as "talk that demeans on the basis of race or ethnicity," and thereby reinforces structures of domination and exclusion, have described its pervasive appearance in innuendo, humor, rumor, and "backstage" interaction (Fine

Figure 1
The "African witch" in Cutumba's "Trilogia Africana," Santiago de Cuba, July 2006,
still from videorecording by author

and Turner 2001; Myers 2005; Picca and Feagin 2007:2). Jane Hill (2008) has shown the workings of this deniability for a number of cases involving American white elite racializing discourses, including the use of Mock Spanish, which Anglos tend to see as lighthearted, witty, and even reflecting a cosmopolitan familiarity with Spanish. The actual derogatory effects of Mock Spanish usage on Spanish-speaking Americans and Latin Americans are readily dismissed by Anglo Americans, however nonracist they claim to be. Mock AAVE is more blatantly marked as racist speech (Ronkin and Karn 1999), along with embodied performances of blackness known as "blackface minstrelsy" (Lott 1993; see also Spike Lee's 2000 film *Bamboozled*).

One rather localized exception to Americans' general feelings of disgust and discomfort when confronted by blackface performance is the New Orleanian Zulu Aid and Pleasure Club's blackface performance of "King Zulu" during Mardi Gras, which is understood as pointed satire, in the African American tradition of "signi-fyin' " (Roach 1996).[1] But to satirize racist caricature is to risk that one's audience might absorb the caricature and miss the satire, as Michael Epp suggests in describing how Spike Lee's film *Bamboozled* "enacts the very restaging of minstrelsy it apparently condemns" (Epp 2003:17). In the Cuban case examined here, there is no sense of irony or satire in blackface performances by performers identifying as Afro-Cuban. Instead, an exoticized depiction of blackness, emblemized in Figures 1 and 2, can work in the service of both dominant and counterhegemonic projects of blackness.

The unspoken backdrop to such racializing performances, whether of racial-ethnic minorities in the United States or of Afro-Cubans in Cuba, is that whites, as the dominant and unmarked racial group, go unremarked, especially in comparison to other groups that are depicted in overtly racialized ways. It is, or should be, remarkable that there is no comparable presence of colonial-era white Cubans in the performances that I am examining to balance the attention lavished on historical African figures. When historical white figures do appear, it is in minor roles as foils to an African or Afro-Cuban origo—as cruel masters, slave-catchers, and even the imperial Spanish army, roles that distance audiences from colonial-era white figures and perhaps conveys that whiteness is marginal in Cuba's national narrative of creolization. Depictions of historical "African" figures create an identification between performers and performed figures, especially during religious ceremonies. Regardless of the racial identification of religious participants, a subject position of blackness is

Figure 2
The spirit of a "Congo cimarrón" demonstrates his trance with a machete, with an nganga (ritual power object) in front. Grupo 1802 de Orozco, Festival del Caribe, El Cobre, 7/8/06, Photo by A. Abelardo Larduet Luaces with author's camera

normalized. But in folklore performances, audiences, whether Cuban or foreign, are instead consigned to an unmarked observer role that is aligned with being white, albeit in Cuban terms. Indeed, Epp (2003) argues that whiteness is partly constructed through this sort of unmarked observer position in which audiences are complicit in understanding the blackface conventions of performances. The following analysis attempts to delineate both marked and unremarked interdiscursive dimensions of racial and historical imaginings.

How Interdiscursive Temporal Envelopes Create a History of Blackness

Interdiscursive connections rely upon chronotopic frames to become evident and, by virtue of the linkage, create temporal frames that order linked events. As Silverstein (2005:7–9) asserts, an indexical connection between two events necessarily creates "eval-ness" between them—an achronic state of suspension in which their similarities can be compared. He argues that the nature of that temporal relationship determines whether the relationship is between a semiotic "type" and its instantiation (type-sourced or type-targeted interdiscursivity) or between earlier and later contextually contingent semiotic events, as in reported speech (token-sourced or token-targeted interdiscursivity) (see also Dunn 2006). "Sourced" means that a general type or earlier instance is presupposed to already exist, and "targeted" means that an attempt to create a type, genre, style, and so forth, is underway. Chronotopic work inheres in interdiscursive processes as we necessarily order chunks of semiotic activity into earlier and later iterations or as instances of time-transcending types within the "co-eval" frame or "envelope" of comparison. To apply this to the racializing performances examined here, each appearance of an historical black figure creates an atemporal envelope of comparison, usually invoking the speech, appearance, and actions of long-ago slaves and maroons and the contemporary religious and folkloric performances that iconize them. Within this envelope of comparison, the colonial era of slavery is made relevant to the present moment of performance, creating a distinctive chronotope of unchanging blackness that glances backward with nostalgia.

As a preliminary example to sketch out the argument in a general way, consider the song in the epigraph that begins "En la loma he cimarrón / Yo taba ya" (On the hill there is a maroon / I was there). In the folklore festival performance that I recorded in 2006, the singers of the amateur folklore group 1802 de Orozco used colloquial or nonstandard Spanish pronunciations ("he" for "hay;" "taba" for "estaba;" "ya" for "allá") to index a Bozal voice associated with African slaves as they sang about visiting a maroon in the hills, thereby implying that the performed origo of the song, its narrator, has also escaped slavery. Dressed as they were in costumes that Cuban folklore ensembles typically use to portray slaves—bare feet, head-kerchiefs, knee-length britches for the men, and skirts for the women—the performers enacted the role of slave/maroon as they carried out a folkloricized version of a rustic Afro-Cuban folk religious ceremony in which they induced the maroon spirit in Figure 2 to manifest himself. Just before the song, one of the performers had been possessed by a spirit introducing herself by the prototypical slave name María del Congo, who then said:

Example 1
María del Congo's speech, Festival del Caribe, El Cobre, 7/8/06; bold type marks lexical items from Palo Monte's ritual register. (See video recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/maria_de_congo.mp4)

1	**Miserecua** pa to criollo	**Mercy** for all creoles
2	Que **papá Dió** acompaña a	May **Papa God** accompany
3	To lo **criollo** ese	All these **creoles** here
4	Que ta **mimo munanso** que yo	of the **same ritual house** as I
5	Y así sea	(performers answer: May it be so)
6	Dici **sala malekun** pa	**Say greetings** to
7	To lo **cuadrilla** que e congo	All the congo **ritual families**
8	**Malekun sala**	(performers answer: **Greetings**)
9	Dici carao	Say damn
10	Mi falta a uni congo	I am missing a congo
11	Donde ta **mimo** congo **lukabbo** ese	Where is that congo **lukabbo**?

This Bozal speech by María del Congo blurs the lines between religious ritual, in which such spirits regularly appear and speak, and folkloric spectacle, in which performers dressed to play the part of "congos" of Cuba's past act out simulacra of these spirits. Her speech incorporates lexical items from the religion Palo Monte's ritual register, including the Palo ritual greeting (*Sala malekun*, from the Arabic greeting, is associated with Palo in Cuba; see next section for an account of this religion).[2] Indeed, even in performances clearly demarcated as folklore presentations, religious performers have been known to succumb to real spirits (Hagedorn 2001), and this aura of authenticity adds to the thrill for folklore audiences. The religious authenticity of spirit possession performances is not at issue here; of interest, rather, is the fact that, across religious and folklore performances, the same historical African figures appear and are voiced in the same way. María del Congo is herself an African slave or maroon figure, and she mentions two other figures in her speech: another "congo cimarrón," whom she seeks, and the wider audience of the spectacle, whom she refers to as being comprised of "congos," meaning African-born blacks, and "creoles," or Cuban-born blacks. María del Congo tacitly positions herself as the ancestor and spirit helper of all Cubans, and all Cubans, in her scenario, have African heritage.

The 1802 de Orozco ensemble's next song fully performs the persona of an escaped slave and invokes the feared overseer, but with the immediate ritual goal of provoking the missing congo spirit to appear. In this case, the song does not include markers of Bozal:

Example 2
Song performed by 1802 de Orozco, El Cobre, 7/8/06 (See video recording at
http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/mayoral_lo_mato.mp4)

| 1 | Si viene el mayoral lo mato | If the overseer comes I kill him |
| 2 | Si viene el mayoral lo pico | If the overseer comes I bite him |

The interdiscursive envelope of both the spirit María's speech and the ensemble's songs thus references the speech of long-ago slaves and contemporary religious ceremonies as "type-sources" for the current performance, although I would suggest that these animations of slave speech are creating Bozal as a register rather than reproducing actual slave speech (see Lane 2005:48). Thus the performances are "type-sourced" with regard to folklore and religious performances and "type-targeted" by entailing the imagined speech and behavior of historical "African" figures. They serve to link historical figure types and cultural expressions with people and cultural expressions marked as Afro-Cuban in the present, such as the performers themselves and their religious practices. In this light, the alignment between Afro-Cuban performer and historical African figure, human host and possessing spirit, is part of the point.

Interdiscursive links thus position the events that they connect within broader spatio-temporal scenarios. For instance, Wilce (2005) examines how lament has lately become framed as a global traditional genre, one that reflexively comments on its very endangerment and disappearance. Tomlinson (2004) examines how Fijian narratives of decline produce a "perpetual lament" for lost greatness. In both of these cases, nostalgia provides the "structure of feeling" for a retrospective chronotope of times past and things lost. In the case I examine, a romanticizing and exoticizing cloak of nostalgia is wrapped around certain figures and performances marked as "African" even as they occur in the present moment. This happens through interdiscursive webs of performances that assign blackness to a perpetually available "historical present."

A Timeless Past Still Among Us

In short, I will argue that blackness in Cuba is temporalized into what I call a "timeless past still among us" in which the relevant past is the colonial era of slavery. This chronotope has multiple inflections: within Cuba's dominant racial ideology of *mestizaje*, racial and cultural blending to produce a seamlessly unified citizenry, blackness is either viewed as an atavistic threat to modernity and progress or safely presented as national folklore that tells the story of the origins of Cubanness, of exotic Others in our midst defining "us" (Bronfman 2004; de la Fuente 1998; 2001; 2007; Hagedorn 2001). As has been shown for many Latin American societies, the racially marked categories of blacks and indigenous people are treated as necessary emblems of national origins while, at the same time, they are marginalized as unassimilated to the national ideal of mestizaje (Rahier 2003; Stutzman 1981; Wade 2001; Wright 1990). Mark Sawyer has described this state of affairs in Cuba as "inclusionary discrimination" (Sawyer 2006). Temporal displacement can also occur, so that racialized groups are projected back in time to a now-completed role in national origins. Hence, in María del Congo's terms, we are all creoles now, and "congos" are spirits of the past.

For predominantly Afro-Cuban communities, the chronotope of the "timeless past still among us" is a source of pride that implicitly tells the story of independent spheres of black sociality and cultural expression, even if it does so within the dominant frame of nostalgia and includes many of the racially caricaturing tropes that support the dominant ideology. Consider, for example, the following short ritual song, or *tratado* (occult act), from a set of folk religious practices called Palo Monte or, more generically, "Reglas de Palo." In the spectrum of Cuban religious practices, Palo

Monte is considered to be a powerful and improvisatory Afro-Cuban tradition deriving from Congo/Bantú origins. It is frequently contrasted with another Afro-Cuban tradition, Santería or "Regla de Ocha," against the religious propriety of which Palo Monte is understood to be more like "witchcraft" and therefore more potent. Indeed, Palo practitioners, known as *paleros*, are often referred to as witches and may even jokingly refer to themselves as such. Paleros develop more contractual and coercive relationships with the spirits that they trap in their *ngangas*, or ritual power objects (see Figure 2 foreground), than do Santería practitioners with their "saints" and spirits (James Figarola 2006; Palmié 2002; Routon 2008). Once, while I was discussing Palo with a practitioner and contrasting its ethos of creativity and adaptability with Santería's focus on exact replication of a temporally transcendent tradition, he shared the following tratado with me:

Example 3
Song of Palo Monte, collected 5/22/07

1	Campana la Luisa	Bell of Luisa (a sugar plantation)
2	Ya se fuá	Now it's dead
3	Yo manda mi nganga a componé	I have an nganga (power object in Palo) made
4	Pa' ti coflorida dime adios	For you friend tell me good-bye
5	Donde manda mi nganga mando yo	Where my nganga is in command, I am in command

The song is typically elliptical (Schwegler and Rojas-Primus in press), its meanings disguised except to those in the know, not unlike African American "signifyin' " that Morgan (2002) and others have analyzed. The song has some nonstandard verb conjugations (e.g., line 2, "fuá," from Kikongo; line 3, "yo manda") and vocabulary (line 4, "coflorida," an archaism), as well as colloquial Cuban Spanish pronunciations (line 3, "componé;" line 4 "pa' ti") that give a distinctive "Bozal" flavor, much like in the spirit María del Congo's speech in Example 1 above. As the palero explained it to me, the song makes reference to a slave revolt at the sugar plantation Central La Luisa, in which the first and most iconic act would be to smash the bell that called slaves to work and dictated their lives. Line 4 indirectly conveys that the first-person-narrated origo of the song is escaping into marronage—saying to his interlocutor "tell me good-bye!" This brief, pointed historical vignette creates an alignment between the figure of a rebelling slave seizing control of his destiny and a palero with a powerful nganga, or ritually created vessel of magical power. I discuss below the deictic devices that create this transhistorical alignment. The message of the song as it is used in rituals is one of bravado: as my field consultant put it, the singer is saying that he, not anyone else, is in control because his nganga is in control.[3] The alignment between these two intertwined parts of the song, my consultant explained, conveys the salient social identity and historical subjectivity of the singer and his intended audience of other paleros: saying, in effect, "I broke free from slavery, and in this house now I am in charge."

Kenneth Routon (2008) has explored how Palo practices, including songs similar to Examples 2 and 3, keep alive a history of slavery through ritual mimesis of social relations between masters and slaves, representing generalizable categories of the powerful and the marginalized. He insightfully argues that paleros "fashion a kind of sorcery out of history" in which their ritual enactments of the past provide models for "strategically manipulating relations of power and inequality" in the here and now (Routon 2008:638). I extend this basic analysis by attending to the semiotic handling of temporal relationships between re-imagined past events—of brutal oppression under slavery, of resistance through rebellion and marronage—and performances in the present. The songs in the above examples perform a timeless historical black figure—the maroon—who asserts his ability to control his own destiny. As a counterpoint, the song in Routon's example threatens a maroon with pursuit by greatly

feared slave-hunting dogs (narrating an event from the historical past) in order to provoke his manifestation in the ceremony. All three songs are temporally cast in the breathless here-and-now, with the effect of claiming ritual power and controlling a spirit to harness its power for present purposes.

Routon draws a parallel between what he calls the "enshrined resistance" of Cuba's Revolutionary commemoration of maroons and the ritual mimesis through which paleros call upon maroon spirits and position themselves to be like maroons in their ability to escape oppression (Routon 2008:634–635). In official projects of commemoration, the maroons are aligned with the *mambí*, 19th-century independence fighters (many of whom had been slaves), and with the later bearded guerrilla fighters of Fidel Castro. This, Routon argues, is an attempt to brand Cuba as a "cimarrón nation" that seeks to escape the global neoliberal order. In Routon's simile—and in Cuban historian Joel James Figarola's formulation of "Cuba, La Gran Nganga" (Cuba, the great ritual power object)—the Revolutionary state is like paleros in that both claim the status of latter-day maroons who draw upon historical marronage to manipulate power strategically from their positions of relative marginalization (in Cuban society, in the world order). I am interested here in the intradiscursive juxtaposition of "past" and "current" events and figures, and in how these discourse-internal (here, song-lyric-internal) cross-temporal connections rely upon other discourse events to create their effect. That is, Routon's argument implies that the Revolutionary government's positioning as a cimarrón nation relies upon the prior circulation of the "cimarrón" type, especially the cimarrón figure's ritual immanence in Palo (and other folk religious) ceremonies.

The Historical Present in the Timeless Past

Isar Godreau has described for Puerto Rico a chronotope in which blackness, associated with both people and cultural expressions, is displaced to the nation's past, where it is nostalgically viewed as one of three original cultural strands that blended to produce Puerto Ricanness, thus disappearing into the mesticized mix (Godreau 2006; Godreau et al. 2008). The Cuban case differs from her account of Puerto Rico, in which blackness is simply distanced from the present by being, as it were, put into the past tense. Instead, in black figures like the maroon, a time-transcending or achronic past is being made forever immanent. Semiotically, this happens through modalities akin to the historical present tense in narratives, a device to make the past vivid by creating "a sense of breathless immediacy and conversational directness" (Wilson 2001). It is not just the use of the historical present that achieves the immanent timeless past: differently marked uses of the present tense co-occur with first-person pronouns and semantic (sometimes phonological) and visual icons of the slave past to construct the particular timeless, present origo of the historical African figure.

The workings of these chronotopic devices can be seen in songs from the repertoire of a venerable institution of the older black neighborhoods that ring the original city center of Santiago de Cuba: the Cabildo Carabalí Olugo. This community folklore society traces its ancestry to colonial-era Catholic co-fraternities or *cabildos* for blacks, in which freedmen and urban slaves were organized by African *nación* (ethnicity) and dedicated to particular saints and churches (Howard 1998; Rushing 1992). From the end of the 18th century into the 19th century, there were three Carabalí cabildos in Santiago (Portuondo Zuñiga 2000), and two currently exist, one on either side of the historic city center. Colonial-era cabildos also provided mutual aid to members, including support for illness, funeral expenses, and even self-purchase for the enslaved, as well as limited space for expression of African-derived forms of spirituality—the precursors, presumably, of modern-day Palo Monte and Santería—and for self-governance (Barnet 1995; Brandon 1993; Howard 1998). Under the Cuban Revolution, cabildos persist as state-approved recreational clubs, recognized as amateur folklore ensembles and bearers of national cultural patrimony (Hearn 2008).

Members of the contemporary Olugo still contribute dues for mutual aid, hold social events, and engage in understated folk religious rituals, such as caring for two *Elegguas*, deities who protect the cabildo. In practice and in symbolic importance, Olugo and similar folklore societies thus continue to carve out spaces of limited autonomy for their mostly Afro-Cuban members and the neighborhoods in which they are based. However, Olugo's primary function is to perform Carabalí music and dance, understood as a genre of Cuban folklore. In addition to a musical ensemble, the dancers take specific roles either in the royal "court," consisting of members appointed for life to be king, queen, prince, princess, duke, duchess, and so forth, and an ensemble of "vassals" subdivided into dance soloists, freedmen, and slaves. The court both displays itself to the audience and serves as an internal audience for the more active choreography of the vassals.

To borrow from Diana Taylor's (2003) metaphor contrasting the "archive" and the "repertoire" as textual versus performed modalities of historical memory, the cabildo Olugo and similar institutions of Afro-Cuban neighborhoods perform a custodial role in safeguarding historical memory through their repertoire of music, song, and dance, which constitutes a repository of embodied and performed collective memory (see also Connerton 1989). This repertoire is continually updated, with new songs and choreographies added each year in preparation for big events like Santiago's Carnival in late July. Carnival and similar festivals, involving numerous folklore ensembles and Carnival *comparsas* (drum and dance clubs), are major performance venues that bring cabildos before city-wide audiences. Examples 4 and 5 and the second epigraph present three songs that the cabildo was performing in 2008. Some songs were authored by Olugo's director, Benito Ramirez Soulary, and even in the case of older songs, like Example 5, which is performed by both Olugo and Santiago's other cabildo carabalí, Isuama, the author is usually known. The songs feature catchy, repetitive melodies, much like many Carnival songs, backed by either the Obia or Marcho Camino rhythms of the carabalí rhythm ensemble. In examining these songs, I am interested in their similar use of various descriptive and deictic devices to depict African historical figures and create alignments between the performers and performed figures—or, following Silverstein (1992), between the interactional and denotational "texts" of events.

Example 4
Olugo song "Rezo Nro 2" excerpts, written in 2007 by Olugo director Benito Ramirez Soulary, recorded in Olugo performance on 5/4/08 and interview on 8/16/08 (Hear recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/soulary_rezo2.mp4 and see video recording of performance at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/rezo_numero_2.mp4)

1	Yo soy negro carabalí	I am a black carabalí
2	Desde el monte yo llegué	I came from the mountain-wild
3	Vengo tocando la tumba	I come playing the drum
4	Una muela y un chachá	A *muela* (bell) and a *chachá* (rattle)
5	Ahi está mi Ma Francisca	Here is my Ma Francisca
6	Y lo mismo Nicolasa	And the same Nicolasa
7	Con un paño en la cabeza	With a kerchief on the head
8	Y la bemba ya pintada	And the big lips already painted
9	Eee, africano soy yo	Aay, I am African
10	Vengo bailando bonito	I come dancing beautifully
11	El mío es carabalí	Mine is Carabalí
	. . .	
20	Congo carabalí	Carabalí Congo
21	Yo soy hijo del lucumí	I am child of the Lucumí
22	Congo carabalí	Carabalí Congo

| 23 | Yo soy hijo del lucumí | I am child of the Lucumí |
| 24 | Nicolasa, tú tiene callo en los pies 3x | Nicolasa, you have calluses on your feet |

Example 5
Excerpts from cabildo carabalí song "La invasión," attributed to Olimpo Nápole, from interview with Ernesto Armiñán Linares, 5/17/07 and recorded in Olugo performance on 5/4/08 (Hear recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/ linares_la_invasion.mp4 and see video recording of performance at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/la_invasion.mp4)

1	Me mires en diferente	You look at me differently
2	porque soy carabalí 2x	Because I am Carabalí 2x
3	Y en la guerra en '68 / yo fui mambí	In the war in '68 / I was a mambí (fighter)
4	Y en la del '95 a la invasión /	And in the one in '95 on the invasion /
5	tambien yo fui	I also went
6	A defender a mi patria /	To defend my homeland /
7	la tierra donde nací	the land where I was born
	(Coro)	(Chorus)
8	Y U'te lo ve camara'[da]/	And so you see, comrade /
9	Y U'te lo ve camara'[da]	and so you see comrade
10	Que el negro carabalí /	That the black Carabalí /
11	peleó por la libertad	fought for liberty
12	Cuando peleaba en Oriente /	When I fought in Eastern Cuba /
13	en la playa y en el batey 2x	on the beach and in the grove
14	De los mangos 'e [de] Baraguá /	of the mangos of Baraguá /
15	partimos a Camagüey	We left for Camagüey
16	Se me cansó mi caballo /	My horse got tired on me /
17	y fui montado en un buey	And I went mounted on a donkey
	. . .	(verses on Camagüey, Santa Clara, Matanzas)
30	Y salimos de la Habana /	And we left Havana /
31	sufriendo un intenso frio 2x	suffering an intense chill 2x
32	Derrotando a los españoles /	Defeating the Spanish /
33	llegamos a Pinar del Río	we arrived in Pinar del Río
34	Y cuando a Mantua llegamos /	And when we arrived in Mantua /
35	el final de la nación	The edge of the nation
36	Y cuando a Mantua llegamos /	And when we arrived in Mantua /
37	cayó el imperio español	The Spanish Empire fell
38	Y en el año '59 triunfó la Revolución	And in the year 1959 the Revolution triumphed

Examples 4 and 5, like most of the Carabalí songs that I have heard, are voiced in the first person to give what can be described as a timeless historical account of cabildo members as "Africans" and specifically as "Carabalí" who are now in Cuba. As Palmié (1993) describes, the ethnic labels for slaves—prominently including Congo, Carabalí, and Lucumí in Cuba—were complex and fluid categories that were as much a product of slave-trade imaginaries and New World ethnogenesis as a reflection of any African sense of identity at the time (see also Law 1997).

Example 4's first line declares, "I am a black Carabalí," and Example 5, too, states, "I am carabalí" in the second line. The songs' common origo is Africans of Cuba's past

who are re-animated by the performers in the present, so that the songs' lyrics are deictically anchored in a subjective present "I-now am" that temporally situates even actions described in the past tense as within the experience of the narrated "I-now." Example 5 is an extended first-person account of participation in the Cuban wars for independence from Spain between 1868 and 1898. In these examples, the crucial poetic patterns are the repeated first-person pronoun and the present tense used to describe both historically distant situations (e.g., Example 4, line 1) and events of the performance (Example 4, lines 3 and 10: "I come playing the drum" and "I come dancing beautifully").

In an examination of the present tense, Benjamin Lee analyzes how the "historical present" functions, using marking theory to account for three different values that the present-tense verb form can convey. As he says, "its general unmarked interpretation has no time reference and indicates process in general." The present tense also has a specific unmarked value that is opposed to the marked past tense and "therefore indicates cotemporality with the event of speaking" (Lee 1997:167). These songs contain examples of the present tense in both of these senses. The songs accompany choreographed dances featuring costumed colonial-era African and Afro-Cuban figures and so have this sense of describing process in general. For example, in Example 4, as the song directs itself to "Nicolasa" (a lame-footed mistress of the director's long-deceased grandfather), a soloist steps forward, alternately bent over with her arm holding her hip and reaching up as if to wave, and does a hobbling step around the floor.

Alongside these general and specific unmarked uses of the present are some instances of the marked historical present: The line "I am African / I am from Nigeria" in the Olugo song in the second epigraph applies to some long-ago cabildo members who may have been born in Africa. Note that the three separate functions of the present tense all use the very same form, and so one usage is iconic with the others, not least because of the anaphoric cohesion that we expect in a chunk of entextualized discourse like a song. In the case of the historical present, in which the present-tense form represents past time, the unmarked value of cotemporality between the event of the singers' singing and the narrated event of the song's content thus continues to resonate, giving that sense of "breathless immediacy" in which figures from the past speak to audiences of the present (not unlike María del Congo's spirit-possession performance).

Live performances heighten the illusion of past events unfolding before the audience's eyes, and everyone expects performers on a stage to act their roles—what Greg Urban calls the de-quotative "theatrical I," which is semiotically similar to the "projective I" of possession trance. Urban argues that our ability to use the first-person pronoun in these ways beyond the strictly referential "I" is key to our awareness of "the weight of tradition" and our ability to engage the subjectivity of others (Urban 1989:27, 36–37). He gives the example of Shokleng narrators of an origin myth lapsing into first-person to "assume the persona of historical antecedent," thereby "subjectively embodying the continuity of culture" (Urban 1989:36–39, 45). Through these deictic cues, I suggest, the cabildo songs serve to flatten history and create a timeless "we" that unifies Afro-Cuban performers and their ancestors.

Consider also the Olugo song lyrics in the second epigraph, "My name is Olugo." Matching the singular first-person pronoun to the proper name of a collective violates usual number agreement (as if I were to say "My name is Western Michigan University"). Here, the singular "I-now" continues and completes the poetic structure of the verse ("I am . . . , I am . . . , I come . . . "). It also signals the pre-eminence of a collective identity as a member of the cabildo.

The cabildos very explicitly cultivate this continuity across time when members emphasize their cabildo's roots in colonial-era cabildos, and when many aspects of the performance—the songs, the dancers' roles, the costumes and choreographies—perform the origo of Carabalís of the past. In a performance that I recorded, the cabildo Olugo punctuated its songs with dances by soloists in roles such as "the

Figure 3
A dancer performs the role of the "African witch," Cabildo Carabalí Olugo, Santiago de Cuba, 5/08, Photo by author

African witch" and "the black dancer." These two dancers incorporated gestures and steps from Santería's ritual dances of the *orichas* (deities), which have also now become staples of folklore shows (Figures 3 and 4). The "African witch" danced fiercely, borrowing the dance gestures and even the hard-eyed facial expression characteristic of the oricha Oyá, deity of the hurricane, and the "black dancer" danced with the coquettish moves of the oricha Ochún, deity of feminine sensuality.[4] The choreography thus "type-sources" both Carabalí tradition and Santería, entailing an ancestral and generalized African vocabulary of movements, one that seems to transcend the usual ethnic and generic distinctions of Cuban folklore.

Indeed, another recurrent theme of carabalí songs is to trace an African connection, as in the Olugo song in the second epigraph: "I am African," "I am from Nigeria;" and in Example 4, line 1: "I am a black Carabalí." This sets up a time-transcending equivalence between the colonial-era ethnonym "carabalí," for slaves deported from the slave port of Calabar, and the modern state of Nigeria, an entity that did not exist until a century after the end of the slave trade. The lyrics of lines 20–23 in Example 4 mention all three of the major "African nations:" "Yo soy congo carabalí/yo soy hijo del lucumí" (I am a carabalí congo [African-born]/I am a son of the lucumí). As we will see, creating tableaus of Cuba's major African traditions is a common trope in folklore performances, usually functioning to contrast stereotypically aggressive and primitive Congos, elegant and acculturated Carabalís, and religiously sophisticated Lucumís—tropes traceable to European characterizations of slaves.

African origins are thus prominent in the song lyrics, and always in terms of their relevance for Cuban history. The origo of the songs is located in Cuba (the -topic part of chronotope). The songs make frequent reference to Cuban geography and particularly to *el monte*, meaning the sparsely populated wilderness of the hills and mountains (e.g., Example 4). The "monte" in Cuba is a powerful symbol of Africanness, rebellion, and folk Afro-Cuban spirituality: it is where maroons escaped to, 19th-century independence-fighters hid, and 20th-century guerrillas under Fidel mounted their rebellion. It is also the heart of nature, and therefore the source of spiritually and medicinally important plants, as Lydia Cabrera (1993) famously described in *El Monte*, whose very title identified the wilderness as an African and Afro-Cuban space.

Figure 4
A dancer performs the role of the "black dancer," Cabildo Carabalí Olugo, Santiago de Cuba, 5/08, Photo by author

Another instance of Afro-Cuban voicings and figures can be seen in Example 4, where two "ancestral" Afro-Cuban figures are mentioned: Nicolasa, the lame mistress, and Ma Francisca, a popular name for African spirits who serve many religious practitioners. They are described as wearing head-kerchiefs and having "big lips" (an offhand but derogatory and racially marked comment on appearance). The song thus unselfconsciously references stereotypical portrayals of Afro-Cuban appearances, such as those that can be seen in the photograph of a Spiritist altar with a number of dolls representing "African" spirits; the dolls' costumes are similar to the cabildo performers' costumes (Figure 5: compare to costumes in other figures; compare also African and European figures on altar). The slave "costume" is solidly enregistered by its repetition across these many religious and folklore performance contexts and thus is available to index metonymically an entire slave (or, by extension, Afro-Cuban) persona. In combination with speech markers such as Bozalisms, these embodied markers of Africanness thus form a powerful multimodal repertoire from which any particular performance or image need only draw a few indices in order to evoke an entire figure.

The spatio-temporal imaginary of Carabalí songs includes the distinctive instruments and sonic environment of the cabildo, such as the *tumba* drum, *muela* (iron bell) and *chachá* (woven-reed, seed-filled rattles) in Example 4. These instruments also remind members of stories about how the hollow spaces of large drums were used to smuggle arms and supplies to support rebels, from the wars of independence to the Cuban Revolution; and how the processions of the cabildos and other Carnival comparsas served as cover for Cuban heroes, from General Guillermón Moncada of the wars for independence to Frank País of Fidel's revolutionaries, to gather for meetings and pass undetected in and out of the city, and even to mount their famous attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, during Carnival (Causse Cathcart 2006:50).

This rebellious and thus quintessentially Cuban nature of the Carabalí is highlighted in a song shared by both of Santiago's Carabalí cabildos, called "The Inva-

Figure 5
Spiritist altar with dolls representing African deities and spirits and plaster statues of Catholic saints, Santiago de Cuba, 8/08, Photo by author

sion" (Example 5). The song recounts the cabildo's involvement in the Cuban wars for independence from Spain. Sung as a first-person account, in simple-past and then past-perfect tense, it recounts the path that independence fighters might have taken around the island as they engaged the Spanish army in each place. The song is thus an aural map of the island, sung from the origo of a mambí participant. As a bid for full citizenship by Carabalí members, the song revisits late 19th and early 20th-century arguments for Afro-Cubans to be accorded equal rights based on their contributions to the struggle for Cuban independence (de la Fuente 2001; Fernández Robaina 1994; Ferrer 1999).

Looking back at the palero's song of rebellious pride in Example 3, we can see that the alignment between the past events from the time of slavery and the ritual events of the present is similarly achieved through the use of the same first-person pronoun juxtaposed with both neutral and historical present tense. The origo of the cimarrón and of the palero with his nganga are aligned because, according to default understandings of pronoun anaphora, once the referent of a pronoun is established in a string of discourse, later occurrences of that same pronoun are assumed to have the same referent unless they are marked otherwise. My argument is that the semiotic devices identified in my examples are widespread and typical of many contexts in which historical African figures are animated in religious and folklore performances.

Olugo's songs and performances thus draw upon a rich repertoire of linguistic and embodied markers of blackness to align performers with historical figures of Africans and create a seamless link between the past and current cabildo and its activities. The time-marking linguistic features of the songs and the historically and religiously inflected embodied cues of the dancers and props work together to create the chronotope of the immanent timeless past, which tells Cuban audiences not only who their national ancestors were (as in Godreau's case of black cultural forms indicating the origins of Puerto Ricanness) but who they are now. The complex effects of this semiotic

work of temporal and racial emplacement are a product of competing historical subjectivities. One is rooted in dominant Cuban ideologies of racial and cultural contact in the past, producing modern Cuban hybridity or mestizaje; another is rooted in religious and social domains marked as Afro-Cuban that covertly celebrate a separate and distinctive Afro-Cuban cultural sphere. It is this latter counterhegemonic inflection that I have emphasized thus far in the cabildo Olugo song examples.

Racializing Alignments in Performances of Historical African Figures

The appearance of apparently nonironic, caricatured "congo" and "witch" figures, often performed in folklore shows by people who identify as Afro-Cuban, raises additional questions about the alignments between performers, performed figures, and audiences. Understanding how these alignments arise out of (and across) inter-discursive webs of these performances is key to specifying the racializing functions they serve.

Although the politics of race and norms of acceptable racializing discourses in Cuba are quite different from those in the United States, there is a shared predilection for avoiding denotationally explicit racist speech and critiques of racism alike in public discourse (de la Fuente 2007; Hansing 2006:188–195; Sawyer 2006). As Carlos Moore (1988) has perhaps most passionately argued, in Cuba, these patterns of avoidance are at least partly a product of government claims to have abolished racism after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, making it counterrevolutionary to point out any ongoing racism. As was apparent in the cabildo Olugo's songs, revolutionary pride is made denotationally explicit (e.g., in expressions like Example 5, line 38, "The Revolution triumphed") and racial pride is framed as a link in the discourse chain producing Cuban national pride, i.e. pride in being a cimarrón nation. The exoticized portrayal of blackness is another such link.

Professional folklore ensembles like Santiago de Cuba's Ballet Folklórico Cutumba have proliferated since the 1960s, benefiting from state support for the arts and contributing to the revolutionary project of celebrating "folk" culture. The founding generation of Cutumba singers, musicians, and dancers researched traditional forms, but the ensemble's primary work in recent years has been to present aestheticized interpretations of these forms on the stage for national and international audiences. One piece, called "African Trilogy," caught my eye because of its juxtaposition of Carabalí, Congo, and Haitian music and dance traditions to present what Cubans call a "theater of relations" involving figures of slaves, Carabalí cabildo members, and paleros (See video recording of "Trilogia Africana" at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/trilogia_africana.mp4).

As I have seen and recorded it in several performances, the piece opens with two Carabalí songs apparently taken from (or inspired by) the Olugo repertoire, presented below in Examples 6 and 7. When I asked Cutumba's singers about the songs' attribution, they described them as "traditional" songs, in contrast to the Olugo director's careful tracking of authorship. The lyrics demonstrate many of the same chronotopic devices that I describe above for Olugo's current repertoire. Here I will focus on the accompanying choreography. During the first song, an elegant couple promenades around the dance floor, then demonstrates Carabalí dance steps. A lone male dancer enters, dressed only in knee-length britches and a red headband, an iconic figure of a slave. He crouches, observing the dancing pair, then leaves and returns with a larger group of similarly dressed men who watch, then imitate the pair (Figure 6). When I asked one of Cutumba's choreographers about this tableau, he explained that the group of men were "congos" who were impressed by the elegance of the creole cabildo members. He also described the choreography as replicating the distinction between the cabildo Carabalí's elegant "court" and rustic "vassals." As the second song begins (Example 7), the group of male dancers takes center stage and performs an eclectic combination of carabalí dance steps and moves imitating the agricultural work of slaves, such as cutting cane and bearing loads (Figure 7).

Figure 6
Video still of a "Congo" watching an elegant Carabalí pair, "Trilogía Africana," Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, Santiago de Cuba, 7/06, from videorecording by author

Figure 7
Video still of dancers performing "slave" actions of carrying loads, "Trilogía Africana," Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, Santiago de Cuba, 7/06, from videorecording by author

Example 6
Opening Carabalí song of "Trilogia Africana," Conjunto Folklórico Cutumba (See video recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/trilogia_africana.mp4)

1	Señores, hasta aquí llegamos /	Ladies and gentlement, we have arrived here /
2	Al compás de este vaíven 2x	At the time of this outing to and fro 2x
3	Saludando al territorio /	Greeting the territory /
4	Y pa' la Isuama también 2x	And for the (Cabildo) Isuama as well 2x
	(Coro)	(Chorus)
5	Ae cantadore' respóndanlo bien 2x	Ay, singers respond to this well 2x
6	Que la reina del cabildo, ja ja ja /	That the queen of the cabildo, ha ha ha /
7	es la que se va coronada 2x	Is the one who is wearing a crown 2x

Figure 8
Video still of the "witch" making the other "slaves" succumb to spirit possession,
"Trilogía Africana," Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, Santiago de Cuba, 7/06, from
videorecording by author

Example 7
Second Carabalí song of "Trilogia Africana," Conjunto Folklórico Cutumba (See video
recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/trilogia_africana.mp4, 01:36 minutes)

1	Yo soy africano, pariente del lucumí	I am African, kin of the Lucumí
2	Olugo me trajo a Cuba a bailar carabalí	Olugo brought me to Cuba to dance Carabalí
	(Coro)	(Chorus)
3	Eso es verdad, eso es así	That is the truth, that's how it is
4	Olugo me trajo a Cuba a bailar carabalí	Olugo brought me to Cuba to dance Carabalí

A new figure appears, dressed in the same britches but wild-eyed as if possessed by a spirit, wearing painted "country marks" meant to represent African scarifications on his cheeks, chomping on a cigar, and shaking two maracas as he circles around the other male dancers (see Figure 1). The music then shifts dramatically into a Carabalí song with African-sounding lyrics, followed by a Haitian Gagá song in what the Cutumba singers described as a "patois" of Kreyòl and Spanish, both songs being unintelligible to most Cubans, including the singers (see Examples 8 and 9). The figure in the role of the "witch" returns carrying a tall wooden container meant to represent a ritual power object. He frightens the other dancers into a corner and, when they return, leads them into writhing convulsions of possession trance (Figure 8). The combination of "African" songs with these danced images is not subtle in conveying blackness as exotic, superstitious, and impenetrable, nor is it coincidental that the most African-looking dancer in a largely Afro-Cuban ensemble dedicated to Afro-Cuban folklore performs the "witch" role. As a Cuban folklorist put it when I asked him, the "witch" dancer had the right phenotype for the role.

Example 8
Third Carabalí song of "Trilogia Africana," Conjunto Folklórico Cutumba (See video
recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/trilogia_africana.mp4, 03:54 minutes)

1	Iyá sanfaranfá iyá	(?)
2	Batibao (repeated)	(?)
3	Yo tiro un pie	I kick a foot
4	Carabalí (repeated)	

Figure 9
Video still of "Paleros" ritually challenging each other, with nganga in middle ground, "Trilogía Africana," Ballet Folklórico Cutumba, Santiago de Cuba, 7/06, from videorecording by author

Example 9
Haitian-Cuban Gagá song of "Trilogia Africana," performed by the Conjunto Folklórico Cutumba (See video recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/ trilogia_africana.mp4, 04:55 minutes)

1   Eti malanga te 2x (chorus repeats 1x)
2   Feyo elepé soyí malé 2x (chorus repeats 1x)
3   Feyo, Feyo piti piti piti soyí malé

The piece then shifts into songs and ritual exchanges borrowed from Palo ceremonies, while the corps of male dancers and the "witch" soloist perform aggressive displays of Palo bravado, including ritualized fights using Palo dance steps, verbal challenges, more wild-eyed spirit possession, and carnivalesque spectacles of snake-handling and fire-eating (these last two are unrelated to Palo ritual practice, but such distinctions are elided in the choreography). I present a representative excerpt of the Palo *llamada* ("call") that is repeated throughout this section in Example 10. The song uses Palo's ritual register to perform palero spiritual potency and bravado, including formulaic call-and-response exchanges such as "Mambé! Diós!"—just enough verisimilitude to type-source Palo, and plenty of stereotypical cues of blackness to titillate the audience (Figure 9).

Example 10
Congo "Call" from Palo Monte of "Trilogia Africana," performed by the Conjunto Folklórico Cutumba (See video recording at http://stream.atis.wmich.edu/wirtz_jla/ trilogia_africana.mp4, 07:47 minutes)

Lead   Te con é, ago tintero
Chorus   Te con é
Lead   Con mi yumba de acero
Chorus   Te con é
Lead   Con mi yumba nganga

In a stage performance such as Cutumba's, the alignment between performers and performed personas, reinforced as it is by having Afro-Cubans perform the

roles of historical "African" figures, is clearly framed as a theatrical conceit. Interviews of Cutumba members and observations of their rehearsals over the years also demonstrate that, for most members, these performances are a job, part of a professional identity as dancers or musicians, and something that most of them distinguish from any participation in Afro-Cuban spheres of cultural expression (such as religious practices) on their own time. As for the choreographer of the "African Trilogy," another of the group's choreographers described his message as a matter of showing how different African cultural strains—Carabalí, Congo, and Afro-Haitian—came together in Cuba, and of illustrating the "evils of witchcraft." More clear is the performance's invitation to audiences to position themselves in contradistinction to the caricatured historical African figures in the performance, and to regard the entire performance, and indeed the folklore ensemble itself, as "the timeless African past still among us," but not as "us." That is, the key difference in folklore performances is that the audience is meant to watch from a distance, across a chronotopic gap that I have characterized as nostalgic. Unlike in Examples 2 and 3, no spiritual power is activated by this performance, nor is an example set for action in the present.

This, then, is how such performances, through the interdiscursive links that they make, serve as tacit racializing discourses: they draw upon "source-types" from contemporary Afro-Cuban religious and neighborhood-based cultural expressions such as the cabildos for their material, which they frame as timelessly representing colonial-era African figures and cultural expressions. The source materials, from religious practices like Palo and neighborhood folklore societies like the Carabalí cabildos, lend themselves to these reinterpretations because they already cast a backward glance at colonial-era figures and events, making the spirits of the past "co-eval" with themselves through the kinds of chronotopic devices and alignments that I have examined, including an overabundance of embodied markers of blackness, slavery, and witchcraft. The distinctions between professional and amateur groups, and between religious and secular folkloric functions, are minimized; every performance points back at earlier ones that carry the weight of unbroken tradition, because each seemingly replicates some "original" African figure, activating what Urban (2001) calls a metaculture of tradition.

One additional consequence of this interdiscursive web of colonial slave-society nostalgia is that contemporary Afro-Cuban folklore societies and religious practices alike carry a whiff of old-fashionedness. People say that the cabildos' former glory is fading, that young people have lost interest in these musty old clubs—a perception belied by the actual number of young participants six to fourteen years of age (although older teens and young adults are scarce). Likewise, many whiter, better-educated Cubans not involved in Afro-Cuban religions like Palo or Santería tend to regard them as superstitious vestiges of less-enlightened times, bound to disappear with better education, a view also belied by the obviously growing popularity of these religions even among Cuban elites. These metacultural perceptions, I believe, demonstrate the pervasiveness of the chronotope of blackness as "timeless past still among us," a chronotope characterizing entire Afro-Cuban genres of performance, societies, and religions. As a whole, these performances play into dominant notions of Cubanness in which "blackness" has a role principally as one primordial source of modern Cuba, imagined to be the product of racial blending and "transculturation" between Europeans and Africans. Markers of blackness, then, are readily viewed through the lens of nostalgia, rather than as thoroughly modern cultural processes.[5]

Conclusion

Asif Agha (2003) has developed a model of enregisterment as an accretive historical process in which judgments of social value move across speech chains from one interaction to the next. Through this accumulative but dynamic and nonteleological process, particular metapragmatic evaluations that map social stereotypes onto ways

of speaking can circulate along with actual tokens of those ways of speaking. Although this circulatory model of enregisterment allows multiple, competing judgments of social value or "metaculture" (Urban 2001) to circulate, the robustness of certain pathways of discourse dissemination and replication permits broad consensus about the social and characterological value of a register to emerge, even if such consensus is never complete and always remains challengeable. I have shown how this model, applied to performances of African cultural figures in several contexts, demonstrates the racializing potential of these performances.

Rather than chains of interdiscursivity, which carry the implication of an almost teleological genealogy of interactional events from some "original," I prefer the metaphor of interdiscursive webs connecting professional and amateur, "traditional" and "interpreted," folkloric and religious performances of historicized black figures through semiotic envelopes of "co-evalness" that allow for complex source and target relationships among performances and their (imagined) precedents. In tracing a few of these connections, I have focused on the role of semiotic devices of temporality and performer-performed, figure-audience alignment in giving these performances the force of racializing discourses (and, doubtless, in linking them to other spheres of Cuban racializing discourses, although these connections are beyond the scope of this essay).[6]

I have attended to three levels of the semiosis of temporality. First is the temporal work accomplished through interdiscursive connections comparing imagined colonial-era events, figures, and acts with various religious and folklore contexts-of-performance. This produces a particular chronotope of blackness as a form of historical imagination that circulates through the linguistic and embodied markers of historical African figures who populate such performances. And finally, there is the robustness of racializing discourses themselves, construed broadly to include these sorts of performances and the racial subjects and objects that they create. As with Irvine and Gal's (2000) examination of the role of semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure (all of which are present in the materials presented here as well), the discourse history of these dense, intertextual webs of performance has generated a rich repertoire of signs of blackness, which is so overdetermined that only a few need be invoked in a given text or performance in order to conjure up an African figure.

Some of the staying power of discourses of racialization thus resides in the rich, multimodal characterization of racialized historical African figures, which circulate widely across many kinds of genres and events via dense webs of interdiscursivity and which are implicated in other sorts of discourses—discourses of history, of nationality, and certainly others that are beyond the scope of this particular analysis. The semiotic production of a chronotope of blackness as "a timeless past still among us" is absolutely central to the role of the performances examined here in simultaneously advancing both a dominant racial ideology of mestizaje that folkloricizes blackness as a representation of a shared Cuban national past and a counterhegemonic, more covert and localized racial ideology that celebrates Cuba's long history of independent Afro-Cuban spheres of sociality and cultural expression—cultural marronage, if you will. But, following De la Cadena's (2001) understanding of hegemony as something that is fractured and unstable, rather than easily separable into dominating and resisting modalities, I suggest that each ideology relies upon different strands in the interdiscursive web to trace a different kind of relationship from performers and audiences back to the imagined "originals" of the various African, slave, maroon, and religious figures reiterated in modern-day performances. Because these interdiscursive webs have nodes both in public, state-controlled folklore representations and in more private and local religious and social spheres that are beyond direct state control, my analysis leads me to question top-down explanations of how dominant racial ideologies are reproduced, and to suggest a more complex interplay of dominant and counterhegemonic discourses that comes into focus when we carefully examine the interdiscursive web.

Notes

1. See also the intriguing stage persona of Screamin' Jay Hawkins.

2. As Routon (2008:645, e.n.3) describes, the ethnonym "congo" in Cuba can also be generalized to refer to any African-born slave, making it synonymous with "Bozal."

3. My use of the masculine pronoun for the voice of the song is intentional: although there are both male and female practitioners of Palo, it is highly masculinized in its self-representations and is widely perceived to be a domain of masculine bravura. Space constraints prevent me from delving into the gendered aspects of voice in this and other examples.

4. Implicit in this too was the longstanding contrast between the uncouth Bozal "Africana" and the sexy "mulata," a trope of so much of Cuban arts and culture; see González Manchi (2006).

5. Modern, counterhegemonic, and cosmopolitan youthful blackness is associated with imported globalized black culture, and especially Hip Hop, Reggae, and Reggaeton.

6. For one example, see Hansing's (2006:212–213) Cuban Reggae song "Cimarrón," which, "by using the historic figure of the maroon . . . not only . . . evokes a strong sense of black pride but also emphasizes the present's continuity with the past."

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