

# Introduction

## Introducing Yemoja

*Solimar Otero and Toyin Falola*

Mother I need  
mother I need  
mother I need your blackness now  
as the august earth needs rain.

—Audre Lorde, “From the House of Yemanjá”<sup>1</sup>

“Yemayá es Reina Universal porque es el Agua, la salada y la dulce, la Mar, la Madre de todo lo creado / Yemayá is the Universal Queen because she is Water, salty and sweet, the Sea, the Mother of all creation.”

—*Oba Olo Ocha* as quoted in Lydia Cabrera’s *Yemayá y Ochún*.<sup>2</sup>

In the above quotes, poet Audre Lorde and folklorist Lydia Cabrera write about Yemoja as an eternal mother whose womb, like water, makes life possible. They also relate in their works the shifting and fluid nature of Yemoja and the divinity in her manifestations and in the lives of her devotees. This book, *Yemoja: Gender, Sexuality, and Creativity in the Latina/o and Afro-Atlantic Diasporas*, takes these words of supplication and praise as an entry point into an in-depth conversation about the international Yoruba water deity Yemoja. Our work brings together the voices of scholars, practitioners, and artists involved with the intersectional religious and cultural practices involving Yemoja from Africa, the Caribbean, North America, and South America. Our exploration of Yemoja is unique because we consciously bridge theory, art, and

practice to discuss *orisa* worship<sup>3</sup> within communities of color living in postcolonial contexts. We also explore the ways that gender and sexuality inform these communities' religiosity.

The contributors in this volume examine Yemoja and her relationship to the construction of gender and sexuality in society and culture through essays and creative works. Some of the creative works in the book include poetry, website production, photo essays, and artists' statements. All of the works are organized into two sections: "Yemoja, Gender, and Sexuality" and "Yemoja's Aesthetics: Creative Expression in Diaspora." These two areas of focus share the evaluative lens of cultural critique that pushes the boundaries of our understanding of how Yemoja traditions situate gender and sexuality in society as transformative and fluid modes of being and doing. Our two unique areas of exploration fit into existing and emerging theoretical, cultural, and historical understandings of Yemoja.

Our foremost goal in this volume is to facilitate scholarly and artistic investigation into the connections among *orisa* religion, art, and practice in interdisciplinary and transnational ways.<sup>4</sup> Our volume uncovers work being done on the discourse and practice of Yemoja traditions and their connections to national identity, gender, sexuality, and race. Indeed, *orisa*-worshipping communities are sites where subjectivities are creatively produced within social and cultural contexts. The chapters and other works in this volume also illustrate the ways that ritual, narrative, and art about Yemoja help to transform these contexts into several important sites of negotiation.

One set of negotiations we emphasize occurs within the African Diaspora, between Afro-Atlantic and Latina/o understandings of Yemoja. Communities that lay claim to Yemoja traditions often inhabit the multiple cultural, social, and racial locations that these descriptors suggest. Therefore, in this volume we are especially interested in addressing and exploring the geopolitical and cultural border crossings that Yemoja religious practices reveal both in daily life and in theoretical terms. To do this, we must examine how the discourses of fluidity found within African and African Diaspora Yoruba religious practices and arts emerge in their many historical and cultural contexts. Here fluidity includes a notion of flexible traditions that are open to hybrid and variable spaces found through Yoruba, and especially *orisa*, itinerant cultural logics and variable aesthetics.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, many of the contributors presented in this volume seek to uncover the ways that Yemoja is understood and reconstructed to reflect, respond, and challenge colonialism as well as the legacy of slavery in the African Diaspora, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Finally, the entire volume considers how constructions of gender and sexuality are deeply connected to Yemoja traditions. Our authors explore the complexity of these constructions within a variety of religious and creative contexts. Thus, this volume emphasizes how images of Yemoja in art, literature, and ritual question what kinds of aesthetics and counter-aesthetics determine the contours of gender and sexuality performed through the figure of Yemoja.

Yemoja is a deity known in Yoruba-based Afro-Atlantic religious cultures for her ability to dominate natural phenomena, especially aquatic zones of communication, trade, and transportation such as oceans, rivers, and lagoons. She is also associated with women, motherhood, family, and the arts. One translation of her name in Yoruba is “mother of fish,” metaphorically capturing her essence as the mother of all living things. In transnational contexts, she is also known by multiple names: for example, Yemayá in Cuba and Yemanjá, Iemanjá, and Janaína in Brazil. She is also associated with other water deities, such as Olókùn in Nigeria and Mami Wata across West and Central Africa. Scholars have explored her close relationship to the river deity Oshun.<sup>6</sup>

Anthropologists and art historians have also connected Yemoja to the Gelede festival of Ketu, especially in relation to gender and female power in *orisa* art and performances.<sup>7</sup> As the ancestral “mother” of the Gelede masks and the spirit children they embody, Yemoja is also necessarily connected to the powers of the *aje*, “our mothers”: powerful and hidden female spiritual forces that are especially propitiated during Gelede.<sup>8</sup> Since Yemoja is noted as a primordial female *orisa*, she is central to how Yoruba religious discourses enact the power of performing gender as a reflexive critique and satire of these roles in society and culture. In this regard, Oyeronke Olajubu’s study of women in Yoruba religion, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, helps us to consider how religious practices can be gendered through multiple narratives of traditionality that co-exist within the layered tapestry of *orisa* religious practice.<sup>9</sup>

A unifying consideration of this volume is how gender and sexuality are central to Yemoja’s fluidity and to the performance of religious agency among her followers. We are interested in showing how post-colonial feminisms and queer theory can provide new and meaningful readings of Yemoja representations and practices. As Jacqui Alexander asserts in *Pedagogies of Crossing*, outspoken and anticolonial expressions of gender and sexuality in vernacular religious traditions are especially vexing to official religious and secular institutions.<sup>10</sup> In this spirit, the queering of Yemoja traditions discussed in this volume further question the naturalization of ideologies of neocolonialism, patriarchy, and homophobia that sometimes mark Afro-Atlantic practices in ways that

lead us away from the religious cultures' transformative powers. Indeed, many of the chapters in this book grapple with the negotiation of what could be considered subaltern communities within these very traditions.

Before discussing the specific contributions to the volume, it is important to examine how scholars have understood gender, sex, and race in how *orisa* religious cultures are represented. Scholars such as Karin Barber and Margaret Drewal have looked at Yoruba religious performances such as *oriki* and ritual dance from the perspective of women's performative agency within an aesthetics of fluidity and play.<sup>11</sup> Although the study of gendered aesthetics remains an accepted way to think about Yoruba performances, debates continue about whether gender indeed exists as an ontological category in Yoruba traditional thought, language, and religious discourse.<sup>12</sup> For example, in *The Invention of Women: Making African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Oyeronke Oyewumi argues that Yoruba linguistic registers do not account for gender. The construction of gendered discourses, and the hegemonies that they imply in the West, she argues, were part of the British colonial project but also have manifested in contemporary Western feminist and anthropological work on *orisa* religions. Her main argument is that biology, like gender, is socially constructed in its mutability and that Yoruba concepts and performances of both gender and biology are guided by social relationships.<sup>13</sup>

J. Lorand Matory responds vehemently against this argument in *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. He argues that gender and sexuality do indeed exist in Yoruba culture, especially in Yoruba religious cultures, and that these aspects of social identity are coded within the paradigms of the performance of transnational imagined communities.<sup>14</sup> He goes on further to suggest that traditions of secrecy in *orisa* religious cultures are the matrix by which gender and sexuality are reinterpreted for a variety of transnational political ends. Thus, "Yoruba" transnational allegiances hinge on how gendered ritual histories have been reinvented with an idea of a cosmopolitan authenticity at their base.<sup>15</sup> Clark likewise grapples with the concept of gendering *orisas* and *orisas* gendering practitioners in ritual practices like spirit possession, in the context of Santería.<sup>16</sup> How feminism, postcolonialism, and race are to be negotiated in multiple contexts whereby *orisa* religious culture performs important work in these three areas is at the heart of these debates.

Queer theory also thinks through the shifting manifestations of gender and sexuality within *orisa* performances.<sup>17</sup> It is important to note here that seminal lesbian and queer women writers, theorists, poets, and activists like Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Lydia Cabrera devoted

important sections of their lives' work specifically to Yemoja (Yemayá).<sup>18</sup> Indeed, though often depicted as the eternal mother, Yemoja can perform different kinds of gender roles, and she has the power to shift, change, and display an ambiguous sexuality in mythology and ritual. Yet Yemoja also reminds us that marking gendered and sexual difference has real consequences within *orisa* religious cultures that grapple with the historical and social legacies of patriarchy and homophobia.<sup>19</sup> Thus, this volume presents provocative essays that connect Yemoja aesthetics and mythology with the legacy of gendered hybridity found in ritual, art, and writing about Yemoja from queer and feminist perspectives that have been understudied thus far.

Poet Pedro R. Pérez-Sarduy opens the discussions in the book as an invocation with his poem "*En busca de un amante desempleado / Searching for an unemployed lover.*" The piece brings us into Havana, a city bordered by the sea. It is a lyrical love song to the "Queen of the Sea" revealing the bittersweet material realities of contemporary Cuba and relating the island's history of conquest and colonialization to Yemayá's imagery and mythological messages. Pérez-Sarduy reminds us that the transnational and transcultural contexts of Yemoja arts are marked by the converging histories of conquest and encounter that traversing the ocean suggests.<sup>20</sup>

The book's first section "Yemoja, Gender, and Sexuality" explores how representations of Yemoja are gendered, sexed, and racialized in Afro-Atlantic ritual, literature, and art. Sometimes represented in the form of the voluptuous, dark mother, Yemoja has been recast in a variety of images that reflect a kind of *tropicalization* of her character in the Caribbean and the Americas—here she becomes racially black in both a discursive and historical sense.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Pérez explores how representations of black women as mothers move throughout the Afro-Atlantic world. Pérez's piece, "Nobody's Mammy: Yemayá as Fierce Foremother in Afro-Cuban Religions," unites queer and postcolonial theory to challenge representations of Yemayá in Afro-Cuban religious cultures that fix her within the colonizing gaze of the "mammy" figure. Her interpretation of the queer term "fierceness" disturbs representations of the "mammy" in ways that recall Jose Muñoz's formulation of disidentifications whereby nuanced performances of mimicry and satire trouble stereotypes of race, gender, and sexuality.<sup>22</sup> Pérez's comparative fieldwork in Cuba and the United States reveals how economies of race, gender, and sexuality within Afro-Cuban religions include queer communities who express their own "fierceness" in performing spiritual and cultural work.

Afro-Cuban religious cultures place Yemayá at the center of discourses about race, gender, and homosexuality.<sup>23</sup> Yemoja is believed to

protect gays and lesbians, and her companion, the duck, *el pato*, is a telling figure in her cosmology. “*Pato*” is used as a derogatory term in Latin America and the Caribbean for a homosexual man, making it an especially interesting symbol to analyze in this regard. Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús uses ethnography and cultural criticism to explore the epistemology of the duck in her illuminating piece, “Yemayá’s Duck: Irony, Ambivalence, and the Effeminate Male Subject in Cuban Santería.” Beliso De-Jesús reveals how representations of *el pato* and Yemayá in Santería create discourses of masculinity and homosexuality in the tradition—inside and outside the island.

In a similar vein, Solimar Otero shares her fieldwork and a close textual reading of Cabrera’s *Yemayá y Ochún* in her piece “*Yemayá y Ochún*: Queering the Vernacular Logics of the Waters.” Otero explores how ritual practices and mythological discourses found in the relationship between Yemayá and Ochún in Cuban Santería reveals coded knowledge about gendered and queered locations in the religion. She particularly looks at how vernacular speech genres, like gossip, can impart certain kinds of information about *orisa* religious knowledge through unauthorized, veiled, and infectious registers.

In a related manner, the transatlantic nature of Yemoja rituals and mythology highlight her important role as a symbol of a gendered traditionality in transnational postcolonial contexts. Issues of authenticity and hybridity in Afro-Atlantic religious terms also resemble Afro-Atlantic philosophical arguments about aesthetics, knowledge, and values in comparing Western and African epistemologies.<sup>24</sup> The questions that the idea of “authenticity” in Yemoja traditions evokes are at the very heart of how Latina/o and Afro-Atlantic religious communities are reconfiguring their beliefs about the nature of society, culture, and even personhood. This last point is a significant issue in terms of thinking how embodiment and subjectivities work in *orisa*-worshipping communities in terms of gender and agency.

Along these lines, there is a diversity of ways that Yemoja’s gender roles are understood in Afro-Atlantic *orisa*-worshipping communities. Her roles among Yoruba communities in Africa are fluid as well; for example, Yemoja’s role can shift between wife and mother with regards to her relationship to the *orisa Sango*.<sup>25</sup> This method of narrative transculturation in Yemoja’s mythology appears in how religious cultures in diaspora are experienced and expressed. The two final chapters in this first section on gender and sexuality are “A Different Kind of Sweetness: Yemayá in Afro-Cuban Religion,” by Martin Tsang, and “Yemoja: An Introduction to the Divine Mother and Water Goddess,” by Allison P. Sellers. Both pieces wrestle with the tensions found in

transnational Yemoja religious practices that simultaneously value cultural fluidity, innovation, and the idea of tradition as the main grounds for ritual and mythological discourse. These two contributions illustrate the multiplicity of Yemoja's traditions in Africa and in the African Diaspora. Both Tsang and Sellers also reveal how the idiom of authenticity in religious rituals works to "traditionalize" much of the innovation, contradiction, and ambiguity found in *orisa* religious cultures. Their work is especially useful in extricating how ritual performances reinforce and subvert gendered scripts like mother and wife through differently gendered and sexed bodies.<sup>26</sup> This kind of performative play can especially be seen in the religious cultures of Cuban Santería and Brazilian Candomblé.<sup>27</sup> However, these religious traditions themselves illustrate a Yemoja-like fluidity in how they generate multiple transnational diasporas of practitioners.<sup>28</sup> As Yemoja traditions continue to move, so too will the ways that her religious practices embody subjectivity and negotiate place, gender, sexuality, race, nation, and culture in diasporic contexts.

The second half of the volume, "Yemoja's Aesthetics: Creative Expression in Diaspora" centers on how Yemoja's imagery offers a visual language through which to discuss slavery, colonialism, and history. Our first piece in the section traverses the borders between Chicana/o and Afro-Caribbean representations of the water goddess through theory, art, and poetry. In "'Yemaya Blew That Wire Fence Down': Invoking African Spiritualities in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and the Mural Art of Juana Alicia," Micaela Díaz-Sánchez explores Yemayá as a central figure in Chicana/o theory and art in the works of writer Gloria Anzaldúa and muralist Juana Alicia. Díaz-Sánchez's provocative chapter invites us to witness how Yemayá helps Anzaldúa obliterate the colonizing and objectifying "wire fences" that alienate women, queers, and people of color. Díaz-Sánchez explores the ways Anzaldúa contests indigenous/Spanish dichotomies by placing Yemayá on the Mexican-U.S. border. Díaz-Sánchez also argues that Alicia's artwork represents this important incorporation and moves Yemoja into new visual narratives. In this manner, communities of color that embrace Yemoja's hybridity and fluidity become connected through her spirituality.

In this regard, we can align Pérez-Sarduy's poem that opens the volume, "*En busca de un amante desempleado*/Searching for an unemployed lover," with the other creative expressions in this section because these pieces speak directly to how Yemoja's fluid aesthetics inform our understandings of the legacies of slavery and colonialism. These aesthetics are especially symbolized by the figure of Yemoja as the ocean. The image of the sea in the art, film, and literature discussed in this section

becomes a site for witnessing and healing the past in the specific historical and cultural terrains of an Afro-Caribbean-Atlantic imaginary.<sup>29</sup>

Two particular chapters in this section, “Dancing *Aché* with Yemaya in My Life and in My Art: An Artist Statement” by Arturo Lindsay and “What the Water Brings and Takes Away: The Work of María Magdalena Campos Pons” by Alan West-Durán, investigate how Yemoja art and imagery remembers peoples and cultures lost during chattel slavery. Lindsay’s piece revolves around the idea of *desaparecidos*, or those who are missing, to explore the connections among Yemoja, Latin American political upheavals, and voices, lives, and histories lost during slavery. His artwork in this book re-imagines the faces and places lost to create spaces for remembrance, healing, and putting fractured communities back together again. His meditation on the similarities between missing loved ones and dispersal in Panamanian and the African diasporas is especially moving and apt. Likewise, West-Durán explores the visual and performance art of Cuban artist María Magdalena Campos Pons. Campos Pons’ work resonates with Yemayá imagery, and her aesthetics of Santería traditions reflect issues of memory and history in the African Diaspora. West-Durán aptly invokes Edouard Glissant’s writings on the sea to help us to place Campos Pons’ oeuvre within a larger Caribbean aquatic imaginary. Again, meditations on loss and renewal center on Yemoja’s ability to recover and regenerate through her cyclical fluidity, and artwork devoted to her forces us to question not only how we understand the past but also whose history is remembered.

In this regard, Teresa N. Washington explores the central nature of Yemoja imagery in a transatlantic framework in “‘The Sea Never Dies’ Yemoja: The Mother-Force Flowing Infinitely in Africana Literature and Cinema.” This piece looks at how seminal works in Africana literature and cinema, like Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust*, explore Yemoja’s ocean symbology.<sup>30</sup> Washington’s piece works nicely within other kinds of narratives that unpack Afro-Atlantic, especially African American, expressions of *orisa* worldview and symbolism in literature and film.<sup>31</sup> As with Lindsay’s work, the *orisa* expressions Washington reveals through her interpretative work call on ritual histories to open up a creative space of remembrance for the lives lost during the Atlantic slave trade.

Yemoja’s healing powers are renown in the Afro-Atlantic world, especially in Brazil, where children, people with AIDS, and other vulnerable communities turn to Yemoja for acceptance and dignity in *Candomblé* religious practices.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Jamie N. Davidson and Nelson Eubanks explore Iemanjá as a formidable force in Salvador, Bahia, in their piece for the volume, “A Sonic Portrait with Photos of Salvador’s Iemanjá

Festival.” This chapter uses personal reflections and photos to give a rich and layered portrait of the Iemanjá festival. Their work focuses on how website construction opens up new ways of presenting ethnographic work, especially in the areas of religious street performance and ethnomusicology. The authors invite readers to interact with their work in the field by visiting their website.<sup>33</sup> The site is dedicated to a “sonic portrait” of the Festa de Iemanjá held in February every year in the Rio Vermelho neighborhood of Salvador, Bahia. Davidson and Eubanks followed the well-known religious group Filhos de Gandhi in 2010, 2011, and 2012, whose musical sounds dedicated to Iemanjá filled the streets in waves that mimicked the ocean. Their site adds a level of texture and resonance to our exploration of Yemoja, especially in terms of how deeply held traditions and beliefs about this fluid and transnational deity affect entire communities in Bahia’s urban environment. Their focus on community building through a range of media, like music and virtual sites, allows us to see how the figurehead of Iemanjá acts as a conduit for forming kin in both traditional and innovative ways.

Another site of transcultural negotiation appears among alternative religious cultures in the United States. Erin Dean Colcord is an artist and neopagan priestess of the Come As You Are (CAYA) Coven headquartered in Berkeley, California. Her coven is an important site for religious admixture between African diasporic and neopagan religions.<sup>34</sup> Her piece “Yemaya Offering a Pearl of Wisdom: An Artist Statement” shares her experiences with Yemoja as a spiritual guide and artistic inspiration. The statement describes how spiritual and cultural exchanges deeply inform her artwork as a mode of religious work. Another piece of art by Colcord, “Mermaid Playing with Merbaby,” vividly depicts a mermaid and a “merbaby” that Colcord created for her friend, a priestess of the American Magic Umbanda House in Oakland, California, as she prepared to dedicate her life to ritual service in the name of Yemoja. Colcord’s art and statement reflect how Yemoja’s fluidity inspires all kinds of vernacular religious cultures and how she opens up spaces for religious and cultural exchange and borrowing in the United States, especially among feminist, nonmainstream religious cultures. Here again, culture and art produced for Yemoja challenge us to think through and across the boundaries, borders, and contours of religious and artistic expression.

Considering the works in the two sections of this volume, we show how Latina/o and Afro-Atlantic cultural production surrounding Yemoja have been creolized, hybridized, and combined through creativity on a transcultural and transnational scale.<sup>35</sup> The chapters and art in this volume express a broad, integrated understanding of the

many avenues of expression touched by Yemoja. The connections among Africa, Latin America, North America, and the Caribbean explored in this book provide a rich commentary on the ways work and ritual about Yemoja require us to become more careful about how we contemplate history, religion, performance, art, and gender and their intersectionality. Components of Yemoja worship, and creative expressions about her, embed themselves in webs of negotiations that situate community identity through an aesthetic of fluidity that mirrors the waters. Like the sea, Yemoja traditions are constantly changing in a manner that provides a template for understanding social and cultural change, hybridity, and reconfiguration. Within these reconfigurations and negotiations, multiple aspects of gender are reflected through Yemoja's role in Yoruba diasporic mythology as a space for secrecy, creativity, and play in constructing subjectivities.

*Yemoja: Gender, Sexuality, and Creativity in the Latina/o Afro-Atlantic Diasporas* challenges rigid constructions of sexuality, gender, and race in profound ways. The conversations found here necessarily take into account historic and contemporary sociopolitical contexts and cultural realities, all of which contribute to unique expressions of Yemoja art and cultural practices. In highlighting the fluid nature of the figure of Yemoja, we emphasize the importance of *orisa* religions in creating a complicated public discourse with important ramifications for understanding especially Latina/o and Afro-Atlantic diaspora religions on a global scale. Yemoja traditions negotiate community identity in bold ways that emphasize the shifting nature of belief and cultural practice in our world today.

## Notes

1. Audre Lorde, *The Black Unicorn: Poems* (New York: Norton, 1978), 6.
2. Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún* (Miami: Colección de Chicherekú, Ediciones Universal 1980), 20. All translations from Spanish to English in this introduction are those of the editors. "Yemayá" is the Cuban Lucumí spelling of "Yemoja."
3. *Orisa* here refers to Yoruba divinities found in Africa and the African Diaspora.
4. Sandra Barnes, ed., *Africa's Ogun*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Joseph Murphy and Mei Mei Sanford, *Osun across the Waters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Toyin Falola, Joel E. Tishken, and Akintinde Akinyemi, eds., *Sango in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Arturo Lindsay, ed., *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art* (Washington, DC.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1996); Kamari Maxine Clarke, *Mapping Yorùbá*

*Networks* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); James Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey, eds., *Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

5. Olabiyi Babalola Yai, “In Praise of Metonymy: The Concepts of ‘Tradition’ and ‘Creativity’ in the Transmission of Yoruba Artistry over Time and Space,” in *The Yoruba Artist*, ed. Henry Drewal et al. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 111–15; Barry Hallen, *The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 65–112.

6. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 9–19, 55–69; Murphy and Sanford, *Osun Across*, 2.

7. Henry John Drewal and Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Gelede: Art and Female Power among the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 3–18; Babatunde Lawal, *The Gelede Spectacle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 42–43, 60–61, 256.

8. Lawal, *The Gelede*, 49; Drewal and Drewal, *Gelede*, 215; Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 27–28; Benedict M. Ibitokun, *Dance as Ritual Drama and Entertainment in the Gelede of the Ketu Yoruba Subgroup in West Africa* (Ile Ife: Abafemi Awolowo University Press, 1993); Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 65.

9. Oyeronke Olajubu indicates in *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 27–28, that the Ifa divination verse, the Odu *Osa Odu Meji* sets the stage for thinking about women’s ritual power in Yoruba religious discourses:

Nigbati won nbo l’aye  
 Awon obirinrin, won ko ri nkannkan yan  
 La t’odo Olodumare . . .  
 Olodumare lo gbe ase fun awon obirinrin  
 O ni awon aje ko gbodo maa lo lati  
 Di ‘ya je ‘nikeni

When women were coming to the earth  
 Women had no powers from Olodumare . . .  
 Olodumare promised them a power greater than that of men  
 Olodumare gave women power over men  
 Women were instructed not to use the power indiscriminately  
 Olodumare endowed women with the power of aje.  
 (translation Olajubu’s)

10. Jacqui M. Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 22–23.

11. Karin Barber, *I Could Speak until Tomorrow* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

12. Oyewumi, *The Invention*; Oyeronke Olademo, *Gender in Yoruba Oral Traditions* (Lagos: Centre for Black and Africa Arts and Civilizations [CBAAC], 2009); Matory, *Black Atlantic*, 2005; 'Wande Abimbola, *Ifä Will Mend Our Broken World* (Roxbury: Aim Books, 2003); Clark, *Where Men*, xix–xx.
13. Oyewumi, *The Invention*, 1–30, 80–120.
14. Matory, *Black Atlantic*, 216.
15. *Ibid.*, 188–90, 217–21.
16. *Ibid.*, 25–46; Clark, *Where Men*, 143–48.
17. José Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 76–100; Alicia Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 83–118; Randy P. Conner and David Hatfield Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions* (Binghamton: Harrington Park, 2004).
18. Lorde, *The Black*, 6–7; Michelle M. Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 167–74; Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 44–47; Gloria Anzaldúa and Ana Louise Keating, eds., *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 242; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 3, 86; Edna M. Rodríguez-Mangual, *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
19. Clark, *Where Men*, xvi, xix–xx; Matory, *Black Atlantic*, 188–266.
20. Toyin Falola and Kevin Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic World: 1450–2000* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Stephen Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 345–54; Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
21. Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, eds., *Tropicalizations* (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1997); Michelle M. Wright, *Becoming Black* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 136–82.
22. Jose Estaban Muñoz, *Disidentifications* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 21–32, 135–41, 161–79; see also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35–46.
23. Cabrera, *Yemayá*, 9–45; Conner and Sparks, *Queering*, 110, 118, 268.
24. Sarah Nuttal, ed., *Beautiful/Ugly* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 6–29; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38–70; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 5–7; Hallen, *The Good*, 1–12, 139–48.
25. Lawal, *The Gelede*, 43.
26. J. Lorand Matory provides useful insights into how the figure of Yemayá similarly troubles gendered discourses in Oyo, Nigeria. See *Sex and the Empire That Is No More* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 243–50, 253–64.
27. Clark, *Where Men*, xix–xx; Matory, *Black Atlantic*, 224–66.
28. Aisha Beliso De-Jésus, “Reimagining the ‘Global’ versus ‘Local’: Religious Cosmopolitanisms and Transnational Santería,” forthcoming; Raquel Romberg, *Witchcraft and Welfare* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003);

Sheila S. Walker, ed., *African Roots/American Cultures* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

29. Keith Sandiford, *Theorizing a Colonial Caribbean-Atlantic Imaginary: Sugar and Obeah* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 14–31; Solimar Otero, *Afro-Cuban Diasporas in the Atlantic World* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 111–39.

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