3. *The Repatriation of Samuel Ajayi Crowther*

Between 1807 and 1863, as they were about to begin the dreaded transatlantic voyage to the Americas, over fifty thousand African captives saw their vessels fired upon by the British Navy, then made to reverse sail, and finally forced to discharge every soul, slave or free, at Freetown, Sierra Leone. Hungry, dirty, and undoubtedly traumatized in mind and body, these slaves must have been bewildered at their first sight of the fledgling colonial capital. Not long after, they must have become grimly resigned when they found themselves again herded by men with whips into a European dwelling, this one dubbed "the King's Yard" by their new captors.[1] (Ironically, by 1818 the gate leading into "the King's Yard" would bear a plaque reading "Royal Hospital and Asylum for Africans Rescued from Slavery by British Valour and Philanthropy."[2]) Supplied with food, water, and rudimentary medical care, these so-called recaptives might have had to wait for days, weeks, and even months until the resident Court of Mixed Commission could be convened to decide whether the Africans had been illegally seized for transport via slave ships to the Americas. Each time the court found in favor of a group of incarcerated Africans, the Royal Navy seamen who had made their interception received their share of the prize money, while the "liberated Africans" were sent off to join others of their number scattered among settlements controlled by the Church Missionary Society (CMS).[3] Plied as they were by white missionaries in an entirely alien setting and far removed from their original homelands, many of these traumatized ex-slaves converted to Christianity and otherwise attempted to integrate themselves into the British

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colonial society of Sierra Leone. Not surprisingly, many remained haunted by the reality of their unwished-for exile, a situation magnified by the differences in language, culture, and history among them and between them and the indigenous ethnic groups who had lived in Sierra Leone long before the British arrived. And newly arrived ex-slaves were in a class by themselves when compared to the Jamaican Maroons, Afro-Britons, and Nova Scotian Blacks who made up the rest of the colony's settler population.[4]

Each arriving group of ex-slaves went through the same experience, settling afterward in Christian-run villages provided by the CMS.[5] Each village was staffed with its own Protestant missionary, who exposed the former slaves to the English language, the mysteries of Christianity, and new patterns of morality governing marriage and rules of conduct for men and women. Though everyone was offered the chance to learn to read and write, former slave men were encouraged to train as farmers or artisans, while women were steered toward the predictable European gender role of housewifery, all in the belief that former slaves would "yield like wax to any impression."[6] This was far from true, since many members of ethnic groups with sufficient numbers (such as the Yoruba) maintained their native languages as well as particular gendered indigenous practices, despite the integration of European cultural elements.

Eventually, in 1839, small groups of these "liberated" Africans set into motion a new dispersal, this time in a voluntary attempt to "return" to their places of origin, beginning first with visits to infamous slave-trading ports such as Badagry, Whydah, and Lagos and then moving increasingly deeper into the Nigerian hinterland.[7] Whereas in Sierra Leone they had been recognized as a distinct outsider class, on arriving at Niger Delta port cities, they heard themselves referred to by local people as the *Saro*, a term derived from the elision of the words *Sierra Leonean*. Ironically assigned an outsider status that seemed to challenge their claim to a preslavery identity, the Saro found integration within some urban centers problematic, in part because residents thought the migrants were simply too much like Europeans.[8] To add further complications, these Saro welcomed the protection of the British, especially the presence of CMS missionaries, who had provided them shelter in Sierra Leone. This seeming embrace of British expansion and British values would ironically create the needed foothold for the European colonial conquest that would be completed by the end of the nineteenth century. And yet, inasmuch as these former slaves were the direct agents of empire, their Christianized, English-speaking children and grandchildren were in the forefront of early West African nationalist movements. Thus, the Saro are often credited as being protonationalists and among the early founders of modern Nigeria.

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Familiar enough to Africanists, the nineteenth-century Saro migration is rarely, if ever, considered by scholars of African American studies, even though it fits the general definition of diaspora subjectivity: "to see oneself in diaspora is to imagine oneself outside a territory, part of a population exiled from a homeland."[9] Certainly, since the Atlantic slave trade's dislocation of millions of Africans from one continental land mass to another exemplifies this definition in stark and dramatic ways, the formation and expression of African diasporic identity would logically seem to take shape in the Americas. Scholars have noted the powerful influence of African "retentions" on Black American art, language, religion, folk culture, and music; however, they argue, beyond these cultural imprints, Africa as knowable homeland has by necessity been replaced by the myth of Mother Africa, the symbol of shared origins and shared inspiration, "the great aporia which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it . . . meaning."[10] Whether as a spiritual rallying cry or as a collective of post–World War II nations rising out of colonialism, when Africa does achieve scholarly attention in African American studies, it is usually in tracing the lineaments of twentieth-century Pan-Africanist thought and activism.[11]

And yet, events such as the Saro migration have prompted many Africanists, including the anthropologist J. Lorand Matory, to ask why diasporas are studied as if time has stopped in the homeland. Indeed, as Charles Piot, another Africanist and anthropologist, has argued, what new perspective might be gained if we saw the continent not as the "provider of raw materials" (namely, "bodies and cultural templates/origins"), but "as itself diasporic"? Recognizing the Middle Passage as coeval with enforced migrations on a similar, if not larger, scale on the continent, Piot recalls that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, countless individuals were "captured and displaced to other centralized polities within Africa itself," a trajectory exemplified by the early nineteenth-century "liberated" African experience.[12] According to Richard Roberts, another anthropologist working on Africa, we cannot regard the patterns and effects of dispersal in both the New World and Africa as identical, simply because of their "functional similarities." However, any attempt to bring Africa into clearer, coeval focus requires us to "confront the fiction of *the* diaspora as a coherent unit of analysis" and instead pay more attention to the nature and relationships among a multiplicity of African diasporas.[13] In light of these arguments, far from being an incident properly concerning only scholars of colonial Africa, the Saro migration speaks to the intertwined nature of the Atlantic slave trade and the internal African slave trade, while also underscoring alternate experiences of dispersal and exile not encompassed by the Middle Passage. Thus, attention to the Saro migration not only "return[s] Africa to the

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diaspora" but also offers an additional model for thinking about African diasporic travel in the nineteenth century, with respect to early "return" migration schemes and the meanings such schemes accrued.[14] Again, it is impossible to think about diasporic travel in this period without taking into account the differences made by gendered experience, by intraracial complexities, by location, and, of course, by imperial expansion.

In general, those who study the phenomenon of dispersal have focused on contemporary manifestations, where modern diasporic subjects evoke return only in an idealized sense.[15] In the context of African American studies, enduring cultural transformation born of initial dispersal is almost always applied to the twentieth- and twenty-first-century African diaspora in the Americas, where return has largely been an imaginative gesture. This is not surprising, since literal attempts to recross the Atlantic for the purposes of finding "home" were part of an earlier pattern of diasporic thought and often ended in failure. If we look outside the Anglophone Americas, however, in these early periods, African-born ex-slaves from Brazil and Cuba were able to "return" to Sierra Leone and to principal cities on the Nigerian coast and integrate themselves within areas that were rapidly being colonized by Europeans.[16] Meanwhile, small groups of West Indians were recruited by European missionaries (for example, the CMS and a Lutheran mission in Switzerland) to establish a Christian community on the coast of what is now Ghana.[17] As with the Saro, then, these transatlantic migrants to West Africa were moving "home" to the land of their ancestors or indeed their birth, even as they were moving from one colonial space (the West Indies) to another, where both the cultural practices of the colonizer and the local structures of European control mirrored what they had left behind in the Americas. In the United States context, emigration projects ranged from Paul Cuffee's attempt to transport New England Blacks to Sierra Leone in the early 1800s, to Black American participation in the founding of Liberia by the American Colonization Society in the early nineteenth century, to the rise of Marcus Garvey's 1920s Universal Negro Improvement Association and his unfulfilled promise to move Black migrants to Liberia on steamers owned by association members. Short-lived or unachieved, such projects failed to attract large numbers of migrants, since most Blacks were focused on securing their rights as American citizens. For those who attempted an African migration, the search for "home" quickly devolved into a real-life confrontation with peoples who had supposedly alien cultures, customs, and languages. In addition, the climate, foods, and ecosystems were unfamiliar, and, above all, there were deadly diseases. In the case of nineteenth-century Liberia, large numbers of American settlers were simply devastated upon arrival, having contracted malaria or some other tropical

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fever while they were still waiting to disembark, causing them to quite literally die upon arrival. On the other hand, those Americo-Liberians who did survive were determined to impose upon local peoples—sometimes through violence—the principles of Western "civilization," all in the name of racial progress.[18]

Yet, while they may have had dubious success in West Africa, especially in the United States and the Anglophone Caribbean these repatriation efforts were extremely important for several reasons. First, though it was always seen as controversial by most US Blacks, emigration to Africa offered a highly visible example of self-determination in the face of racism and disenfranchisement. Second, as in the case of the founding of Liberia and the Garvey movement, emigration was politically galvanizing for a variety of New World Black communities, thereby creating the classic "network among [exiled] compatriots" usually imagined to be a central feature of diasporic identity formation. Third, despite the almost total disenfranchisement of US Blacks up until the middle of the twentieth century, the organizational requirements for supporting (or opposing) repatriation movements enabled new forms of activism among Black men and women.[19] Certainly, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the topic of repatriation was routinely referenced in early African American novels and periodical literature, having become a staple feature in discussions of racial destiny and national identity.[20] Thus, early repatriation movements certainly had profound cultural effects in North America itself, even if not reflected in actual emigrant numbers.[21]

Though the return migration of the Saro intersected with a number of Black migrations from the Americas, the southeastern dispersal of Sierra Leone's so-called liberated Africans offers a very different example of diasporic repatriation and its consequences. Unlike North American or West Indian Blacks, the Saro were not aliens to the topography and climate of West Africa. Also, many had retained or were at least familiar with the languages and cultural frameworks of their preslavery lives. A few were even successfully reunited with lost friends and relatives. Still, given the inevitable changes wrought by prolonged exile and acculturation in Sierra Leone, we cannot presume that Saro migrants were simply reeled homeward to the Niger Valley by an unbreakable cultural lifeline. Rather, complex intraracial, interethnic experiences of affiliation and disaffiliation undoubtedly figured into their experience of repatriation. This would have been occasioned initially by the fact that in many parts of Africa, to quote Charles Piot again, "every village . . . was touched, and most remade, by their encounter with slave raiders and expanding kingdoms."[22] Though the Saro encompassed a Yoruba majority, their numbers included other ethnicities, including the Hausa, Nupe, and Egba. Before captivity, they had practiced

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indigenous forms of religion or had been converts to Islam.[23] As an initially destitute and displaced population in Sierra Leone, they were expected to abide by European notions of literacy, religion, and dress, not only by the British but also by the immigrants of African descent from Britain, Canada, and the West Indies. Thus, as nineteenth-century West Africans, they were a culturally heterogeneous group in a region of other culturally heterogeneous groups. Many of these ex-slaves had been displaced from community to community as prisoners of war, slaves, and refugees—even as slave traders themselves. Still, despite barriers of language and culture, and whatever their occupations before enslavement, by 1839 evolving local conditions had enabled a number of ex-slaves and their descendants to become merchants. Additionally, as they became Christianized they served as cultural brokers between Europeans and local peoples.[24] Nor did these ties to Sierra Leone diminish when members of this community set off for what is now modern Nigeria. Even though some migrants calculated that the move to Nigeria would afford greater financial opportunities, they left behind neither Sierra Leone nor the European influences they had absorbed.

In addition to the challenge of working out their relationship with other Africans, beyond Sierra Leone the Saro—that is, the Sierra Leone migrants—crossed paths with Cuban and Brazilian Blacks who had settled in urban areas in the Niger Valley. This New World group relocated from the Caribbean and South America at different points throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, among the earliest wave of Brazilian ex-slave migrants to Nigeria were some who had been born in or were closely identified with the Yoruba, and they vied with the Saro for economic opportunities in the places where they settled. As Matory has argued, these migrants from the Americas worked in concert with the Saro in commercial centers such as Lagos to create what is ironically known today as "traditional" Yoruba culture:

> What came to be classified as Yorùbá tradition fed on cultural precedents in the hinterland of Lagos, but its overall name, shape, contents, standards of membership, meaning, means of transmission, and relative prestige would have been radically different—if they had come into existence at all—were it not for the intervention of a set of diasporic financial, professional, and ideological interests that converged on the West African coast. Returnees [from Sierra Leone and the Americas] converged on Lagos during the nineteenth century and not only composed a novel African ethnic identity, but through a literate and politicized struggle, guaranteed that it would be respected in a unique way by generations of students of Africa and its diaspora.[25]

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Consequently, as Matory points out, the impetus for early Nigerian nationalism arose as a result of broadly diasporic influences, influences which both shaped and were shaped by the Saro themselves. Because of the received myths held by many of African descent about African cultural "authenticity," these nineteenth-century forms of African hybridity are not always taken into account, such that primarily Black subjects from the Americas have come to be associated with the cultural hybridity of diaspora.

Still, even as Africanists have begun to argue persuasively that "the boundaries of 'African history'" must "include the history of Africans in the Diaspora" as well as the history of diaspora within Africa, a problem persists in the treatment of nineteenth-century return as primarily a discursive phenomenon shaping the formation and expression of Black identities of dispersal in the Americas.[26] Separate from their literal act of migration, mission-educated individuals among the Saro migrants to Nigeria would also have utilized particular rhetorical strategies to create and recreate continuously not only themselves and their histories but also their interpretation of the social and historical worlds in which they circulated. As the Saro made their mark on the cultural landscape of West Africa, such self-creations would have been necessary for migrants to articulate and resolve the confusion and discomfort inherent in their search for home. But how do we identify the kinds of texts Saro migrants employed to grapple with the meaning of their return? As Karin Barber reminds us, once they learned European forms of literacy, colonial Africans across the continent produced letters and diaries, as well as local newspaper columns and essays on religion, gender roles, art and music criticism, fiction, and even gossip—and the Saro were no different.[27] Much of this writing emerged as individual Saro related their trials and tribulations to sympathetic missionaries and colonial officials or as they went about their business as merchants, teachers, and catechists attached to various European missionary societies. Also, once they began to constitute a new economic and cultural class in West Africa, many individuals felt the need to publicly articulate an emerging personal and community identity. Generally seen as the seeds of a modern West African literary tradition, their texts have been crucial to historians working on nineteenth-century Sierra Leone, West African politics, the internal slave trade, and European colonialism.[28] If we accept the notion that nineteenth-century West Africa was as much a site of diaspora as the Americas, how would Saro writers have articulated both their unique African hybridity and their conditions of mobility, using genres originally designed to create and maintain decidedly European perspectives? How might gender have influenced not only day-to-day perspectives among the migrant authors but also their liter-

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ary construction of persona, their narrative strategies, their choice of form, and their conceptualization of an audience? Since gender is both a marker of social identity and a widely utilized trope for the articulation of political relationships within same-sex groups, between and among classes, races, and ethnicities, and between national and regional entities, how would the language of gender have informed the representation of intra and interracial relationships created by the act of return and any written commentary on it? At the same time, how would the language of gender have affected the way in which inevitably nostalgic concepts of return, home, and memory were figured rhetorically in Saro texts?

Unquestionably, the most textually prolific Saro of this period—and certainly the most famous—was Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1808?–1891), a former slave who, after being taken to Sierra Leone by the Royal Navy, had a long and distinguished career with the CMS, eventually becoming the Anglican bishop of West Africa (figure 3.1). Born in a Yoruba village to a family of weavers, Ajayi was a teenager in 1821 when he experienced the breakup of his family and the complete destruction of his village by Fulani Muslims, who had come to kidnap slaves. Once in captivity, Crowther circulated from master to master until he was loaded onto a Portuguese ship bound for Brazil. After the Royal Navy intercepted his ship and landed everyone on board at Freetown, Crowther underwent his own "King's Yard" experience, until missionaries assigned him the trade of carpentry and attached him to the household of the Reverend James Wright, a former slave and Wesleyan convert who had risen in the missionary ranks. (The two seemed to have been a poor fit, and Crowther was later reassigned to an Anglican household.[29]) For the most part, after conversion he was educated by the CMS, and as was the case with so many of his peers, he was placed at the bottom of the mission hierarchy in the role of catechist and interpreter. Things changed when he proved indispensable on the ill-fated 1841 British Niger expedition, when almost two-thirds of the white members died from tropical fever. Always obedient both to his superiors and to the goals of the expedition, Crowther ministered to dying sailors, negotiated patiently with local Africans for wood and other supplies, and scrupulously recorded his impressions of the people he met and their attitudes toward slavery and the possibility of establishing a CMS mission at some point in the future. Impressed by his intelligence, religiosity, and skills as a mediator, the CMS supported Crowther's ordination as an Anglican minister in 1843. At the same time, his widespread fame as both a mission success story and an extremely articulate advocate for abolition occasioned a private audience with Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and Lord Palmerston in 1851.

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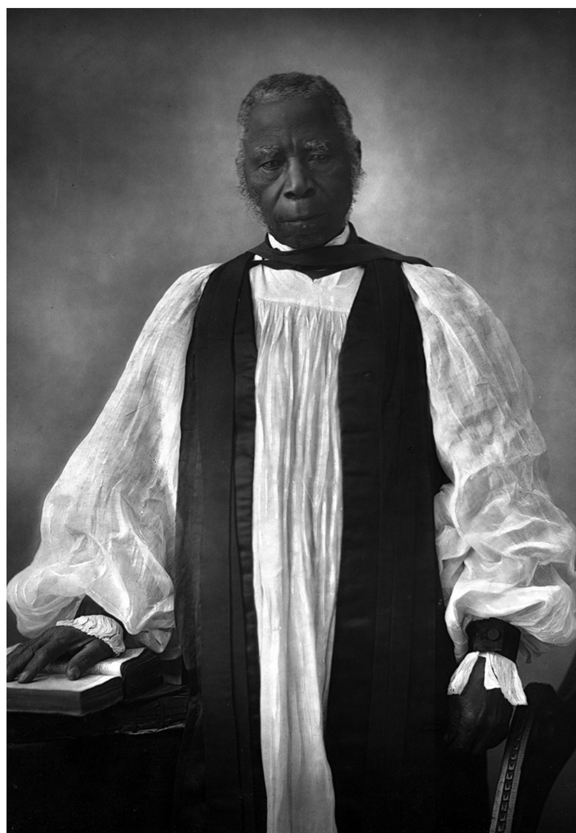

FIGURE 3.1. Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1890, just a year before his death. (National Portrait Gallery, UK)

Some nineteen years later, Crowther rose to become the first Black bishop of West Africa, and in that capacity he worked hard to establish and nurture an independent, indigenous African church, even if at times this meant being in opposition to CMS officials in London. Still, throughout a career that spanned over sixty years, Crowther continued to represent the interests of the CMS on exploratory expeditions into the West African interior. In conjunction with his work as missionary and explorer, he achieved a reputation as one of the leading nineteenth-century scholars of African languages. In 1880, his contributions as an explorer earned him a gold watch and a lecture invitation from the Royal Geographical Society. As the epitome of the cultural broker, Crowther appeared to be the perfect crosser of boundaries. Indeed, the religious studies scholar

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Lamin Sanneh has called Crowther "the ideal 'new man,'" one "deeply enough grounded in the old Africa to discern what its authentic values were and yet sufficiently molded by the new forces to be a credible and effective guide."[30]

Though Crowther never expressed a personal desire to leave Sierra Leone in search of his old homeland, as a CMS missionary he was a key figure in the expansion of Christianity throughout the Niger Valley. And, of course, this expansion was occasioned in part by the migration of the Saro and their vigorous encouragement of Christian mission. By the 1850s, Crowther and his family had moved from Sierra Leone to the Niger Valley in an effort to provide religious support to Saro migrants. As a result, Crowther was both a missionary and a Saro "returnee": while the lay migrants worked to make money and expand trading networks, Crowther worked to build new congregations and recruit more Africans for a native pastorate. He also used the opportunity to report on and promote abolition of the internal African slave trade and, of course, effect the Christian conversion of local peoples. Ironically, his religious duties required Crowther to revisit the locales where he himself had endured slavery. Indeed, he was among the few Saro who reunited with lost family members, in his case his mother and a number of siblings. Despite these reconnections, as with his fellow Saro, Crowther had no interest in submerging himself in preslavery religious frameworks. Rather, he hoped to transform indigenous "heathens" with Christianity and European notions of literacy, to supplant traditional clothing with Western dresses and suits, and to replace inland slave trading with the production and sale of agricultural raw materials such as cotton and palm oil—in other words, the "three Cs" (Christianity, civilization, and commerce). Clearly, as with the first Saro who described ambitious plans to reshape what they referred to in an 1839 petition to Queen Victoria as "our Land," Crowther set out for a Niger Valley world which he and other ex-slaves from Sierra Leone were determined to reinvent.[31] Not surprisingly, then, virtually all of Crowther's letters, journals, and narratives, as well as his work as a translator, were shaped by his experiences as a former slave, as a missionary participant in and a witness to the Saro migration, and as a highly influential figure in the new cultural and political world that was inevitably cocreated by slavery, repatriation, colonialism, and internecine conflict among unconverted West African ethnic groups.

In light of such a remarkable life, how do we integrate a gendered analysis of Crowther as both writer and African diasporic subject? The role of missionary was a male category and required rigidly prescribed forms of letter writing, journal keeping, and, in the context of expeditions, ethnographic travel writing. Certainly, first as wives and daughters and then later in the nineteenth century as wage-earning teachers, European women were allowed to operate

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as missionaries in the field, and therefore some of them maintained individual correspondence with the CMS Parent Committee. However, they are sparsely represented in the nineteenth-century portion of the archive, their letters and narratives often embedded within the papers of male relatives or mission superiors, further underscoring the close association between missionary writing and the construction of a range of masculine subjectivities under colonialism. Mary Louise Pratt and others have convincingly argued that as the nineteenth century wore on, Anglo-European expedition narratives were crucial ingredients in constructing an imperial masculinity by enforcing a contrast between the "effeminate" native and the manly explorer. At the same time, since the language of gender helps to articulate difference in a variety of social contexts, such a narrative form encouraged white writers and their readers to envision imperial conquest via the representation of a dangerously chaotic and fecund African landscape, requiring the order and discipline of colonialism in the form of the plow, the rule of (European) law, and the establishment of European-style trade.[32] What forms of African diasporic masculinity would such literary conditions have enabled or foreclosed for Crowther, who in the mission field took on what seemed, at least, to be roles equal to those of his European colleagues? What would it have meant for Crowther to create meaning for his "return" journey, within a textual framework specifically designed to articulate white male arrival in West Africa?

These issues become even more complicated when we remember that, in addition to the white men in whose company he traveled and the indigenous Africans he encountered, Crowther would have come across Black men from Britain and the Americas, some of whom were missionary agents from other Christian denominations vying for influence in the region. Recent methodologies for gender analysis provided by Africanists Andrea Cornwall, Nancy Lindisfarne, Lisa Lindsay, and Stephan Miescher collectively suggest that in colonial contexts, African men who stood at the intersection of social and cultural change would have been presented with a range of heterogeneous African and European masculine models, both Christian and non-Christian, within their immediate social world.[33] Depending on the politics of cultural context and change, these models might themselves have been flexible and open-ended. In light of this formulation, Crowther's self-construction both within the texts he contributed to the CMS archive and within the tradition of the expedition narrative would have occurred against a mosaic of Black and white, indigenous, European, and Black American models of masculinity. Since their various roles as soldiers, prisoners, traders, peasants, chiefs, religious leaders, adventurers, settlers, colonial officials, and missionaries guaranteed that Africans, Black Americans,

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and white Europeans would interact on various levels, we should think in terms of permeable and heterogeneous West African and European cultures in transition, cultures continually being reshaped by the demands of religious change, political upheaval, the Atlantic and internal African slave trades, and European colonialism. We might then augment the concept of multiple masculinities by recognizing how the models Crowther would have encountered come to be in cross-cultural dialogue in the first place, and how that dialogue reveals the exigencies of dispersal and return.

CROWTHER AND SARO HYBRIDITY

Though Sierra Leone's liberated Africans never crossed the Atlantic Ocean, their lives were still transformed by the dramatic rupture of enslavement. Even before they were sold into slavery and herded onto ships, many lived through a major political crisis that had reverberated throughout the region starting at the end of eighteenth and continuing into the nineteenth century. Until the early 1800s, a variety of West African ethnicities were subject to the administration of the centuries-old Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo. In 1789, with the death of the *Alafin*, a central figure in the Kingdom of Oyo's administration, the bitter rivalries for leadership among senior chiefs led to civil war and thereby the creation of countless refugees and prisoners of war, many of whom ended up as slaves—either circulating in the mainland slave trade or headed for the slave ships of the Atlantic coast. One of the provisions of Britain's abolition of the transatlantic slave trade was the stationing of Royal Navy vessels along the northwestern coast of Africa, with orders to intercept all vessels deemed to be slavers. As the primary British port on the West African seacoast, Freetown became the disembarkation point for the ex-slaves. Faced with the arrival of hundreds of ex-slaves a year, the British worked with missionary societies to streamline what they all assumed to be a necessary "Europeanization" to transform the newly liberated into a civilizing force for Africa.

Despite the missionaries' assumption that they were helpless victims of slavery, African ex-slaves refused to be patronized, even as some West Indians, Black Nova Scotians, and Afro-British settler groups looked down on them as barbarians. Modern-day historians have lauded the unique hybridity of what has been called Sierra Leone's *krio* identity, a term used to describe the rich and presumably harmonious mélange of cultures that evolved after the establishment of the colony at the end of the eighteenth century.[34] However, by the early 1800s, the hierarchical social structure within Sierra Leone had sufficiently overdetermined relationships among multiple African diasporic communities

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such that differences in skin color, education, Anglicization, and personal history created substantial rifts, even though among the non-African settlers, migrants had been motivated by the same goals of repatriation. Founded in 1788, Sierra Leone first served as a so-called province of freedom for four hundred or so of Britain's "Black poor," who were considered to have a better chance of advancement in their ancestral home. Then, in 1792, an even larger contingent of Black loyalists who had fought for the British during the American Revolution arrived from Nova Scotia. Unable to return to what was now the United States but unwilling to live in Canada, they had opted to make a new start in Africa. These two communities routinely squabbled with white colonial officials, with each other, and with indigenous peoples such as the Susu, the Temne, and the Mendi. Indeed, the colonists were in a state of open rebellion when, in 1800, over five hundred Jamaican Maroons arrived—relatives of the Maroon descendants Nancy Prince encountered in 1840s Jamaica. As Christopher Fyfe reports, having been lately deported from Jamaica for rebellion, "the Maroons were in good health and spirits," and when recruited by the colony's administrators to help restore peace among the settlers, they were "delighted at the suggestion they stretch their legs in familiar warlike pursuits."[35] Also from the West Indies, a small community of middle-class, often light-skinned and sometimes well-educated Blacks completed this settler portrait. The West Indians had been officially recruited by the British to serve as mid-level officials and clerks, since tropical diseases generally kept the colony's white population low.[36] Thus, the liberated Africans would have experienced Sierra Leone as a loosely coalescing but heterogeneous set of exiled African diasporic communities produced and set into motion by Britain's continuing efforts to create a stable and unified American empire. Without question, there were cultural and political differences among overlapping African diasporic communities, all of which were articulated through the grammar of a hierarchy-bound British colonial system of management.

Ironically, even the Saro's 1839 plan for migration "home" to the Niger Valley had a West Indian connection. In the British Caribbean, 1839 coincided with the end of apprenticeship. No longer bound to their previous owners, two Hausa ex-slaves from Trinidad passed through Freetown en route to the Niger Delta port city of Badagry. So it was in 1839 that three Sierra Leone ex-slaves purchased a ship and set out with sixty-seven passengers on an initial trading voyage, also to Badagry, to scout out possibilities. On their return to Freetown, these "Saro" merchants brought news of tremendous local encouragement and unlimited trade opportunities. The phenomenon of an internal African reverse migration in tandem with the arrival of African ex-slaves from the West Indies

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speaks mightily to the ways in which many of the Saro, only lately rescued from slavery, reimagined themselves as agents within the larger cultural as well as economic space of the Black Atlantic, reminding us of the multiple worlds of experience created by multiple African diasporas. In this context, we might well ask how terms of identification such as *African* and *West Indian*, as well as *Nupe*, *Hausa*, and *Yoruba*, spoke to different aspects of cultural heterogeneity, rather than to a false opposition between "pure" origins and a cultural hybridity born in the hold of a slave ship.

Viewed as "liberated" slaves in Sierra Leone, they soon recreated themselves as the Saro, by the very act of agentive migration. Additionally, they were identified by Nigerian populations to which they had formerly belonged and by their experiences abroad. As one would expect, these population shifts created numerous possibilities for cultural innovation, but also a variety of alliances and disidentifications. For instance, in contrast to the Saro, Brazilian ex-slave migrants were commonly referred to as the "Amaro," or "those who have been away from home." "Through time," reports historian Jean Kopytoff, the moniker *Saro* "acquired . . . other connotations, some derogatory, as, for example 'mingy,' or 'stingy.'"[37] Adding yet more texture to this pattern, Femi J. Kolapo has recently suggested that such rejections in large urban areas were not to be found within smaller rural communities. Rather, "the minute, daily, local, and short-run" encounters between these locals and Christian Saro migrants sometimes evidenced "a radical variation to the general pattern of conflict." Thus, depending on the local histories of stability or flux, many returnees—even culturally chauvinistic Saro migrants determined to convert their heathen compatriots—were accepted "within preexisting sociological and political frameworks. These were constructs already in use to integrate the different diasporic immigrants or settler groups (with their distinct cultural, religious, and political experiences) [especially] into young settlements."[38] Depending on where they chose to go, then, the Saro might have had a range of experiences that would have affected their "return."

As a "liberated" African, Crowther chose the missionary path instead of pursuing a trade or becoming a merchant. Once CMS officials witnessed his great intelligence and considerable linguistic skills, he was immediately maintained at the expense of the society in its Christian Institution near Freetown (later Fourah Bay College). This blossoming association with the CMS opened up an entirely different community for Crowther, one that was egalitarian under God, with no regard (at least in theory) for color or conditions of birth. Not surprisingly, Crowther married within the liberated African community, eventually dividing his time between his religious studies and raising a large family with

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his wife Susan. Still, though he was ever devoted to mission work and CMS authority, we should not assume that Crowther had simply discarded the cultural frames that many Yoruba ex-slaves in the colony managed to preserve. He was still fluent in his native language, and as his later translations of Yoruba proverbs demonstrate, he maintained a lifelong interest in Yoruba oral culture. Also, while he was committed to the Christian conversion of Africans, he understood that he had to approach African Muslims with respect, since Islam was well established regionally.[39] This sense of cultural flexibility emerged in other areas, as well. For instance, though he encouraged Christian marriage, Crowther was less distressed by polygamy than were some of his white colleagues. Also, in 1859, the CMS learned what was to them the surprising fact that his wife, Susan, regularly engaged in trading. Since such practices were forbidden among CMS missionaries, she was required to stop her activities. However, as reported by historian T. E. Yates, in an 1861 letter Crowther "assured [the CMS] that Mrs. Crowther had never kept a store, had agreed not to sell cotton or palm oil for profit, but did not 'hypocritically bind herself not to sell at all.'"[40] Traditionally, one of the ways in which West African women accrued assets while maintaining and consolidating their social agency was through the trade of agricultural and household goods. This practice did not stop once female slaves from the Niger Valley were set free in Sierra Leone. As a liberated African herself, Susan Crowther seemed not to have been conflicted about integrating this form of West African gendered activity into her life as the wife of an Anglican missionary. We can assume, then, that Crowther tolerated her activities and that if the CMS had not discovered her additional source of income, she would have gone on, literally, with business as usual. Though Susan Crowther is largely an invisible figure in discussions of her famous husband, this example demonstrates the ways in which Crowther and his family recognized and engaged with a range of indigenous West African cultural norms. At the same time, amid the group tensions in Sierra Leone by the late 1830s, Crowther was ever supportive of a Christian education for ex-slaves.

GENDER, GENRE, AND THE NARRATION OF DIASPORIC IDENTITY

The first time Crowther traveled from Freetown to the Niger Valley was as a member of the ill-fated 1841 Niger expedition. Chosen because of his talents as an interpreter and general student of African languages, his job was to assist the Reverend J. F. Schön, a German native who had joined the British CMS and now served as the chief CMS representative on the expedition. The expedition had been conceived by missionaries, reformers, and British government officials for

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roughly two reasons: as a way to impress upon Africans the virtues of abolition and as an opportunity to map the upper reaches of the Niger as a prelude to creating European trade routes. Halfway into the journey upriver, the expedition ended in disaster when over 40 percent of its white participants died of malaria. Despite this loss of life, the posthumous journal of the expedition leader was published, alongside the travel narratives of Schön and Crowther, together with latter's 1837 slave narrative. The notes upon which these texts were based had to be scribbled in between attempts to nurse the sick and comfort the dying—and, according to all reports, the dying went on for days on end. Nevertheless, the published narratives by Schön and Crowther outlined the extent of "heathenism" along the river, the suffering of African slaves in the internal trade, and, most important, the largely positive reception of local Africans to the idea of Christianity. Though Schön was the lead CMS spokesman, the compassionate yet clear-eyed and detail-oriented narrative produced by Crowther made an especially strong impact on his readers. It no doubt helped his image greatly that both the expedition narrative and the slave narrative revealed him to be a fiercely intelligent yet humble and unassuming African catechist with whom the British could feel comfortable. This fact, coupled with his universally acknowledged role as an effective negotiator and interpreter, made him instantly famous in Britain among missionary supporters once they read the narratives. Taking advantage of his growing popularity, the CMS vigorously promoted Crowther as the ultimate example of what could be achieved in "savage" Africa, and for all intents and purposes, his became a household name among the society's lay membership at the metropole. Given such public celebration of his talents, it was inevitable that Crowther would be allowed to take holy orders in 1843 and that his presence would be required on future expeditions to the Niger Valley. In 1846, he accompanied two white colleagues to Abeokuta, a large and influential town recently founded by refugees of the civil wars of Oyo, to establish the first successful CMS mission outside of Sierra Leone. Once the Abeokuta mission was put in place, it was followed slowly but steadily by the establishment of others, due in part to the increasing role Crowther came to play as an African representative of the CMS, a role that he self-consciously fostered and in which he sincerely believed.

While the 1841 expedition inaugurated Crowther's journeys of "return," his work as a CMS missionary also put him in the path of another agentive migration, that of the white missionary dispersal effected by the CMS's goals for West Africa. These white missionary men brought their own notions of masculinity, but their goal was not so much to impart these notions to their African subordinates as to shore up their own racial authority as Europeans in West Africa.

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Crowther's affiliation with the Saro, with the CMS, and with indigenous groups with whom he made contact during his travels demanded that he create a masculine identity for himself within and against other identities—including, in the case of the CMS missionaries, identities that were dependent, in part, upon missionary writing. The second half of this chapter will be devoted to a detailed discussion of what challenges were posed for Crowther by missionary writing, and then to a careful examination of Crowther's self-presentation in his 1841 Niger expedition journal. The journal itself is a wonderfully hybrid document, functioning at once as a travel narrative and, because it was commissioned by the CMS, as a missionary journal.

Though Crowther authored countless letters and reports throughout his time with the CMS, I focus here primarily on the early period of his authorship, as it was expressed specifically in the 1841 Niger expedition narrative. Crowther's ethnographic eye is much keener in the later narratives, which is why his texts have proven very useful for modern readers who wish to understand the nature and dynamics of precolonial life in Nigeria. However, the 1841 narrative marks Crowther's first attempt to write an extensive document for a white metropolitan audience, thereby calling into being that confident and engaging voice the scholar Jacob Ajayi has found so impressive. Indeed, the 1841 narrative offers a unique perspective on how Crowther originally set about deploying a European genre to articulate an evolving, mobile African masculinity in the midst of representing his first gestural "return" to an "original homeland."

In his consideration of how native agents of the CMS might have inhabited missionary genres, J. D. Y. Peel has argued persuasively that the mandatory journals kept by African clergy should be seen as "narrative representations of life," fully plotted, with the African-born missionary especially and necessarily present within the scene, rather than as an omniscient, disembodied observer.[41] According to Peel, African missionaries such as Crowther "were both insiders and outsiders to the society they were writing about [and] they show an intense awareness of the narrative implications of [Christian] mission."[42] Rather than seeing such genres as an imposition, Peel writes, native missionaries fully integrated them into their daily lives, as part of an ongoing process of cultural accommodation. According to Peel, "Narrative empowers because it enables its possessor to integrate his memories, experiences, and aspirations in a schema of long-term action. The more potent narratives have the capacity to incorporate other agents, so that they become accessories to the authors of the narratives. To the extent that (for whatever reason) narrative cannot be achieved, agency or self-motivated action—the hinge between the past of memory and the future of aspiration—becomes impossible." In arguing that missionary writ-

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ing by Africans functioned discursively to envision and enact at least a narrative resolution of their experiences, Peel implies that, rather than being an "alien" genre which had to be "appropriated" and subverted, the journal format proved to be a malleable form. Consequently, for liberated Africans who became agents of the CMS, the journal could thus function as a means of resolving the disjuncture created by exile and return through the very process of narrative. At the same time, Peel reminds us, African Christians "were even more saturated with Biblical language and imagery than the Europeans," so that the infusion of religious language within these journals would not have been burdensome.[43]

Still, despite their real investment in and facility with the missionary journal, the resulting textual appropriation by native missionaries must be understood in terms of the ways missionary writing in general was constructed by the CMS Parent Committee in London. Within the mission field, all CMS missionaries, whether they were African or European, were required to communicate directly with the Parent Committee on a regular basis via letters and journals. Generally, letters reported on a wide range of events or needs in the life of a mission. For example, the author might describe the behaviors, illness, or death of European colleagues, ask questions about staffing, report on the state of supplies at the mission station, or ask permission to marry or to return to Europe due to ill-health. In contrast, mission journals were expected to describe day-to-day life, including encounters with heathens and converts alike, relations with migrants and colonial officials, and even the slightest ethnographic observation that might help with African conversion. On a quarterly basis, missionaries were expected to forward their journals to London, to give the Parent Committee a sense of how work in the field had progressed (or not) over time. Not surprisingly, there were moments when the dividing line blurred between the genre of the letter and the genre of the journal.

As with all such organizations, the CMS devoted itself to establishing a transnational reach: thus, it makes sense that a dissonance existed at times, simply because of the vast distances between the mission field and the CMS leadership in London. To ameliorate such effects, the society enforced strict rules about *how* missionaries should actually write. As Judith Irvine has observed, "Missionary journals were not a genre in which authors freely expressed individual ideas and feelings. . . . They were subject to the rulings of the Parent Committee and other parties in the organizational hierarchy, as to appropriate topics, tone (spiritual) and style."[44] Such rigid requirements helped the CMS Parent Committee enforce unity of both purpose and point of view, since London relied heavily on missionaries to be the society's ears and eyes in the field. Letters and journals also provided the CMS with raw data that could be excerpted and

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even reworded for propagandist use in lay publications. As Anna Johnson has demonstrated in her study of nineteenth-century British missionary writing for the London Missionary Society, parent committees deliberately manipulated accounts from the field "to inculcate public support for missionary endeavors; to ensure an ongoing supply of donated funds from individuals, institutions and governments; to cultivate a community of like-minded British citizens who would stand up for missionary interests . . . ; and to encourage a community of potential recruits."[45] Because they also received copies of lay religious publications, both African and European missionaries were fully aware of how their materials could be used and so might well have deliberately provided highly "quotable" chunks of writing.

Thinking back to Peel's discussion of how African CMS agents used their texts, one might ask how native missionaries engaged with the broader politics of gendered identity within a highly mediated form of writing that still needed to be personally meaningful to them, while also satisfying a white British audience. The dynamics of this balancing act are exemplified in one of the most referenced extracts from Crowther's early journals: the description of his reunion with his mother, Afala. Composed in the late summer of 1846, the entry was reprinted the following year in the *Church Missionary Gleaner* as evidence of how well things were progressing with the establishment of the Abeokuta mission. When British Christians at home opened their spring 1847 issue of the *Gleaner*, they would have seen:

> Aug. 21, 1846—The text for this day, in the Christian Almanack, is, *Thou art the helper of the fatherless*. I have never felt the force of this text more than I did this day, as I have to relate that my mother, from whom I was torn away about five and twenty years ago, came with my brother in quest of me. When she saw me, she trembled. She could not believe her own eyes. We grasped one another, looking at each other with silence and great astonishment: big tears rolled down her emaciated cheeks. A great number of people soon came together. She trembled as she held me by the hand, and called me by familiar names by which I well remembered I used to be called by my grandmother, who has since died in slavery. We could not say much; but sat still, and cast now and then an affectionate look at one another—a look which violence and oppression have long checked—an affection which had nearly been extinguished by the long space of twenty-five years. My two sisters, who were captured with us, are both with my mother, who takes care of them and her grandchildren in a small town not far from hence, called Abàkà. Thus unsought for—when

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> all search for me had failed—God has brought us together again, and turned our sorrow into joy.[46]

This description has the power to move past and present audiences because Crowther momentarily steps outside of his adult identity as an Anglican priest to articulate every slave child's deepest longing: not just for a reunion with his mother, but also for her active quest to *redeem* him. At the same time, along with the joy of reclamation, Crowther intimates the trauma of violent captivity and enslavement, of cultural and spiritual violation, of loneliness for family—that is, those private, unspeakable memories that by necessity exclude his white readers. However, since the redemption of Crowther's family is understood as an extension of God's will, his journal extract proves Peel's point that the style of African missionary journals plotted a narrative of providential progress that made sense of what at first seemed to be the irrevocability of slavery's dispersal.[47] Thus, not only Crowther but also his "heathen" family members are blessed and protected by God's will.

Yet, given the religious and the secular connotations of redemption as an idea, this evocation of deep personal loss and recovery also sets the stage for a more earthly rescue of the son by his mother, since it is she who has come "in quest" of him. By granting agency to Afala, Crowther negates his own agency and the institutional context of his "return" to Nigeria as a CMS missionary carrying out the society's directives. Return then becomes refigured as rescue, with the Saro desire to find "home" both answered and subsumed under the more powerful desire of those first left behind. As if to illustrate this unbreakable link, Afala and Ajayi recognize each other as mother and child via his memory of childhood and her handed-down language, despite her son's cultural transformation into Samuel Crowther, the urbane, European-style clergyman. For nineteenth-century readers familiar with both Crowther's life story and the geographical location of Abeokuta, the emotional weight of the description would have been heightened by the fact that the city was located barely fifty miles south of Crowther's birthplace. Ironically, what the published journal extract does not make clear is that it was Crowther who had discovered that his mother was living in the area, and that it was he who had first sent word to her. At the same time, since Afala and the adult children who remained with her were essentially displaced refugees, Crowther's narrative undercuts the reality that, in a sense, they were all exiles working to create a new home. Not surprisingly, "return" has to be figurative, despite the literal, public drama of reunion between mother and son. Crowther uses his narrative to articulate what could be, a move that looks forward to Afala's own baptism two years later as Hannah,

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the mother of the Biblical Samuel. According to Peel, "as Afala bore Ajayi in the flesh," now Samuel would look forward to being "reaffiliated . . . with Hannah in spirit. . . . Crowther's reconnection with his past, in the person of his mother, through the medium of a narrative that grounded his own religious commitment . . . served to relaunch him on his life's career."[48] Both the extract and this reading illustrate how Crowther uses narrative effectively to imbue the initial business of mission (to establish a Christian outpost in the refugee city of Abeokuta) with a highly personal interpretation of familial "return."

In the rest of this published version of Crowther's journal, we see that Crowther has integrated his account of reunion in ways that confirm the authority of his white readers. Treating them first to a detailed, matter-of-fact account of where enslavement had taken his mother and sisters and how much they had to pay to redeem themselves, Crowther ends with what seems to be a relinquishing of the agency he had first granted to Afala. But neither does Crowther invoke the power of Providence:

> Could the friends of the Africans witness the happy meeting of those who have by their means been restored to the bosom of those from whom they were violently taken away, it would, I am sure, rejoice their hearts that their labour has not been in vain, nor their money spent for nought. Could they hear this moment how many thanks are given to them by African parents, whose minds have been cheered in their declining years by the return of their children, from Sierra Leone, they would thank God and take courage to go on in their work, which God is singularly blessing, and the effect of which is seen and felt in the interior of this country.[49]

Mission stations around the globe were directly financed by the contributions of the society's British lay membership, so Crowther attributes to them the status of God's redeeming agents. Those whom he advises to "take courage to go on in their work" undoubtedly include the European agents in the field. As Crowther and his audience understood all too well, European men who traveled with their wives to the African continent had to confront the alarmingly high death rate among whites, relative to the alarmingly low rate of conversion among native Africans. From this perspective, Crowther reaches out to his white audience with an awareness of their financial sacrifices and their anxieties that foreign missionary service often entailed a white migration from which there was frequently no return.

As a complex rhetorical strategy used by the native missionary to fulfill a variety of audience demands, Crowther's closing statements replace the tragedy of African dispersal through slavery (as well as the Saro initiative to return

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to the Niger Valley, with the English in tow) with concern for the tragedy of white exile and sacrifice. While the public understanding of the white missionary dead included women and children, Crowther's characterization resonates with Victorian notions of "muscular Christianity." As Norman Vance explains, muscular Christianity was less about "muscularity" than about "a combative Christianity involving urgent ethical and spiritual imperatives." Though men and women participated equally in the support and maintenance of overseas missions, "the manly work of social improvement" meant that "manliness and Christianity were strictly bound up with each other."[50] Crowther's evocation of African male passivity thus encourages and validates a white male intervention that Crowther implies is powerful enough to transform the face of West Africa. What was, in essence, a white response to an act of liberated African reconstitution of community in Abeokuta is refigured now as the central force behind return. Thus, far from being simply a literal act of mobility or a nostalgic desire, diasporic repatriation functions here as a trope for a complex interracial pattern of agency in the context of colonialism.[51] Such moments demonstrate Crowther's twofold use of narrative, first to mediate and resolve the politics of his own displacement, and second to provide CMS supporters at home with a tangible sense of their empowerment as philanthropists. The latter established beyond question both Crowther's selflessness and his negotiation of white agency.

Virtually all scholarly discussions of the above extract rely on the version published in the 1847 *Church Missionary Gleaner*. When we compare the published version to the original entry in Crowther's own handwriting, we see deleted text marked in the editor's pencil. On the face of it, the edited version reads more clearly and preserves the drama of reunion. However, a crucial difference between the two versions revolves around a small but important paragraph that was deliberately omitted from the *Gleaner* 's version:

> My father had five wives, two died, three are now living. Of his children five are now living besides myself, the seventh was stolen away a few years ago and has not yet been found. My father died before I left this country. The preservation of my father's family from being sold into foreign slavery is one of the singular cases of escape here and there to be met with in the country. Some families have been swept away altogether when half of others have been carried off.[52]

For nineteenth-century British readers, the power generated by Crowther's description of meeting his mother rests in part on the abolitionist's familiar evocation of maternal devotion, a virtue that allowed British men and women

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to achieve a sentimental rather than literal identification with African ex-slaves via the figurative language of domesticity. At the same time, the *Gleaner*'s version of what Crowther calls his "fatherlessness" seems to remove the problem of African masculinity from the white abolitionist tableau. Indeed, it is the absence of his father that allows the sense of familial helplessness and vulnerability evoked in Crowther's closing remarks in the *Gleaner* to be so effective. In the excised passage, Crowther evokes not only the memory of his dead father but Yoruba patrilineage, which was traditionally buttressed by the "heathenish" practice of polygamy. Consequently, this deleted passage gives new meaning to Crowther's opening quotation from Psalm 10:14, "Thou art the helper of the fatherless." Instead of being merely a reference to God's protection of bereft widows and orphans, the quotation suggests that God's response to Crowther's plight is to restore that protection given by a father to his family—in this case, through the restoration of Crowther's mother and siblings. If fatherlessness in the biblical sense implies not just material dispossession but also the loss of home and familial belonging, then the "singular [case] of escape" exemplified by his family's fate allows for the possibility of reconstituting that home.

The deleted manuscript passage also resonates with a moment in Crowther's 1837 slave narrative (the one included with the published 1841 Niger journals), where he vividly recalls his final memory of his father in the act of protecting family members: "The last view I had of my father was when he came from the fight, to give us the signal to flee. . . . Hence I never saw him more—Here I must take thy leave, unhappy, comfortless father!—I learned, some time afterward, that he was killed in another battle."[53] Here Crowther's family portrait shifts from the stock abolitionist image of the slave mother and child (who are then ultimately "saved" by white philanthropy) to one that represents Yoruba manhood as providentially sustained and sustaining. Given that, in his father's absence, the returning Crowther would undoubtedly unite the scattered family members and effect their conversion, the implication in the extract is that as his father's descendant, the son emerges on the other side of slavery as the new, agentive patriarch. And since Crowther the son has now mastered Christian practices, he is in essence a dramatically hybrid extension of a moral, courageous, preslavery Yoruba masculinity. If, as Peel suggests, the earlier passage about Afala helps Crowther reconnect to his past via his mother, this ignored moment in the original handwritten entry (which was deliberately included by Crowther as part of the submission to the Parent Committee) creates a more balanced reconnection to both his father and mother as well as to his father's other families via his polygamous relationships.

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DIASPORIC MANHOOD AND BELONGING: THE 1841 NIGER EXPEDITION

As the manuscript version of the 1846 journal entry suggests, Crowther envisioned for himself a mobile, male identity created through diasporic experience, ideally one transformed through Christian conversion but still closely related to his preslavery roots. This hybrid masculinity is the production of his negotiation of the models of manhood presented by white CMS missionaries—models which, rather than representing a stable set of values, were just as contingent upon evolving contexts created by dispersal. Indeed, such models were shaped in part by both transnational mission policy in the nineteenth century and the specific social conditions brought into being by the Saro diaspora.

Throughout the nineteenth century, despite a consistent public front on the part of the CMS that emphasized a harmonious interracial brotherhood among European and African missionaries, white male CMS agents were constantly threatened by the presence of their African counterparts. For instance, when in 1862 word reached the Reverends Henry Townsend, David Hinderer, and C. A. Gollmer (the white missionaries who had accompanied Crowther to Abeokuta twenty years earlier) that Crowther was to be named bishop, they strenuously petitioned the CMS Parent Committee against the appointment, specifically on the grounds of race. As Hinderer put it in an 1864 letter to the society's General Secretary Henry Venn, "Not that I should have the slightest objection to Bishop Crowther being over myself and the congregation which God may give me. . . . But . . . because God gives us influence as Europeans among them [our authority] is very desirable and necessary to us, but if they hear a Black man is our master, they will question our respectability."[54] Rather than dismissing Hinderer's comments as garden-variety racism on the colonial frontier, I suggest that they touch on the challenges faced by white male CMS agents within the class-conscious, anglicized context of the society.

For one thing, the average white male missionary who served the British CMS in Africa was not necessarily English or middle class. With a white missionary death rate from 25 to 65 percent, a posting in West Africa was an emotionally wrenching experience that sorely tested the faith and, just as importantly, the institutional loyalty of the average white CMS agent. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the CMS seemed to have little success recruiting from among either the middle or the industrial classes in Britain. However, as sociologist Jon Miller suggests, this may not have posed a problem. In his study of the Lutheran mission headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Miller argues that strong institutional control was required if missionary organizations were to

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establish functioning and effective outposts in the field. Miller contends that, like the Basel Missionary Society, the CMS deliberately tried to select men who exhibited humility and a lack of personal ambition, which very often turned out to be rural men from modest circumstances.[55] Thus, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of the small number of recruits the CMS did obtain from Britain, many had been valets, sons of farmers, glove makers, carpenters, and small-trades men: that is to say, men who were not agitators for social reform at home.

To supplement this group, the society went overseas to none other than the Lutherans of Basel, since their seminary specialized in producing male missionaries with the desired class origins and temperament.[56] The resulting social structure within the missionary organization mirrored an idealized world of class hierarchy, since Parent Committee members were drawn from among the educated and wealthy professional and mercantile classes, in stark contrast to the lower-class missionary men who were to be sent into the field. As the Anglican Bishop Edward Steere commented toward the end of the nineteenth century, "It has been the custom far too much to think of missionaries as an inferior set of men, sent out, paid and governed by a superior set of men formed into a committee in London. Of course then you must have examiners and secretaries and an office to see that the inferior men are not too inferior; and you must have a set of cheap colleges in which the inferior men may get an inferior education and you must provide an inferior sort of ordination which will not enable them to compete in England with the superior men."[57] Thus, the CMS and other organizations deliberately cultivated a specific category of white masculinity that would be ill-suited to producing radical change either at home or abroad. At the same time, the supplementation of CMS missionary personnel with Basel seminarians resulted in missionary communities in Sierra Leone and Nigeria that included both English and German speakers, both displaced from their European homes. As a result, while English-speaking missionaries had a hard enough time contending with language differences between themselves and Africans, the Basel recruits had the added problem of moving from German to English as they attempted to master the languages of their potential converts.

Despite cultural and linguistic barriers, their posting to unknown and dangerous surroundings, and the fact that they were handpicked essentially for their institutional obedience, both the British and the Basel recruits were alive to the opportunities they might accrue by cultivating their usefulness to the CMS. Though their training was inferior to that of Protestant ministers in Britain, white male agents of the CMS were guaranteed a steady salary, medi-

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cal care, a pension, a basic education beyond mere literacy, the opportunity to meet and marry socially superior women within their Christian communities, and, if they had children, schooling for their offspring.[58] At the same time, once they were among what they regarded to be a "heathen" population, their racial identity as white men could be effectively consolidated, since they assumed themselves to be the sole agents of civilization. The one catch, of course, was that all these benefits were achievable only if they agreed to be stationed overseas in foreign locations where the CMS had the greatest need, but where deadly tropical diseased also reigned.

In the end, even with the graduates of the Basel seminary, the CMS could not send missionaries to West Africa at a rate to surpass those dying in the field. From as early as the 1820s, then, the Parent Committee took the pragmatic step of training African male converts to run their own native churches as the only remedy for the situation. Theoretically, all the benefits of employment as a white male missionary were then potentially available to Christianized West Africans men, provided they could prove their fitness. The problem with this notion of an interracial fraternity through mission, however, was the dissonance that existed between the largely middle- and upper-class male leadership of the CMS and the "inferior" whites who served in the field. Thus, when in 1864 Gollmer, Hinderer, and Townsend (the first two being Basel graduates, the third formerly a rural English schoolmaster) opposed Crowther's appointment as bishop, their racism evinced a deep-seated anxiety that the emergence of native missionaries would undermine the social status that they, as so-called muscular Christians, had risked their lives for in the first place. Indeed, such animosities only increased with time, so that by 1880, Bishop Crowther was ousted by younger white missionaries who, armed with improved methods for preventing and treating tropical diseases, were actually surviving foreign postings and so could claim their authority over ordained West African ministers.

Long before he became bishop, Crowther was well acquainted with the gendered politics of status that shaped the lives of white CMS missionary men in the field, particularly from his time as a pupil at the CMS's Christian Institution at Fourah Bay. As a student in the 1820s, Crowther had been allowed to go to Britain for several months for education; soon after, the CMS offered him another such invitation, but the headmaster of the institution, the Reverend Charles Haensel (himself a Basel graduate), strongly disapproved of extending such offers to African boys. From Haensel's point of view, Crowther would return to Sierra Leone "*a conceited fop*, with wants unknown to those brought up in the Colony as to dress, food, and residence and dissatisfied as long as he is not put on an equality with the Europeans" (emphasis added). Additionally,

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argued Haensel, when such a youth was ready for marriage, he would then be dissatisfied with the selection of native women in Sierra Leone, a point which touched on the missionary's broader anxiety over interracial relationships, whether legal or illicit, between whites and Africans.[59] Or perhaps the question was really about who would determine and shape this intimacy: if left to his own devices, Haensel had a plan to mold his protégé into the perfect native assistant, since "he is learning my ways exactly" and then when Crowther was "allowed to marry . . . his wife would prove an additional help . . . in the domestic concerns" of the CMS mission school.[60] On the one hand, the mobility of the Saro as presented in Crowther's 1846 journal entry was seen as the point of opportunity for the agency of white British Christians to spread the gospel among the "heathens." On the other hand, as Haensel's comments suggest, mobile African men as unfettered agents, many with their own dreams of advancement, were a threat to the social order precisely because of the possibility that they could be remade in the image of the white missionary.[61] Such fear of a power reversal reveals the highly contingent nature of lower middle- and working-class white male missionary status.[62]

This sense of anxiety provides an interesting context for reading Crowther's narrative strategies in his account of the 1841 Niger expedition, especially given the discursive power of the genre to enable the social construction of white masculinity. His presence on the expedition constituted his first journey "back" to Nigeria. The narrative it generated was the first major piece of writing (other than his earlier slave narrative) that Crowther completed under the auspices of the CMS. While he had an idea of the professional benefits that would accrue to him from writing the narrative, I would argue, following Peel's notion, that this text becomes a vehicle for Crowther to imagine himself reconnected to the places and peoples from which he had been kidnapped.

It might be helpful to think more generally about the notion of exploration as the immediate context of Crowther's narrative production. In his discussion of the cultural politics of European explorations in nineteenth-century Africa, Johannes Fabian coined the term "mobile colonies" to indicate that these journeys were "never simply 'travel.'" Rather, an expedition "was never outside an existing, if constantly changing, context of local and international political power."[63] Public anxiety in Britain about the dangers faced by white members of the 1841 expedition rendered almost invisible the nonwhite sailors from Britain, the West Indies, and West Africa who made up the crew. Focus on whites also drew attention away from the small group of Black settlers leaving Sierra Leone and Liberia (again, some from Africa, some from the Caribbean, and some from the United States and Britain) who accompanied the expedi-

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tion. Indeed, among the native agents of the CMS under Schön's supervision, there were a few ex-slave interpreters, in addition to Crowther, who doubled as servants.[64]

As with all travel narratives of the period, Crowther's journal dutifully describes the landscape, the peoples who inhabit the riverbanks, their customs and manners, and so on. This reflected the society's desire to find a suitable location for a mission station, among friendly Africans but also close to trade and transportation routes. In terms of the persona generated by the narrative, Crowther represents himself as the picture of humility, simply recording details and following orders. More often than not, he reproduces the appropriate vision of the future possibilities of British commerce expected of him. For example, he writes at the mouth of the Niger, "The coast, as far as I went, was low and swampy; which is very much against this highly-interesting part of it, as here ought to be a sea-port, where goods from England might be landed, as well for shipping off the produce from the Niger."[65] And when he makes contact with native Africans, he presents himself as the perfect intermediary for the white explorers and missionaries. Before one such group of locals, he reports:

> I commenced my message—That the Queen of the Country called Great Britain has sent the King of the ship to all the Chiefs of Africa, to make treaties with them to give up war and the slave-trade—to encourage all their people to the cultivation of the soil—and to mind all that the White People say to them; as they wish to teach them many things, and particularly the Book which God gives, which will make all men happy. I added, likewise, that there are many Nufi, Haussa, and Yaruba people in the White-man's country, who have been liberated from the Portuguese and Spanish slave-ships; that they are now living like White Men. (315)

Clearly, the journal does not appear to challenge the European philanthropic fantasies of Africa as a fertile field waiting to be cultivated. Rather, Crowther presents the British and Christianized Africans like himself working in unison in support of white philanthropy and "civilization."

Throughout the text, Crowther is deeply respectful of his white superiors and is saddened by the loss of life on board, presenting the late Captain Allen as a heroic Christian martyr from the first day of the voyage. However, after the necessary genuflections, he provides at least as much attention to the other formerly enslaved African interpreters who, like himself, had been selected to model Black civilization for the locals. Crowther does not contradict white accounts of the *obi* (ruler) of Aboh as a fickle, corpulent leader, comically attired in dirty, mismatched European clothes and adorned with jewelry made of coral

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beads, brass trinkets, and leopards' teeth. Yet, in light of the potential of Africans for industry and the Niger River for the establishment of ports, the obi represents the "old" Africa in need of discipline, his odd collection of European commodities a sign of his uneducated—though nonetheless very present—valuation of white civilization. In their respective journals, both Crowther and Schön note the obi's request that the expedition leave behind one of its interpreters—the formerly enslaved African Simon Jonas—but Schön is the one fearful of Jonas "falling into sin," suggesting that once he is removed from white company, the veneer of civilization provided by his conversion to Christianity would wear away (134).

But the obi's selection of Jonas reveals a greater comfort with African than white Christians, and indeed, like Simon Jonas, Crowther himself spends long periods inland, visiting local communities, noting language differences, and gathering information about politics, with little harm to his faith and character. In effect, according to Crowther's narrative, the formerly enslaved Africans seem to perform the real tasks of the expedition, while the whites slowly become incapacitated by malaria. Indeed, Crowther repeatedly narrates the presence and interventions of himself and other African catechists as God-directed. During a voyage that would be memorialized in the minds of the British public as a journey of white death, Crowther notes early in the journal his own providential rescue when a heavy piece of equipment loosened from its moorings narrowly misses his head. Later, he reports, "The Captain's clerk, who has been raving [from fever] for some days, threw himself overboard from a port-hole in the Captain's cabin. Providentially he was caught by a Black sailor, who immediately flew overboard in pursuit of him" (332). Thus, we see early on that Crowther engages in a struggle to represent West Africa as belonging firmly to the "returning" "Saro" or Sierra Leone ex-slaves heading to Nigeria.

While Crowther's journal articulates significant differences in perspective under the guise of the transparent native reporter, his imagined reentry into Nigeria is deeply intertwined with white male anxieties about basic survival. For instance, consider the accounts of the expedition's time at the British outpost of Cape Coast Castle in Ghana. The official expedition journal drawn from the late Captain Allen's writing notes the grave of Victorian poet Letitia Elizabeth Landon, or L.E.L., as she was known to her public. Landon left London under a cloud of scandal to marry the castle's governor, George Maclean, in 1838. In his review of the Niger expedition narrative, Charles Dickens (like many white travelers, armchair or otherwise) memorialized Landon's death as the tragic collision of all that was civilized and good in England with the savagery of Africa.[66] Crowther himself notes such white anxieties when he reports that as the

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British neared the mouth of the Niger, "some [white sailors] could not help remarking, that they were going to their graves" (274). This rendering of English death in the body of Landon (she was, after all, the symbolic figure of white social and cultural refinement), coupled with the incongruity of her presence in Africa, goes a long way toward enhancing the heroism of the white explorers who pay homage to her, while also emphasizing Africa as dangerous and alien, so that conquest becomes all the more dramatic and empowering. Since the dead Landon becomes the foil for white manhood and Englishness, she can be more easily resurrected, the scandal clouding the final years of her life falling away before the larger threat of African barbarity.

As with the official Niger expedition narrative published by the British government, Crowther marks the obligatory graveyard visit at the castle, but with a major difference:

> While [the ship's surgeon] Dr. Marshall was taking a sketch of the monument of Mrs. M'Lean . . . he requested me to copy for him, from another monument, the following Inscription:—
>
> Sacred to the Memory
> Of the
> Rev. Philip Quaque
> Native of This Country,
> Who Having Been Sent to England
> For Education,
> Received Holy Orders 1765,
> And Was Here Employed Upwards of Fifty Years,
> As Missionary
> From the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,
> And as Chaplain to this Factory.
> He Died 17th October 1816,
> Aged 75 Years. (265)[67]

In the letter appended to the CMS journals, Crowther comments that "who the individual [Quaque] was, I know not," which might well have been true (350). However, those white readers equipped with the history of Christian missions to Africa might have known Quaque's history. He was an African from a locality neighboring the castle, who at the end of the eighteenth century had been selected by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for missionary training in England. Upon his return to West Africa with a white wife in tow, Quaque

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became the chaplain of Cape Coast Castle. By the time of his appointment, he had thoroughly lost his native language and had little, if any, success converting his fellow natives. Indeed, he was, for the most part, an outcast from his former community and was often ridiculed and ignored by white officials of the castle.[68] In that sense, then, the example of Quaque might well be a cautionary tale for British readers about the effectiveness of native clergy, once they were left to their own devices. As Quaque's case proved, the one asset that an African clergyman might have over his white counterpart in his attempt to gain converts—a natural and abiding fluency in his own native language—was certainly not to be relied upon. But Crowther's apparently naive reading of Quaque as a success ("What attracted my attention was, that he was a Native of that place—sent to England for education—received Holy Orders—and was employed in his own country upward of *fifty years*!") transforms the dead African minister into a figure of affirmation for returning African catechists such as Crowther, at the very moment when the white male encounter with Letitia Landon's grave signifies white displacement and death.[69] In this sense, the superimposition of a story of African male success over that of white vulnerability (Landon) implies that the border-crossing hero is not the white explorer, but his liberated African interpreter.

Given that the failed expedition was noteworthy to the British public for the horrific loss of white lives, the strategy of representing Black slavery or suffering, of representing the emotional weight of Black return, would have misfired in Crowther's narrative. However, it is precisely on this question of linguistic ownership that Crowther chooses to reintegrate the liberated African's experience. Again, at Cape Coast Castle, Crowther visits the church of the Reverend John Birch Freeman, the English-born, mixed-race Wesleyan missionary who preaches to a local congregation with the help of a native interpreter. After the minister selects his text from the Bible and delivers his sermon, the interpreter supposedly renders the ideas verbatim in Fante, but Crowther notes that "frequently, the Interpreter occupied more time than the Minister. . . . How much of the meaning is lost . . . I know by experience; unless the Interpreter is a well-known qualified person, as I have every reason to believe the one at this place is" (266–67). Crowther's matter-of-fact observation implies that it is the native interpreter who is in control, and he underscores here his own observations as a bilingual African Christian, fluent in English and his native Yoruba, that European missionaries often fail to reach their African audiences: "The attention of a great part of the Congregation was pleasing; while others appeared to have been brought there merely from curiosity" (267). For Crowther, the only remedy is for missionaries such as Freeman to learn the local languages, "a tedious and difficult work, as it takes years to bring it to perfection" (268)—or for the

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British to relinquish the work of mission to bilingual Africans themselves, who are already native speakers. As Crowther uses the *Journal* to document his extensive work as a linguist during the expedition, his own candidacy might well be implied. Since the role of the linguist was at times combined with the role of explorer, Crowther's suggestion, for all its courtesy, implies some competition with the traditional white male leadership of African exploration. [70]

Significant, too, is Crowther's comment: "How much of the meaning is lost . . . I know by experience." Here he refers to his own postslavery memory in Sierra Leone, as a young Yoruba-speaking ex-slave in a CMS-supervised village, experiencing the disorientation (and possibly boredom) of listening to a Christian service in English. Crowther's memory of his first experience in a Christian church is far removed from the experience of the Fante in that the congregation had not been kidnapped and sold into slavery. However, the narrative reduces the cultural distance between Crowther and Africans he encounters after leaving Sierra Leone, thereby gesturing to a common experience *as Africans* of a confusing moment of first contact with whites. This moment also points to an equally ironic separation of Crowther from the white missionaries, even though he is himself engaged by them. Thus, we are left not so much with a transcendent, unproblematic reconnection to Africa or a triumphant subversion of the white explorer's narrative as with a more subtle, at times blatantly resistant and at others troubling, negotiation of inevitable differences that inhered within the context of "return."

The challenge of reconnection is also figured in the very person of Freeman, who in 1841 was the most famous Wesleyan Methodist missionary on the coast. Indeed, had he been given enough support by the Wesleyan Parent Committee, he—rather than the Anglican CMS—would have established the first Christian organization in Abeokuta. Given his central importance to West African mission history, it is significant that Freeman was born in Britain to a working-class white mother and a freed African father. Ironically, his own travel narrative, *Journals of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomi, in Western Africa*, appeared in serialized form in the *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* between 1840 and 1843, making him famous in both Britain and West Africa. As the chaplain of Cape Coast Castle, Freeman was, like Crowther, the spiritual descendant of Philip Quaque.[71] There were, of course, other Black men from Britain, the West Indies, and the United States who served as missionaries to Africa under the banner of European (and later American) missionary organizations, including the Reverend Edward Jones, a freeborn South Carolinian and the first African American to attend Amherst College, who had been in Sierra Leone since 1831 and who took over the running of the Christian Institution the year

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Crowther set out on the expedition.[72] Therefore, in distinguishing between European missionary newcomers and native Africans, Crowther both embraces and rejects African diasporic missionary fraternities that operated along the same circuits as white mission fraternities, articulating his own sense of identity in relation to the intraracial difference inherent within the convergence of peoples of African descent on the west coast of Africa.

THE STORY OF CROWTHER and the Saro encompasses a range of involuntary and agentive nineteenth-century travel patterns that linked those whom David Northrup has aptly named "Atlantic Africans" with Black subjects in the Americas.[73] Involuntary migration was the by-product of enslavement. For the emancipated, migration translated into the search for employment, for trade opportunities, and for political independence. The Saro, the British colonial authorities, and the CMS recognized that the desire for and the literal act of repatriation unlocked a range of new possibilities, both political and social. For everyone concerned, repatriation also enabled particular rhetorical forms specific to the precolonial conditions on the ground in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The purposes and deployment of those forms were site specific: despite its ubiquity in the Americas and among the Saro, "return" by necessity meant different things to different communities in different places. As the example of ex-slaves such as Crowther suggests, physical "return" was achievable and even desirable, not to recover what had been taken away, but to articulate inevitably new and shifting identities. The removal from Sierra Leone to Nigeria had little to do with retrieval of land, family, or ways of being and almost everything to do with creating, dismantling, and negotiating new and existing power structures and cultural frames. There is, of course, much irony that Crowther's "return" to Nigeria was initially figured through a British exploration of "unknown territory," except that Crowther necessarily filtered everything through new eyes and within a historically contingent and at times semipermeable missionary power structure. His dedication to Christian mission was as unshakable as his Christian faith, so he embraced the goals of the CMS as his own, especially when it came to creating a native pastorate. In this sense, repatriation came to be framed within and achieved through mission. Therefore, Crowther—as well as Philip Quaque, for that matter—has something in common with generations of Black Americans, from the eighteenth century onward: the linking of African repatriation to the evangelical impulse.

Part travel text, missionary journal, autobiography, and ethnography, Crowther's 1841 Niger Expedition journal incorporated not only historical and sociological

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data but also a sense of what we (anachronistically) call diaspora as both a spatial and a cultural phenomenon created in the shadow of empire. My reading of Crowther's journal is not to mine his text for historical details about Christian mission or ethnography or even to argue that his intent was to deceive his white readers or rebel against his white superiors—or, worse, that he was somehow clairvoyant and was hinting at his future advancement in the CMS hierarchy. Rather, my approach has been to listen for resonances and moments of dissonance in his text, because such reverberations would have been the inevitable result of a piece of writing created under the weight of multiple expectations and audiences. In this sense, Crowther's journal is very much an *institutional* document, literally commissioned by the CMS for the benefit of Christian readers. In this sense, his text was a personal narrative designed to enhance his image (like Mary Seacole's) or to excite a unity of feeling and action toward the redemption of other people of African descent (like the writings of Nancy Prince). Additionally, as an institutional document, his journal was never meant to serve the function of an official expedition narrative—the white military survivors of the expedition took care of that aspect of the record keeping themselves. Even as Crowther wrote of what he *saw* and *heard*—that is, as he was responsible for putting on display the "new" scenes and peoples encountered on the voyage—he was himself a specimen of sorts, equally on display to white CMS administrators and agents, as well as the British public. In other words, the success of his text rested not only on what he wrote but also on his ability to prove through his text that he was not merely the so-called barbaric African with a veneer of civilization. This figuration would have been entirely different in the case of the white explorer-author, for whom an expedition narrative would have confirmed intellectual superiority, valor, heroism, and international fame.

The next chapter continues with the theme of nineteenth-century travel in the form of African repatriation, this time from the point of view of the freeborn explorers Martin R. Delany (the United States) and Robert Campbell (Jamaica). Both men wrote from a sense of duty under the exigency of finding some site of refuge, where Blacks from the Americas could find relief from poverty, racism, disenfranchisement, and violence. Both men wrote with the hope of convincing Black readers to join them in going "back" to Africa to start anew, while also requesting help from US and British audiences in enabling that refuge. Delany and Campbell activated an imperial gaze of sorts, confirming that any repurposing of travel writing comes with its own baggage. Their story also expands on the notion of locational specificity. Because Delany was an American, while Campbell straddled the United States and the West Indies, the question of what constituted *Black* and *American* becomes central.

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