Pentecostalism in translation:
Religion and the production of community in the Haitian diaspora

I examine the growth of Pentecostalism in the Haitian diaspora through both a neo-Weberian framework and the argument, derived from Walter Benjamin, that the cultural translation of religious doctrine should resonate with the original and not merely substitute scholarly categories for sacred meanings. Haitian migrants to Guadeloupe, French West Indies, appropriate Pentecostalism to produce a transnational enclave in the face of marginality and displacement. Using Christian idioms, they defend themselves against denigrating stereotypes and articulate sentiments of loss and remembrance of the Haitian homeland. Their theology of sin, salvation, and the spirit therefore overlaps with anthropological frameworks about the production of community. These two languages complement each other, and each provides a partial theory to explain the need for moral separationism as well as its likely effects. Examining this complementary relationship suggests both the specificity of Haitian Pentecostalism and the limits of Benjamin’s literary model for ethnographic interpretation. [Pentecostalism, Haiti, transnationalism, religion, morality, translation, Benjamin]
We should be suspicious, however, of easy translations of the theological language of Pentecostalism into an analytic framework of social operators and the production of community. It is not surprising that this radical Protestant doctrine has profound and ramifying social consequences (Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Weber 1992). However, the terms used to describe the consequences can easily overshadow the sentiments of believers and obscure precisely how they use religious signs to contest and criticize the dominant order. Pentecostal doctrine demands that Christians separate totally from the fallen world and seek direct encounters with God. In this article, I ask what is involved in translating the absolutist morality of Pentecostalism into the anthropological language of marginality and transnational community. In an influential essay, Tali Asad (1993) criticizes several models of cultural translation for ignoring the structural inequality of languages. He demonstrates how anthropological translation too often usurps or radically transforms nondominant discourses in an unself-conscious display of its own power and the "established structures of life" in Western academia (Asad 1993:193). In what follows, I trace the emergence of Haitian Pentecostalism in Guadeloupe in light of both Weberian approaches and Walter Benjamin's arguments about translation, especially as articulated in his article "The Task of the Translator" (1968), cited by Asad. My goal is to explore the significance of Pentecostalism for Haitian migrants but to avoid privileging the anthropological "translation" over the "original" Pentecostal views of morality and theology. I do not treat Pentecostal doctrine as a cultural text ripe for translation into anthropological discourse (in order to recuperate its implicit sense or render it more coherent). Instead cast the original and the translation as complementary, overlapping accounts of the crisis of marginality among Haitians in Guadeloupe. In the conclusion, I review what is lost and gained in the anthropologist's translation.

Haitian religion in Guadeloupean society

Haitians' specific uses of Pentecostalism in Guadeloupe emerge from the complicated process of displacement from Haiti, resettlement, and insertion into an occasionally hostile society. There are two major religious groupings among Haitian residents of Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, the island's largest city, where I carried out research in the mid-1990s. One partially reproduces the nominally Catholic orientation found in Haiti, but of this group, only a small minority attend church on a regular basis. The French-language mass, the white French priests, and the displays of wealth and prestige among Guadeloupean parishioners combine to keep most of them away. Consistent with the religious continuum in Haiti (see Brodwin 1996:152 ff.; Desmangles 1992; Hurbon 1972; McAlister 1998; Métraux 1972), some of the these nominally Catholic individuals also attend sévis lwa, or ceremonies for spirits in Vodoun, in one of several urban shrines (hounfo) operated by Haitian religious specialists in the two poorest neighborhoods of the city (Boissard and the Carénage).

The second major religious grouping in this migrant population belongs to the all-Haitian Pentecostal churches scattered throughout the metropolitan area. They come together in cramped church buildings several times a week for formal services, evening and afternoon prayer meetings, choir and music practice, religious education, and other activities. Their pastors are Haitian, and the services are conducted mostly in Haitian Creole, although all of the churches were founded in the past 30 years by visiting North American missionaries (as were most Pentecostal churches in Haiti itself). Indeed, the names of these congregations (the Church of God of Prophecy, Holiness Church, Church of the Body of Christ, and the Apostolic Church of Faith) are familiar to any observer of the U.S. Pentecostal scene (see Blumhofer et al. 1999). An accurate count in this shifting migrant population is nearly impossible, but most Haitians I spoke with in Pointe-à-Pitre peg the rate of affiliation with Pentecostal churches at 40-60 percent, in striking contrast to Haiti, where no more than 15 percent of people identify themselves as Protestant (Conway 1978, 1980; Romain 1986).

The majority population of Guadeloupe (French citizens of African and East Indian descent) consider both Pentecostalism and Haitians foreign presences. For many, each is also an unwanted and dangerous presence: Guadeloupans regard the storefront churches as unwanted competitors to Catholicism and the Haitians as a disorderly people and economic drain. In fact, the only direct experience that many people have of Haitians comes from encounters with crowds spilling into the streets in front of Pentecostal churches and tent revivals. These are common scenes in many neighborhoods of Pointe-à-Pitre, and they reinforce the impression of Haitians as disorganized and intrusive. From the standpoint of Haitians, however, their alienation and exclusion from the dominant society is precisely the problem they address through the moral and theological doctrines of Pentecostalism. Haitian migrants appropriate a patently foreign ideology—conservative U.S. Pentecostalism—as a strategic response to their treatment as permanent foreigners in their current surroundings. They utilize Pentecostalism as both a guide to individual salvation and a vehicle for the production and defense of their transnational community. To explore their strategic uses of the religion, I first examine several scholarly frameworks for Pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Second, I outline Pentecostal morality and the separatism it engenders, as a matter of both doctrine (orthodoxy) and the regulation of everyday life (orthopraxy). I then address the history of Haitian marginalization in Guadeloupe and the response migrants have crafted through the specific habitus and worship styles of this religion.
Pentecostalism and the problem of cultural translation

Much scholarly writing about Pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean insists on the contextual re-
terpretation of its central doctrine. The social science literature too often ignores what the "recorded theological text says and explicitly recommends" and focuses instead on what people influence by these concepts do in everyday social and political contexts (see Gellner 1970:19). In particular, this approach de-emphasizes the core Pentecostal command to separate from the fallen, sinful world in order to secure one's salvation. It privileges instead the sociological results that flow from the doctrine, that is, the formation of new collectivities and this-worldly commitments. The insistence on interpreting away the absolute separationism of Pentecostal (and, more broadly, evangelical) morality runs throughout otherwise divergent accounts of this religion's growth in the New World.

The standard neo-Weberian argument features a core narrative of the transformation to modernity and the accompanying forms of loss and compensation. After the forces of global capitalism have uprooted traditional networks, the argument goes, evangelical and Pentecostal churches restore group boundaries and community identity, although on different terms. Social dislocation is counteracted through membership in small-scale storefront congregations (Garrard-Burnett and Stoll 1993). The status loss and marginality produced by rapid modernization is compensated by new collectivities and new forms of discipline (e.g., Brusco 1995:142 ff.). In some versions of this argument, classic Protestant doctrines of individual effort and self-denial become the major contributors to individual success in modernizing, bureaucratic societies (e.g., Mintz 1974). In other versions, Pentecostal churches offer rural migrants and the urban proletariat a framework not for joining the dominant social order but, rather, for galvanizing an oppositional culture (Lancaster 1988:100 ff.; Willems 1967). In the latter scenario, Pentecostalism supplies people caught in oppressive hierarchies with a counteridentity and marginally more room to maneuver than they have in the larger society (e.g., Burdick 1993). Finally, Marxist-influenced scholars and critics of neocolonial dependency such as Lalive d'Epinay (1969) and Stoll (1990) interpret Pentecostalism as a route to greater hegemonic control by local and regional elites and, hence, a way of deflecting popular political consciousness.

These approaches interpret the growth of Pentecostalism by reference to a metanarrative of modernity (see Englund and Leach 2000). They give analytic priority to global forces (such as commoditization, rural to urban migration, and the insertion of once-bounded communities into larger systems of exchange) that rupture traditional outlooks and practices. According to proponents of these views, people turn to Pentecostalism as a way to negotiate the frustrations and contradictions of modernity. In common with so much recent anthropological writing that situates local knowledge as a response to global forces, however, the above accounts of Pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean undercut believers' own understanding of their lifeworld (Englund and Leach 2000:228). In particular, scholars submerge Pentecostals' strident and otherworldly separationism in an analytic apparatus about the new social formations (assimilationist, oppositional, or co-opted) that believers end up constructing. The literature on Pentecostalism thus emphasizes one aspect of the Weberian project at the expense of another. It examines the social consequences of Pentecostalism but de-emphasizes what drives people to convert in the first place or to persevere with the religion's ethical demands. (At worst, it assumes, in a functionalist sleigh of hand, that people accept Pentecostal doctrine because of its desirable social effects.) Weber, of course, examined both the religious convictions of Calvinists and Calvinism's serendipitous but objective historical effects. As Morris notes, "Weber did not suggest that Calvinist preachers advocated capitalism, but rather that their stress on 'calling' . . . had the unintentional consequences of capital accumulation" (1987:67). This unintentional connection was nonetheless coherent to the early European capitalists, who relied on their theology to guide their action in the world. Weber retained that coherence in his scholarly reformulation by joining the social consequences of Calvinist doctrine to what believers themselves found most compelling about the religion.

Even the best neo-Weberian studies of Pentecostalism in Latin America tilt the scales toward sociological explanations and hence away from believers' explicit commitments. For example, although Brazilians say they join the Pentecostal Assembly of God for the guarantee of salvation and release from affliction, Burdick (1993:63 ff.) claims that the political consequences of the religion derive from something entirely different: the creation of a new secular identity that suspends and questions other social affiliations. Believers who have "left the world" in theological terms transcend their previous selves, in particular, their poverty and illiteracy. As Burdick (1993:224) notes, Pentecostalism is not alone in this regard. Umbanda—a combination of spiritualism, Catholicism, and African-derived candomblé—also provides its members with a safe place to suspend unavailing roles and statuses and temporarily inhabit new and more rewarding ones. Because Burdick explains the appeal of Pentecostalism and Umbanda in virtually the same terms, his account moves quite far from the professed beliefs of Pentecostalists, who would surely deny they share anything in common with Umbanda devotees and their practices of spirit possession.

Burdick here echoes Weber's suspicion that historical and social consequences ultimately undermine the intentions.
wrote in “The Task of the Translator,” quire transforming the translator’s language in accordance substitute the logic and categories of its own language for what the author accomplished, and it points out not strive to imitate the original, any more than literary crit- translation inevitably makes prosaic and nonsacred what tions about what the author accomplished, and it points out (see Asad 1993). The translator of texts faces problems analogous to those of the neo-Weberian anthro- and mutate over time. There exists, however, a related standard of coherence, derived from the method of literary translation (see Asad 1993). The translator of texts faces problems analogous to those of the neo-Weberian anthropologist of religion. On the one hand, the translation should not strive to imitate the original, any more than literary criticism should be a copy of poetry (de Man 1986:83). The translation inevitably makes prosaic and nonsacred what was poetical and canonical in the original. It raises ques- tions about what the author accomplished, and it points out disruptions and contradictions in the text (de Man 1986:97ff.). On the other hand, the translation should not substitute the logic and categories of its own language for those of the original. In fact, a coherent translation may re- quire transforming the translator’s language in accordance with the particular text in question. As Walter Benjamin wrote in “The Task of the Translator,” “Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of foreign works. . . . The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue.” [1969:79–81]

The translator must avoid two extremes: (1) simply transmitting the original in another register (ultimately an impossible task); and (2) obliterating the intentions of the author by replacing the conventions of the original language with those of the translator. To find the right middle ground, one must choose a style of translation that harmonizes with the original. Of course, using the literary model of translation for the anthropological interpretation of religion poses several theoretical dilemmas, which I examine in the conclusion. The literary model, however, immediately suggests specific guidelines for the ethnography of Haitian Pentecostalism in Guadeloupe. Chief among these is to privilege the resonance between the Pentecostal and the anthropo- logical accounts of the situation facing Haitian immigrants. The conventions and background assumptions of the religious account are theological, dealing in sanctification and world rejection. The anthropological account is secular, dealing with the production of community (cf. Appadurai 1996) and the collective expression of displacement. The intended object of the two accounts, however, is the same: the formation of new collective identities and oppositional discourses vis-à-vis the surrounding society. These sacred and secular accounts complement, overlap, and anticipate each other in surprising ways.

Pentecostal morality: Salvation and world rejection

The Pentecostal code of morality forbids smoking, drinking, dancing, swearing, watching commercial films, wearing jewelry, perfume, or cologne, dressing provocatively, and having pre- or extramarital sex (see Anderson 1979; Dayton 1987; Synan 1971, 1975). These restrictions on behavior, consump- tion, and display all emerge from a specific theological doc- trine. In the Pentecostal hermeneutic of the gospel, Christians must re-enact in their own lives the biblical drama of human- kind’s creation, fall, and redemption (Dayton 1987:23). In this subjectivizing theology, personal redemption is essential, and John Wesley’s formulation lies at the heart of its spiritual path. Wesley began with the scriptural formula (e.g., from John 3 and Romans 6) outlining the individual’s acknow- ledgment of sin, followed by repentance and conversion. Through conversion, one is saved from the “guilt of sin,” that is, forgiven for the actual sins committed up to that point in one’s life. However, Wesley also envisioned a second
conversion to obtain salvation from the very possibility of sin. The first conversion brings forgiveness for outward sin, but the second conversion would eradicate inward or original sin, the residue of Adam's fall. This second conversion became known as sanctification, spiritual perfection, or holiness. It represents a perfect victory over sin, likened to the complete love of God ideally achieved by Christians in the moment before death (see Conkin 1997; Hollenweger 1972).

According to the 19th-century U.S. preachers who elaborated Wesley's doctrine, sanctification opens the way to the gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and healing. These "signs and wonders" characterized worship in the American Holiness churches of the late 19th century as well as the Pentecostal churches that were founded in their wake. Pentecostals regard exuberant, emotional devotion as signaling the individual's second baptism and a re-experience of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles that took place 50 days after the crucifixion (as described in Acts 2:1-4). Such "hot" religion, with its dramatic and seemingly free-form worship styles, sharply differentiated Pentecostalism from other Protestant denominations and became the aspect of the religion most derided by outsiders (see Cox 1995).

The dramatic moments when individuals receive the gifts of the Spirit, however, are far less relevant for Pentecostal morality than the disciplined ethical work that precedes them and that ultimately sustains individuals in the sanctified state. Although a gift of grace, sanctification requires continual personal effort and pure intention—a paradox that, of course, runs throughout Protestantism. Moreover, one must be aware of the gift that is offered and make the decision to receive it (Nordbeck 1990:37). Ellingsen 1988 notes the emphasis on individual commitment emerges from the distinctive "forensic" or juridical view of grace characterizing conservative Protestantism (Nordbeck 1990:37). God as judge redeems us, but this is essentially a legal fiction; we remain guilty of sin and selfishness and must consciously struggle against them even after conversion and sanctification. Individual redemption therefore depends on both the explicit desire for grace and the personal effort to live a sinless life, in particular, by obeying specific scriptural guidelines for behavior and continually rejecting worldly temptations (Anderson 1979:195–222).

In this light, the ordinary world is a uniquely dangerous place for Christians. Rejecting the world and its unsaved inhabitants becomes a moral requirement, the best guarantee of upright personal conduct, and hence a crucial step toward achieving and sustaining sanctification. Moreover, it becomes the only moral requirement, and it rules out other forms of ethical action. Working to ameliorate current-day ills would mean meeting the world on its own terms instead of challenging its fallen state. Pentecostals demand that people "in the world" undergo a moral change, not incrementally but, rather, absolutely and inwardly, from sinfulness to redemption (Hollenweger 1972:15). To fulfill the separationist imperative, Pentecostal pastors and deacons sharpen the boundaries they draw in their sermons between church members and the unsaved, and this particular theological distinction also serves as the core organizational principle for conservative evangelical schools and Bible institutes (see Ammerman 1987; Peshkin 1986). Institutionalized opposition to the majority society arose within Pentecostalism at its very origin. Early-20th-century church members denigrated as sinful not only liquor and tobacco but also life insurance, secret societies, doctors, and Coca-Cola, all elements of the emerging urban, bureaucratized order of the United States at that time. One historian describes this as a mutual rejection on the part of Pentecostals and the majority population (Synan 1997:187ff). Denouncing the surrounding society and strictly regulating one's personal conduct have long supported each other as the central moral labors in this religion.

Pentecostals' explicit self-segregation from the everyday world resonates with the commentaries of anthropologists and historians about the social effects of Christian conversion. According to recent studies, entering a Christian community typically means acquiring a new reference group, a locus of self-definition in the wider social array (Heffner 1993a). Converts construct bounded enclaves, tangibly marked off from the rest of society by dress, group activities, forms of consumption and display, and other daily or ritual behaviors (Heffner 1993b). By joining a given denomination, the individual produces a new public and visible persona that is calibrated to local social contradictions. In the case of U.S. Pentecostalism, the first generation of converts were people largely excluded from full participation in the dominant society. The Azusa Street revival of 1906—one of the storied birth events of the religion—began with a group of black servants and custodians led by a southern Holiness preacher whose parents were former slaves. In the following years, visiting churchmen reported with disapproval that poor blacks, whites, Mexicans, and Asians worshipped together in the same church—and this in Turn of the Century Los Angeles, which was firmly ruled by a white business and political elite (Cox 1995:45 ff.). In doctrinal terms, such social divisions represent the imperfect sinful world that Christians should escape by opening themselves to the Spirit. In sociological terms, the worldview of early Pentecostals represents a familiar use of radical Protestantism to create "free social spaces" that offer at least partial protection from the injurious hierarchies of the larger society (Martin 1990:268, 287). During the early years of English Methodism, for example, the doctrinal emphasis on personal conscience carried a cryptopolitical message for people at the margins of the social order, and their worship meetings created partially autonomous communities that, however, never directly challenged state and ecclesiastical authority (Martin 1990:33). In the following century, Methodist and other Nonconformist Protestant missions to England's
colonies offered novel idioms of moral reform that implicitly opposed dominant racist hierarchies (see Austin-Broos 1997; Comaroff 1985).

In all these cases, people enacted a separation from the sinful world, conceived in theological terms, which both repeated and responded to their exclusion from the surrounding social order. Theological and anthropological accounts of Pentecostalism, thus, chase each other, each claiming to represent the lived experience of exclusion and marginality from, as it were, the opposite poles of individual salvation and collective identity. For this reason, anthropologists should seriously explore Pentecostal doctrines about the fallen world and the need to separate from it. Moreover, in transnational settings such as Guadeloupe, the resonance between Pentecostal moral edicts and anthropological notions about the production of community will take a specific form. When individuals visibly differ from the majority society and when they do not possess the proper legal documents for residence, they will probably derive specific benefits from the “protective social capsule” (Martin 1990: 284) offered by Pentecostal congregations. They may use its oppositional moral rhetoric—pitching the saved against the sinful—to reinterpret the boundaries of language, race, and nationality and to contest their marginal place within those domains. Evidence of such cultural improvisation within the doctrinal idiom of Pentecostalism emerges from several recent ethnographies of Pentecostal churches in transnational communities (see León 1998; Toulis 1997). As converts bring their lives into accordance with Pentecostal doctrine, the church provides them with not only a new reference group and collective identity, calibrated to the specific social contradictions they face, but also an explicit moral commentary about their exclusion. People’s social uses of the religion complement their specific theological convictions and spiritual practices, and in what follows, I explore such resonances in Guadeloupe.

Moral separationism, counteridentity, and social critique

By joining a Pentecostal church, Haitian migrants defend themselves against the devalued images of Haitians that circulate in Guadeloupean society. These images form a palimpsest that originated with the start of large-scale Haitian migration in the mid-1970s. Haitians were originally brought to Guadeloupe as cane cutters in the midst of a bitter struggle between plantation owners and laborers over unionization in the island’s declining sugar industry (Hurbon 1983). Without their knowledge, they were used as strike breakers by the plantation owners, and in 1975 this unleashed a wave of violence (including lynch mobs) by prounion Guadeloupeans. Although the violence was fairly quickly quenched by progressive politicians and activist Catholic priests, the episode left an enduring image of Haitians as opportunistic foreigners opposed to the interests of the ordinary Guadeloupean (see Bébel-Gisler and Hurbon 1987: 71–88).

The next stage in the formation of a hegemonic image of Haitian migrants came in the 1980s, as Haitian immigration increased from a controlled influx of poorly paid agricultural workers to a wave of small merchants and unskilled laborers who came without documentation or who stayed on after the expiration of their visas. The migration that occurred in the 1980s was the source of today’s transnational Haitian community in urban Pointe-à-Pitre. Beginning in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, most current migrants fly to Curacao and then to St. Maarten, both self-governing states associated with the Netherlands. St. Maarten is separated by a lightly policed border from St. Martin (an offshore dependency of Guadeloupe), which occupies the other half of the same island. Most people told me they simply walked to the French side of the island and then purchased a plane or boat ticket to Guadeloupe, some 160 miles away. Once settled in Pointe-à-Pitre, most men work in the construction industry as masons or laborers, and most women become commerçantes (in Haitian Creole, madan sara), vendors who purchase commodities in bulk (from other Haitian women who routinely travel between Pointe-à-Pitre and Miami, Port-au-Prince, and San Juan) and then sell them on the streets of Guadeloupe’s major towns.

Their appropriation of this economic niche gives rise to several widespread images of Haitians. One portrays the immigrant as an economic drain on society: someone who takes in money through daily wages earned on construction jobs or sales of clothing, towels, and housewares on the street and then sends it all back to Haiti. This is the cliché of Haitians as quintessential greedy outsiders, who are not willing to settle down and who maintain an allegiance to their country of origin that purportedly harms Guadeloupean society. A second, related image emphasizes not the greed of Haitians but their sheer numbers. “They are crowding us out” is the popular expression for this cliché, which is rooted in the tangible experience of street life in Pointe-à-Pitre. Most Haitian market women do not have the capital to open their own stores. They display their wares on the sidewalks, but their tables and boxes spill into the street, stand in the way of shoppers, and block the entrances to established retail stores. The competitive energy of these Haitian vendors subverts the desires of long-time residents for order and cleanliness in the old downtown, which dates to the colonial era. Guadeloupean residents of Pointe-à-Pitre consistently complain that Haitians are pushing them out of their own city. A final, but more diffuse popular image dovetails with the fears just mentioned. From news reports of political instability and violence in Haiti arises the notion that Haitians are essentially a disorganized people who cannot rule themselves effectively. The fear just below the surface of this
particular notion is that Haitian migrants will bring this disorder with them to Guadeloupe. By obeying certain codes of behavior, Haitian Pentecostals put forward a counterimage to the negative stereotypes listed above. This is true in a literal sense, that is, in the visual image of church members. In Pointe-à-Pitre, I became a member of a Haitian Pentecostal congregation, the Church of God of Prophecy. From the start, I was struck by people's careful grooming and clean, pressed clothes, the Bibles they hold prominently at their sides or hug to their chests, and the erect bearing they adopt at church and on the street. These rules of display operate as a political economy of signs directed both outwardly to Guadeloupeans and inwardly to the Haitian transnational community. Like many clothing styles, Haitian Pentecostal dress has both explicit and implicit meanings that fit the divisions of the everyday social world (Hebdige 1979:101). Shined shoes, coats and ties, and modest dresses project the bourgeois norms of stability and civility that Haitians, by reputation, lack. This is an intended meaning: Church members often told me that Haitians must take care to dress well, because they are guests in the country and do not want to make trouble. Nonetheless, Haitian church members do not end up looking like Guadeloupeans. Guadeloupeans remarked to me that the colors Haitians wear are too brash and the women's dresses too extravagant for walking through a ghetto (the same word is used in French as in English) to a storefront church. From this perspective, the clothing gives the impression of misplaced prosperity or a bid for bourgeois respectability that overshoots the mark. The Pentecostal code of appearance, thus, only partially succeeds as a foil for the widespread negative stereotypes of Haitians.

That, however, is not the code's only or even major use. Their outward appearance operates not only to defend Haitian Pentecostals against dominant cliches but also to criticize the surrounding society and provide a compelling counterexample. The dress code, thus, acts as the leading edge of a wider critique of Guadeloupean norms for women, men, and domestic authority. To begin with, church members routinely criticize Guadeloupean women for dressing too provocatively, and their critique targets chiefly the jeans, cut-off shorts, and T-shirts that women wear in the street and in the cramped courtyards and alleys where both Haitians and Guadeloupeans live. The same criticism of women's dress comes up in pastors' sermons that decry the dangerous moral laxity of life in Guadeloupe. Through such rhetoric, migrants take a well-known gender norm from Haiti, amplify it through Pentecostal doctrine, and then deploy it as a moral rebuke of the surrounding society.

In Haiti, women control the nation's system of rural markets, and they typically handle their family's finances, as well. However, their economic autonomy coexists with a public ideology of male authority and sexual license as well as the expectation of sexual conservatism and even disinterest on the part of women (Lowenthal 1987). Haitian gender ideology has several sources, including the long-standing patriarchal household structure in rural areas (Comhaire-Sylvain 1961) and the linked forms of sexual and economic exchange that typically work against women's interests (Brown 1991:163 ff.; Lowenthal 1987). The overdetermined gender ideology produces a singular code of appearance, typified by the below-the-knee dresses or skirts and head kerchiefs worn daily by many women in rural Haiti.

A very similar code governing women's appearance and, by implication, sexuality emerges from conservative U.S. Pentecostalism. The Church of God of Prophecy, the root denomination of the group I joined in Pointe-à-Pitre, was founded in Cleveland, Tennessee, in the early 1950s out of an earlier schism within the Church of God, which itself was organized in 1908 during the first decades of the U.S. Pentecostal revival. From the start, this broad religious movement defined itself as an antimodem reaction against the surrounding secular society, which it considered irredeemably corrupt. The role and behavior of women became (and remains) an important battleground in this cultural and religious struggle (Balmer 1994; Hawley 1994). Conservative U.S. Protestantism idealizes women's spirituality and enshrines reproductive and domestic roles as women's sacred calling. Conversely, women who reject their God-given callings contribute to the spiritual degradation of society. In everyday terms, the dress, demeanor, and ritual containment of conservative Christian women in the United States symbolize their role as the safeguard of morality (Caplan 1987). These expectations apply to women in the Church of God of Prophecy (along with most other U.S. Pentecostal denominations), and they have been communicated to Haitian pastors in Pointe-à-Pitre through training literature and direct instruction from the North American missionaries who helped found this church. The gender ideology motivates pastors to warn women against wearing makeup and jewelry and to chastise them for not keeping their heads covered in church (a direct application of the Pauline injunctions for feminine submission; see Austin-Broos 1997:246).

The resemblance between the two ideals of femininity—one derived from the organization of gender and sexuality in Haiti and the other from the doctrine and cultural nostalgia of conservative Protestantism in the United States—accomplishes several things. First, Haitians who convert have little difficulty accepting the Pentecostal church's dress code, the spatial segregation of men and women during worship, and other aspects of the church's gender ideology. I heard no complaints from members of the Church of God of Prophecy about the restrictions placed on women's behavior and appearance. Undoubtedly, many migrants do not accept these rules and simply stay away, but women nonetheless make up more than half the membership of these Haitian churches. Moreover, once women accept the gendered
code of appearance, that is, once they take on the visible role of guardians of morality, they enter into respected and spiritually powerful positions. Pentecostalism supports women's prophetic role and their equal potential to manifest the gifts of the Spirit (Conkin 1997:311). At the Church of God of Prophecy in Pointe-à-Pitre, as many women as men speak in tongues and organize prayer meetings, and proportionally more women deliver testimonies from the pulpit. Although women are banned from the roles of deacon and pastor, their witnessing about God's power holds the congregation's rapt attention and functions essentially as preaching. Women, thus, act as autonomous leaders in worship activities that, in terms of the Pentecostal doctrine of spiritual gifts, are actually more significant than formal sermons.

Most importantly, the convergence of norms for women's behavior in rural Haiti and U.S. Pentecostalism helps in the ideological defense of the Haitian enclave within Guadeloupe. It allows church members to frame the difference between themselves and the dominant society through moralistic metaphors of holiness and sinfulness. Haitian Pentecostals accomplish several things at once by dressing modestly and vehemently criticizing local women's behavior and appearance. At one level, they visibly proclaim their acceptance of Pentecostal doctrine. At another level, their very appearance refutes the standard Guadeloupean stereotypes of Haitians as threatening, disorganized, and chaotic. But at a third level, and in keeping with explicit Pentecostal doctrine, they portray Guadeloupean society as morally corrupt and worthy only of their disdain. By conforming to the religion's code of personal appearance, church members affirm their difference from Guadeloupeans but in terms that now work to their advantage.

After all, the visible distinctiveness of Haitians is taken as an objective fact by Guadeloupeans, Haitians, and Dominicans (the other migrant population from the neighboring island of Dominica). Members of the three groups can easily pick each other out on the street through the hints given by occupation, gait, and gesture. In addition to visual cues, the creole languages spoken by Haitians and Guadeloupeans, although mutually intelligible, are not identical, and Guadeloupeans easily identify the distinctive grammar, idioms, and accent of Haitian Creole. Unable to erase their tangible difference and portrayed by Guadeloupeans in the most derogatory terms, Haitians respond by transforming difference as such into moral rebuke. They reinstate (and display) themselves as saved, while casting the French residents of Guadeloupe as sinful and hopelessly lost. In this way, church members make the categories of Haitian and Guadeloupean virtually synonymous with the morally upright and morally objectionable, respectively. Recall that the logic of sanctification opposes "the world" to the state of sinless grace. The world, however, impinges on one all the time, and following the Pentecostal path of sanctification demands that one continually identify and reject the obstacles it presents, including temptations of the flesh such as smoking, drinking, dancing, and unregulated sexuality (see Anderson 1979:195–222; Austin-Broos 1997; Synan 1997:7). Haitians in Guadeloupe graft this moral opposition, available to them in doctrinal form, onto the mundane fact of marginality. They populate the categories of the saved and the sinful with figures drawn from the local social world: Haitian church members and Guadeloupeans.

Haitians also use the Pentecostal idiom to criticize the relations between generations and the intrusion of the state in domestic life. Their critiques aim at the formal state policies and informal practices that challenge the production of the Haitian community in the intimate domestic arena. One such critique came up, for example, during a series of revival meetings at the Church of God of Prophecy in the summer of 1994, when a pastor visiting from an unaffiliated Pentecostal church in Aquin, Haiti, made the breakdown of parental authority a central theme of his sermons. He illustrated his point with lines about a young Haitian man in Guadeloupe "who buys a great-looking LaCoste shirt but then turns around and swears at his mother," and a Haitian woman in Guadeloupe with beautiful teeth and a good figure "who just walks all over her parents." The lines garnered great laughter and applause, and during an interview at his home, he explained to me why he chose them.

Here in Guadeloupe, it is harder to keep your children obedient. There are laws that say you can't slap your child. If you try to hit him, even if he's ten years old, he'll say, "I know about 17." [This is the emergency telephone number for the police.] Here, children insult their parents, but in Haiti they respect their elders. Here, they teach them about sex in the schools. They give them free condoms. Children are more free here: they get a job, they make a little money, and then if they get into trouble, the state comes and takes them away. Imagine that! They take the kid away from home, away from the parents.

We could read the pastor's litany of complaints simply as a reflex of conservative Christian doctrine, because he supported his call for children's obedience and respect with copious biblical quotations. However, such sentiments also address far more immediate and local problems, and they help draw a boundary between the Haitian enclave and Guadeloupean society both now and for the next generation. This pastor holds up the behavior of Guadeloupeans as a negative example that his Haitian flock should avoid emulating. In objecting to the general loss of parental authority, he also warns about the extension of state power into the properly domestic task of child discipline, a danger that has no precedents in Haiti. At times in his sermons, he moved from the general theme of obedience to the importance of speaking to one's children in Haitian Creole. "Even if your
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children are born here," he said in an aside from the pulpit, "they should speak the language of their mother, of their husband or wife. so, if they go back to their country, they'll be able to understand!" This exhortation, inserted into a much longer biblical commentary, was continuous with the rest of his message about buttressing the family as the site of cultural reproduction and guarding against pressures for children to assimilate to non-Haitian norms (a concern also faced by other Haitian transnational communities; see Stepick 1998).

In these different registers—backstage talk with me, references to scripture as well as offhand remarks in sermons, the gendered code of clothing and bodily bearing—church members articulate the seductions, contradictions, and blockages they face in Guadeloupe. Doctrinal edicts serve as a guide not only to personal behavior and the ultimate goal of sanctification but also to specific tasks in producing this transnational community. These tasks include defending against obvious negative stereotypes, launching a countercritique of the indifferent or hostile Guadeloupean majority, and strengthening traditional parental authority against the French state as well as children who are fluent in French, not Haitian conceptions of child welfare and family control.

Pentecostal worship and the collective expression of displacement

According to Pentecostalism, the paramount goal of the Christian life is sanctification through baptism in the Holy Spirit. Abandoning sinful behavior and refusing all engagements with the fallen world is the first step toward this goal. In taking this step, Haitian Pentecostals constitute their congregation as a community of light, defined theologically in opposition to the world of moral darkness (Boone 1996). The congregation becomes a "contrast society" in both a theological and anthropological sense, as church members elaborate explicit doctrinal messages of moral separationism within an enclosed and marginal community. However, sanctification itself issues only from God, and specific worship activities are needed to facilitate the direct encounter with God’s grace. Pentecostal congregations, thus, become the site for communicating with and manifesting the divine. This, too, helps produce a community in both a doctrinal and anthropological sense, as people use prayer, songs, and testimonies to articulate individual longing for redemption and union with God as well as collective sentiments of loss and remembrance of Haiti.

Experiencing God directly and intimately is the core goal of Pentecostal worship and this differentiates it from the biblical literalism of most other U.S.-born fundamentalist and evangelical groups (e.g., see Crapanzano 2000). Its scriptural antecedent is the original outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Galilean disciples of Jesus as described by the Acts of the Apostles, and the early apostolic church stands as the obligatory model for current Pentecostals (Hollenweger 1972:321; Wessels 1992). All Christians should seek to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and they can be assured that God continues to act today as scripture records he did in the past. Because the Pentecostal outpouring continues to manifest in the midst of current-day believers, Pentecostals often say, "We really got God tonight" after a particularly satisfying service (Albrecht 1992:111).

The entire ritual field of Pentecostal worship moves congregants toward a highly personal encounter with the divine. Services are largely nonliturgical and have a minimum of prescribed formulae and rites. They comprise instead a range of activities (congregational singing, spontaneously composed individual prayers, testimonials, and, least importantly, sermons) that can be orchestrated differently on each occasion. According to Daniel Albrecht (1992), a leading U.S. Pentecostal theologian, these activities stimulate certain "sensibilities of worship" that heighten the reality of close communion with God. Exemplifying another overlap between Pentecostal and anthropological languages, Albrecht borrows the terminology of ritual studies (e.g., Alexander 1991; Grimes 1982; Turner 1969) to describe the embodied attitudes and sensibilities created by singing, praying, and testifying. For example, corporate prayer, in which all members of the congregation simultaneously speak out loud their individual prayers, produces the sensibility of "transcendental efficacy," the expectation of an answer and intervention from God. Singing instills a mood of contemplation or deep receptivity to God and a yearning for the Spirit to become manifest.

This brief summary of Pentecostal spirituality serves as an accurate guide to worship at the Haitian Church of God of Prophecy in Guadeloupe. Sermons from the pulpit typically elaborate the same themes: sin and redemption, temptation and the need to resist it, divine power and love, and the command to give praise to God. Such stock canonical messages do not vary much in style or content from week to week at the Pointe-à-Pitre church (as well as the many other Haitian Pentecostal congregations I have visited in both Guadeloupe and Haiti). By contrast, the sequence of hymns and prayers varies considerably at each service, and these are the defining moments of Pentecostal worship. The pastor or deacon leading the service orchestrates such indexical elements of the ritual as he sees fit, calling on certain church members to offer their prayers, instructing people to sing or segue into melodic humming, and at times inviting the entire congregation to offer its prayers in a cacophony of individual voices. Church leaders and ordinary members can, thus, creatively shape the worship services in response to other interests or events. They use this malleable medium to articulate both generalized sentiments of separation from Haiti as well as detailed narratives of the migration process.
During the summer of 1994, the leaders of church services frequently directed the congregation to pray for Haiti. Prayer became an especially powerful gesture of remembrance at the time largely because of the political crisis in the homeland. After nearly three years in power, the Haitian military junta commanded by General Raoul Cédras had driven most of the population deeper into poverty, and the international embargo had increased Haitians’ isolation from relatives living abroad (see Catanese 1999:62 ff.). Although church leaders never discussed this political situation directly in their sermons, their calls to pray for Haiti intertwined the personal troubles created by this situation with theologically conventional interrogations of God. For example, the senior deacon spent several minutes one Sunday morning recounting his recent trip back home, his visits with family, and his efforts to deliver letters and packages to the relatives of church members. He ended by saying, “We should remember the people in Haiti. The Bible says if someone is joyful, be joyful with him, and if someone is suffering, suffer with him. We should keep praying for Haiti, for somehow things will have to change there.” In this case, the call to prayer clearly implies a call to remembrance, but the object of remembrance is not the Haitian homeland in general. The deacon instead homes in on family members—his own and those of other people in the Church of God of Prophecy—who continue to suffer. The goal of his message is not to mobilize political action against Cédras or the embargo but, rather, to articulate the sentiments of frustration and helplessness among migrants separated from and unable to do much about the condition of their relatives.

Because the prayerful yearning for God already mobilizes powerful emotions, calls to pray for Haiti integrate the affective roots of Pentecostal spirituality with highly charged sentiments of personal loss. Reciting personal narratives often triggers this process, exemplified by Sister Andrea, the wife of one of the deacons, as she led an evening service in August 1994. She introduced one of the hymns by saying, “I just lost a brother today, my brother in Haiti. My mother is old, and she buried one child in 1989, and another in 1991, and now my brother died. If I had wings, I would go to Haiti right now to talk with my mother, to comfort her. . . . Now the door to Haiti is closed, but it must be opened somehow, for Jesus’ sake.” She read out loud the first line of the hymn “Soldiers of Christ and Haitians,” and as the congregation began to sing, she sat in front of them sobbing uncontrollably, stopping only a few measures before the hymn ended. The song itself marshaled specifically Christian resources in response to her inability to support her mother in the hour of her need:

Soldiers of Christ and Haitians,
We are citizens of the heavens;
In the Word of the Lord,
We find the only true happiness.

This evening prayer group orchestrated a spoken narrative, the wordless display of loss, and a well-known Protestant hymn into a performative whole. In particular, this format answered both the personal grief of Sister Andrea and the painful separation from relatives shared by virtually everyone in the room through the Pentecostal language of consecration to God. In interpreting the significance of these services, readers should keep in mind that migrants bear an enormous responsibility to family members left behind. The difficulty of sending their families money as well as the inability to protect them from the spiral of violence and poverty under the junta were often topics of conversation among migrants outside of church (see also Laguerre 1984, 1998; Richman 1992; Stepick 1998). Pentecostal worship provided a focal point for yearnings that could not be satisfied, given the political impasse at the moment, and for commentaries about the embargo that could not even be expressed, given the wish of the clergy to avoid scrutiny by Guadeloupean authorities as well as the doctrinal de-emphasis of direct political protest. Sister Andrea explicitly linked her personal situation to the solidarity and collective religious devotion of the nation. By orchestrating the service in this way, she responded to her own suffering by calling for the spiritual rehabilitation of the nation as a whole. Calling on Jesus to bless Haiti transposed her personal experience of separation and loss to a theological plane. The theological language of the hymn valorized equally the divine Christ and the lost homeland.

During several Pentecostal prayer services in 1994, pastors wove powerful and unsettling emotions connected to the death of family members into worship activities and then used this idiom to express in precise theological terms the general estrangement of Haitian migrants from their homeland. While conducting an evening service during a week-long crusade at the Church of God of Prophecy, a visiting pastor said that he had just learned that his brother-in-law in Haiti had died, but because of the restriction on air travel, it was impossible for him to return for the funeral. “The country is going through such misery, and we are tempted to lose all hope,” he continued from the pulpit. He then directed us to sing a slow, stately hymn, whose mournful refrain (“Father, Father, why have you abandoned me?”) then became a song in its own right, again under the direction of the pastor. Gesturing with his hands, the pastor directed us to sing more and more softly until the room was simply humming the melody before the voices died down completely. The church was left almost completely silent save for the soft undercurrent of people’s whispered prayers.

Save, Lord, and bless our dear Haiti!
Small nation, hasten towards Zion
Consecrate yourself to God, make Jesus your King . . . .
Haiti for Christ forever! [Chants d’Espérance 1994, hymn no. 320, author’s translation]

We are citizens of the heavens;
In the Word of the Lord,
We find the only true happiness.
After a few minutes, the pastor began a loud, impassioned prayer of his own, shouting, "God, appear to us! Give us something!" One by one, over a period of five minutes, other people raised their voices until the entire congregation was participating. I could make out several voices that beseeched God's power to "help us, help us in our life."

It was an enormously moving performance, intertwining a spoken narrative of personal loss, a hymn, and the Pentecostal style of corporate prayer. By orchestrating the elements in this way, the pastor connected the Passion and the seemingly hopeless exile from an embargoed homeland into a nearly seamless whole. He organized the sentiment of separation and abandonment on three registers at once: his own bereavement and inability to return for his brother-in-law's funeral, the separation of migrants from their families in Haiti, and the heightened moment in the central Christian drama when Jesus was abandoned by God. Each form of separation served as a metaphor for the others. The hymn restated the separation in a theological register and then responded to the pastor's personal loss, and the collective prayer allowed people to articulate (along with other religious sentiments) their ongoing concern about their distance from kin left behind. This service thus merged a commentary about the separation from Haiti and its ramifying effects with the doctrinally standard forms of Pentecostal worship and the longing for God to manifest in one's life.

In these Pentecostal services, doctrinal messages and the collective expression of displacement come together in a condensed and mutually supportive whole. However, the services not only memorialize people's relatives left behind in Haiti; they also publicly articulate migrants' experience of leaving their country and entering often hostile receiving societies. "We all have a rendezvous with the Lord," a visiting pastor from Haiti said once at a revival, "but this is not a trip like the ones we have taken before. You know, first you have to get your passport, then you need your birth certificate and baptismal record, then you go to the embassy and get a visa, then you have to buy the plane ticket, pack your luggage... This trip requires only faith." For the pastor, the litany of endless bureaucratic steps needed to emigrate from Haiti serves simply as an anecdote to illustrate, by contrast, the direct Pentecostal path to God. At other times, the balance shifts, and the anecdote illuminates the experience of dislocation much more than any particular religious doctrine. One pastor ended his sermon with the following story. "Everyone in Haiti wants to leave. They arrive in America, and then they must go before the judge. Everyone says 'I left Haiti for political reasons.' But the judge will carry out an investigation to see whether it was for political reasons or just because you were poor... And you know," (here the pastor pushed the microphone away from his mouth and spoke unamplified) "they always say it was because you were poor." He paused for a few beats, and then he went on to another point, letting the vignette end there. This narrative obliquely referred to the sermon's theme (the biblical message from I Timothy 4:16 that he who perseveres will be saved), but it directly enunciated the social blockages encountered in the Haitian diaspora, in particular the highly unpopular (and for most people, utterly groundless) distinction enforced by U.S. immigration policy between economic and political refugees.

Because they left so recently, migrants carry the image of Haiti as a living memory, and they have not forgotten how difficult their lives were before leaving. References to the migration experience in Pentecostal services therefore do not idealize the lost homeland, unlike the nostalgic invocation of home among other transnational populations (e.g., Naficy 1991). What is confounding to Haitian migrants, and hence in need of collective cultural work, are the obscure and uncontrollable events that characterize the marginal space they have entered as transnational migrants. The uncertainties of travel and communication throughout the diaspora and the vagaries of immigration law characterize the contact zone in which transnational Haitian communities are emerging (see Rosaldo 1993). These themes become grouped together under the sign of Haiti in Pentecostal discourse and worship activities. The spiritual practices of Pentecostalism become the occasion for retelling the indignities and bewilderments of displacement, and Pentecostal churches become virtually the only communal space in Guadeloupe where Haitians can collectively articulate the sentiments of anger and exasperation produced by the migration experience.

Anthropologists have long shown how religious rituals index local social hierarchies and contradictions (e.g., Tambiah 1985). According to this literature, rituals model the social world; they reduce and simplify it, and they thereby allow participants to appropriate and interpret an otherwise elusive totality (Bell 1997:160). However, the social world of Haitian transnationalism has emerged only in the past few decades and is rapidly changing (cf. Glick-Schiller et al. 1987; Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001; Richman 1992). Indeed, the Haitian community in Guadeloupe has several possible futures. It may persist in its present form as a loosely organized group of undocumented workers, continually replenished by new arrivals from Haiti and involved in multistranded family and economic relationships between the two islands. Some members of this population may eventually gain French citizenship or assimilate through marriage with Guadeloupans. The population may also disappear over time through large-scale resettlement in the United States or mass deportation back to Haiti (the fate in 1995 of the former Haitian population in St. Martin). Therefore, the personal experiences of loss and displacement that people introduce into worship services and endow with religious significance are novel ones. They grow from the unprecedented experience of massive transnational migration and the modern international and bureaucratic structure of
border controls, immigration courts, United Nations-led embargoes, and the like. To represent this shifting and unfamiliar social world in ritual terms means virtually to invent a new ritual or, as the Haitian Pentecostals have done, to take over an older one and seize on its potential for creative improvisation and the expression of novel personal experiences.

Conclusion

This article illuminates what is unique about Pentecostalism in the Haitian community of Guadeloupe, and it also shows the limits of Benjamin’s ideas when applied to the task of cultural, as opposed to literary translation. To examine the specificity of this setting, let us briefly compare it to contemporary Jamaica, where members of the working class use the absolutist doctrines of Pentecostalism in similar ways. In her landmark study, Austin-Broos (1997) describes the moral dishonor attached to people at the bottom of Jamaica’s class and color hierarchy. Members of the black working class face deep obstacles in conforming to the English-derived code of respectability; they are denigrated especially for their “superstition” (i.e., neo-African religious practices) and their “immorality” (i.e., having families outside the bourgeois European norm). In response, Jamaicans join Pentecostal churches, where they credibly themselves to perform the marriage rite and they ferociously denounced “fornication” in sermons and everyday talk. Church members thereby generate distinctive modes of collective identity (Austin-Broos 1997:10) through the sanctifying practices of marriage and sexual restraint.

Like Haitians in Guadeloupe, working-class Jamaicans invoke the Pentecostal discourse of sin and redemption to create room to maneuver within the constraints of the dominant cultural hierarchy. In other details, however, their use of the religion differs from the Haitian case. That a poor black Jamaican, typified as immoral in the conventional scheme of things, could become a perfected “saint”—the Pentecostal term for a believer purified of sin—clearly inverts the socioeconomic order (Austin-Broos 1997:120). But these saints go further and seek legitimacy and full membership in the national society of Jamaica (whether or not they eventually achieve it). By contrast, Haitian migrants seek to evade, not to join, French Guadeloupean society, which in any case has disenfranchised them from the start. For Haitian transnationals, a certain level of social alienation marks both the beginning and the desired end point of the Pentecostal path.

Moreover, Pentecostalism in Jamaica owes its appeal and significance to the neo-African practices that it has encompassed. This is one of Austin-Broos’s central points: Pentecostalism is a site of such cultural creativity because it weaves together an imported Protestant moralism with the neo-African religious focus on healing and emotionally charged “eudemonic” rites. Pentecostalism is only the most recent in a long line of Anglo-American Protestant denominations through which Jamaicans have legitimated subterranean African religious practices (Martin 1990). Revival Zion, Pukumina, and now Pentecostalism all encourage possession and make available spiritual power for healing biomoral malaise. Pentecostalism in Jamaica has thus been fundamentally redefined and deflected away from its U.S. roots. Haitian Pentecostals in Guadeloupe, however, have not significantly changed the religion from imposed to indigenized or from European American to creole and neo-African. In fact, Pentecostalism appeals to people precisely as a new and powerful repudiation of the long-standing syncretism between Catholicism and Vodoun (Brodwin 1996; Conway 1978). The appeal of U.S. Pentecostalism in Jamaica depends on its transformation into a familiar Afro-Christian form. In Haiti, however, its appeal depends on its distance from and denigration of the syncretic creolized religious system.

In tracing how Jamaicans creatively subvert the ostensibly signs and practices of Pentecostalism, Austin-Broos emphasizes that the social use of Christianity changes its meanings. Haitians in Guadeloupe, however, use these signs and practices in ways that amplify and preserve their doctrinal meanings, despite the inevitable recontextualization. Haitian church members use Pentecostalism to achieve certain practical ends but in ways that converge with the explicit Christian messages of renunciation and redemption. Hence, the anthropological language about social praxis (specifically, the production of community and the ritual expression of collective loss) touches and overlaps with the doctrinal language of moral separationism and Spirit-filled prayer. The original and its translation both point to the same religious activities in nonequivalent but complementary languages.

The ethnographic situation in Guadeloupe drives my theoretical goal: to supplement the neo-Weberian paradigm for Pentecostalism in Latin America and the Caribbean with ideas about cultural translation drawn from Asad 1993 and Benjamin 1968. By contextualizing the appeal of Pentecostalism for transnational Haitians, I seek to connect the objective functions of the religion with church members’ own commitments. That is, I seek out the resonance and points of overlap between an anthropological language about the production of community, on the one hand, and Pentecostal discourse and spiritual practices, on the other. How do Benjamin’s ideas help in this task? Just as Weber warns against privileging the social effects of religion to the exclusion of believers’ own cosmology, Benjamin warns against utterly transforming the meaning of the original text in order to fit the conventions and forms of life inherent in the translator’s language.

According to Benjamin, the task of the translator is to complement the original, and neither reproduce nor replace it. He illustrates this task with the straightforward case of the German word for bread, Brot, and its French translation, pain:
The words *Brot* and *pain* intend the same object, but the modes of intention are not the same. It is owing to these modes that the word *Brot* means something different to a German than the word *pain* to a Frenchman, that these words are not interchangeable for them, that in fact, they strive to exclude each other. As to the intended object, however, the two words mean the very same thing. [Benjamin 1968:74]

For Benjamin, a text has an intended object (what the language is aiming at) as well as a mode of intention (the way that the language creates meaning) (de Man 1986:86). As his simple example shows, the language of the original typically has a different mode of intention from that of the translation, and these two modes may directly conflict (because each mode of intention comes with its own conventions and is embedded in its own form of life). Therefore, the original by necessity undergoes a change through translation, although the intended object remains the same for both. The original and translation simply serve as two ways to comprehend and represent it. As Benjamin (1968:73) puts it, the best translation will "lovingly and in detail" incorporate the original's intention and thereby make both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a larger whole.

Using a model of literary translation for the purpose of ethnographic interpretation, however, requires that I read Benjamin's essay against the grain. His essay addresses problems of literary translation, that is, from text to text. The translation relates to the original as one language to another, not as a linguistic production to some extralinguistic meaning or situation (de Man 1986:81–82). Moreover, the task of literary translation begins only after the original is completed; it constitutes, in Benjamin's words, the afterlife of the original. It revives but also transforms the original, in the same way that subsequent generations reading the same text continually discover new meanings in it. A good translation thus provides the "ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering" of the original (Benjamin 1968:72).

We cannot adopt this formulation wholesale for the anthropological translation of religious commitment, because the "original" is not a text, definitively finished and set to paper at a particular time. Religious commitment involves a set of practices, discourses, and ideologies that people continually renew in the midst of social action and calibrate to changing circumstances. Saying this is not a naive dismissal of the textual preconditions of ethnography. I produced many field notes and transcriptions of tape recordings during my stays in Guadeloupe, and these are certainly embedded in this article as the sermons, prayers, and comments of Haitian church members (cf. Crapanzano 1986:51). The relation between field notes and journal article counts as a translation in the literary sense, that is, of one text to another. Out of this act of translation emerge the jointly authored constructions and relatively smooth dialogues that, once inscribed by the fieldworker, have a way of becoming transparent in the final ethnographic book or article (Tedlock 1995:274 ff.; Wolf 1992). However, the analytic translation of Pentecostal doctrine and practice into the frameworks and conceptual language of anthropology is a different process. It is not a matter of setting a series of texts side by side. It instead assumes an extralinguistic referent: the experience of displacement and loss that people fluent in one or the other language—that is, doctrinal or anthropological—will articulate through the genres and conventions that they know. The anthropological translation of Pentecostalism presented here is the outcome of another, more fundamental precondition of ethnography: granting authority to the subjects of research to indicate the contexts that are relevant to their practice (Englund and Leach 2000).

For these reasons, I have used Benjamin's essay more as a source of ideas than as a strict template. An anthropological translation of Haitian Pentecostalism is not part of the afterlife of the original, because Pentecostal churches continue to develop and produce new rituals and representations. The original and its translation are two partial accounts of the same phenomena. The two languages are coterminous, and they each have complex relations to the same specific transnational processes affecting Haitians in Guadeloupe. Nonetheless, they have different degrees of political power, and as Asad (1993) warns, anthropologists should not let their unequal power trick us into endowing the anthropological translation with final interpretive authority. Here Benjamin's ideas again prove helpful. By necessity, translators fail to find the meaning of the original text. In this sense, the translation is redundant because the original was adequately achieved (Bullock 1987:14). The translation therefore must wrest another kind of meaning from the original but must also acknowledge how different that meaning is and how much of the original it fails to capture.

As Benjamin puts it, "translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (1968:76). The goal is a translation that echoes the original but in an admittedly different language, although one that ideally will complement that of the original. Adapted for anthropologists, this goal is a humble one. At least in comparison with the claims about cultural translation made over the past half century (see others cited in Asad 1993; Gellner 1970; Pocock 1961). Translation of this sort fails by definition to reproduce what is most significant for those who participate in the "original" discourse and practices. In particular, I have argued here that by joining Pentecostal churches, Haitians in Guadeloupe gain some discursive power over their world, devise effective forms of mobility and collective defense within it, and forgo strategies that are likely to fail. This is a legitimate translation in Benjamin's sense: It aims...
at the religion’s doctrines and worship activities, and it tries to find an echo in current scholarly notions about the production of community in marginalized transnational enclaves. However, it does not ratify what Pentecostals consider themselves to have achieved: to become free of sin and approach the Spirit. For these Pentecostals, and others throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the chief conflict lies not with an oppressive social system, but with “the world” and “the devil” (Westmeier 1999:24–25). The anthropological echo privileges the former conflict, and it therefore moves in an entirely different direction than the original. Its virtue, however, is that it does not ignore or flatly contradict the Pentecostals’ convictions about moral separatism and the way the Spirit operates. It takes seriously the explicit meanings of Pentecostalism that have animated new epistemic communities (Rudolph 1997) in Haiti, the Haitian diaspora, and elsewhere, although it speaks of communities in different terms altogether.

Notes

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1. Field research was carried out from May to September, 1994, and May to August, 1996. All interviews were conducted by the author without interpreters in French, Haitian Creole, or Guadeloupean Creole.

2. Weber’s use of the word Selbstaufhiebung illustrates the conceptual problem. The root verb aufhieben means to lift to a higher level, to supercede, but also to keep or retain. The concept is well illustrated by the Hegelian dialectic, as the thesis and its antithesis are both retained in, but superceded by, the synthesis. Weber’s notion that historical consequences supercede the intentions of actors, thus, does not imply that their intentions become irrelevant. They are instead retained and transformed through the operation of new institutions and historical trends. (I am grateful to Dr. Herbert A. Arnold of Wesleyan University for this insight.)

3. Benjamin’s commitment to a Gnostic and sacred view of language inevitably limits his influence in anthropology. His provocative call to translators to seek not an accurate imitation but, rather, a resonance with the original derives from his belief that a universal language exists hidden in the multiplicity of spoken tongues. As a translator, Benjamin would allow the source language to penetrate and modify his own (Steiner 1998:67), but not in order to achieve a more flexible or egalitarian interpretation. Benjamin’s programmatic notion of translation aims instead at recovering the singular, pure, and primal language that directly partakes of the essence of things (Steiner 1998:51 ff.). Of course, anthropologists do not share the same Gnostic goal. Nonetheless, Benjamin’s essay offers a new way of thinking about how meanings shift between the original and its translation, for example, between the actor’s formulation and the social theorist’s, or between indigenous discourse and ethnographic interpretation.

4. This derogatory image does not address job competition. In contrast to current anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States, I have never heard Guadeloupeans complain that Haitians steal jobs from them. Even people who criticize the Haitian presence openly admit that Haitians hold jobs that Guadeloupeans would never take.

5. This stereotype of Haitians has historically deeper origins in Guadeloupeans’ ambivalence about their own dual African and French inheritance. Haitians occupy the “savage slot” in the fractured culture of the island (cf. Trouillot 1991): They are an exemplar of Africanness that many Guadeloupeans both despise and envy, and, hence, a potent symbol in the highly charged discourse over Guadeloupean national identity (see Flage 1982; Hurbon 1983; Machire 1996). This symbolism also seeps into ordinary social interactions. I was told several times by Haitian friends that local residents do not feel comfortable interacting with them because they know that Haiti is independent, whereas Guadeloupe is forever tied to France. Alongside these pejorative stereotypes, however, Guadeloupeans also invoke some positive images of Haitians. For instance, they consider Haitians more dependable workers than Dominicans and less likely to use drugs. Moreover, many Guadeloupeans are connoisseurs of Haitian popular music and attend concerts by visiting Haitian bands.


7. The absence of complaints might also reflect the micropolitics of fieldwork. Women may not have voiced their criticisms to me, given my status as a white outsider, a man, and, even more importantly, an unmarried man. Of all my personal characteristics, the most awkward, and easily the prime source of suspicion among people was my status as an unmarried man who had the means and was the appropriate age (mid-thirties) for marriage. Although this probably dissuaded some women from speaking to me, it testifies to the sacred significance of domestic obligations that apply, after all, to men as well as women. The few complaints church members directed at me indexed not my sex but my nationality. A handful of people routinely complained about the mismanagement or incompetence of particular pastors, deacons, and other church leaders. They often asked whether my home church could support an offshoot in Guadeloupe. In doing so, they were repeating the pragmatic search for missionary interest and material support that led to the founding of the Haitian Pentecostal churches in Guadeloupe in the first place.

8. The Church of God of Prophecy in Pointe-à-Pitre holds five services a week, and they vary in length from 45 minutes (on weekday evenings) to over two hours (on Sunday mornings). The revival services held periodically throughout the year take place every evening for seven straight days, and each service can last three hours.

9. The lyrics for almost all songs at the Church of God of Prophecy are printed in the hymnal Chants d’Esperance, a compilation of over eight hundred hymns and choruses widely used in Protestant churches throughout Haiti and the diaspora. This bilingual (French and Haitian Creole) hymnal itself attests to the hybrid origins of Haitian Pentecostalism. One section features songs composed by Haitian evangelicals. Another section lists the corresponding English
melodies for every Creole entry. In yet another section, some hymns are cross-referenced to the French Chants de la Ligue pour la Lecture de la Bible [Songs of the League for Bible Reading] and others to U.S. evangelical hymnals such as Maranatha Gospel Choruses and Old Fashioned Revival Hour Songs.

10. A full explanation lies beyond the scope of my article. For the history of Pentecostalism in Haiti, see Conway 1978, and in Jamaica, see Austin-Broos 1997 and Wedenoja 1978. Glazier 1980 and Martin 1990:133 ff. offer useful case studies and comparative frameworks for the growth of Pentecostalism in the Caribbean.

11. Ethnographic interpretation, therefore, must address not only the language and performances of Pentecostalism but also the social transactions conducted as part of ordinary congregational life. A full treatment of the organizational advantages of Haitian churches in Guadeloupe lies beyond the scope of this article, although I note the following. All of the Haitian churches in Pointe-à-Pitre are legally registered at the prefecture in accordance with the French law governing civil associations (the Law of 1901) (see Agulhon 1993). Membership in a state-registered church provides migrants with their only cushion against restrictive French immigration policies and the legal machinery of deportation. (Church members often complain that the Haitian consulate has neither the personnel nor the political will to support undocumented Haitian nationals.) Immigration police are barred from entering officially registered churches. Moreover, Haitian pastors have the right to visit church members who wait in prison before deportation. Besides boosting morale, such visits answer practical needs, because people picked up by immigration police are not allowed to return home to collect their belongings or papers. Haitian Pentecostal churches also provide a supple network for the circulation of people, money, commodities, and communications throughout the Haitian diaspora. The Church of God of Prophecy sends members back and forth to affiliated churches in Haiti and the United States (there are seven congregations in Miami, six in New York, and two in Boston), and they serve as an important conduit for money, letters, cassette tapes, and so on. The impasse in Haitian politics in the summer of 1994 made this especially clear. The intensified embargo voted by the UN Security Council in June 1993 had drastically reduced the number of flights into and out of Haiti and the operation of cash transfer services. At the time when migrants’ families needed money the most, it was hardest to send it to them, and pastors become the only available carriers.

12. My argument responds to the call of Englund and Leach (2000) for ethnographic studies that do not grant ultimate analytic power to Western academic metanarratives of modernity. I accept a final and unbridgeable difference between how I, as an ethnographer, and L. as a church member, would specify the sources of Pentecostalism’s appeal. However, the difference is not between my translocal discourse (about the wider context of rupture and discontinuity) and the congregant’s local discourse, restricted to the immediate effects of global forces as they filter downward. Both the ethnographic and the faithful viewpoints toward Haitian Pentecostalism situate the religion in the context of migrants’ passage from Haiti into Guadeloupe and the racism and stigma they encounter there. The difference lies in which particular wider context one chooses in order to draw meaning from dislocation. I interpret the dislocation in terms of the history of the Haitian diaspora and the social uses of Pentecostalism throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Pentecostals interpret the dislocation in terms of the cosmic history of God’s relation to humans and the ideal life course of repentance, forgiveness, and sanctification. In both cases, however, we authorize our accounts by considering the “wider context,” that is, shifting the scale of explanation from the visible to the invisible, the local to the overarching, and the immediate to the long-term.
Bullock, Marcus Paul

Burdick, John

Caplan, Lionel

Catanese, Anthony V.

Chants d'espérance

Comaroff, Jean

Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff

Comhaire-Sylvain, S.

Conkin, Paul K.

Conway, Frederick

Cox, Harvey

Crapanzano, Vincent


Crews, Mickey

Dayton, Donald

de Man, Paul

Desmangles, Leslie G.

Ellingsen, Mark

Englund, Harri, and James Leach

Hagie, Albert

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia, and David Stoll

Gellner, Ernest

Glazier, Stephen D.

Glick-Schiller, Nina, Josh De Wind, Marie Lucie Brutus, Carroll Charles, Georges Fouren, and Louis Thomas

Glick-Schiller, Nina, and Georges Fouren

Grimes, Ronald L.

Hawley, John Stratton

Hedlige, Dick

Hefner, Robert W.


Hollenweger, Walter J.

Hurbon, Laënnec


Laguerrre, Michel


Lalive d’Epinal, Christian

Lancaster, Roger N.

Léon, Luis
Lowenthal, Ira P.

MacLester, Elizabeth

Metraux, Alfred

Naficy, Hamid

Nordbeck, Elizabeth C.

Peshkin, Alan

Pocock, David F.

Richman, Karen

Romain, Charles- Poisset

Rosaldo, Renato

Roseberry, Ivan

Rudolph, Susan Hoeber

Steiner, George

Stepick, Alex

Stoll, David

Stone, James

Synan, Vinson

Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja

Tedlock, Dennis

Toulis, Nicole Rodriguez

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph

Turner, Victor

Weber, Max

Wedenoja, William

Wessels, Roland

Westmeier, Karl- Wilhelm

Willems, Emilio

Wolf, Margery

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