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F O U R

# Two Visions of Africa: Reflections on Fieldwork in an “Animist Bush” and in an Urban Diaspora

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OPENING THOUGHTS

The silver sedan screeched to a stop inches before me as I dashed across the well-marked crosswalk. After catching my breath and turning to catch a glimpse of the Portuguese driver who had nearly killed me, I remembered the word for “run over”—*atropelar*—which I had just looked up yesterday, after seeing it mentioned numerous times in the local newspaper. Suddenly a series of stories I’d barely glanced at the past week made sense, and I made a mental note to pay more attention to what I now suspected might become a theme in my stay in this city—and that, I worried, might even be a theme endemic to the Portuguese psyche.

After twenty-five-plus years living among, working with, and writing about the Beng, a small, rural, “animist” community in the rain forest of Côte d’Ivoire, I recently began research in a radically different space—the European capital city of Lisbon—as the jumping-off point for a new research project with Cape Verdeans, a deeply diasporic population dispersed across Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Some anthropologists move easily from one fieldsite to another; that was not my profile. Loyalty had kept me attached to the Beng long after the point when I could visit them safely, and a good decade of indecision had kept me from committing to a new fieldsite. My hesitations had both scholarly and personal foundations. In this chapter, I use my own case to think through broader trends and themes that characterize our disciplinary expectations for the model professional career.

When I last conducted fieldwork in a small Beng village in 1993 with my husband, writer Philip Graham, I started having doubts about the One Scholar/One Fieldsite model that I thought our discipline regarded as normative (see my introduction to this volume). That summer, the Beng endured poverty even more extreme than what Philip and I had observed during our previous stays, in 1979–1980 and 1985. Globalized forces far from their purview had taken their toll—from declining coffee prices on the world market, and unrealistic requirements imposed by “structural adjustment programs” as part of huge loan packages proffered by the World Bank, to outrageous mismanagement and plundering of the country’s finances by government officials. As a result, the West African nation’s small-scale farming communities were in crisis. Buses rarely ran in the countryside, and when they did, few villagers could afford the fare, stranding the ailing far from the town’s health center. In any case, the dispensaries contained no medicines—and sometimes no staff. Nor could villagers afford to buy the few medicines that the pharmacies actually stocked: the price that government traders offered the farmers for their coffee harvest—their major source of cash—had fallen so low that the Beng had chosen to watch coffee berries fall to rot on the forest floor, rather than invest time in collecting them to sell for an insulting pittance that couldn’t even cover their costs (for further reflections on that stay among the Beng, see Gottlieb and Graham 2012).

While Philip and I despaired for our Beng neighbors, I also weighed whether our growing family could withstand another long-term residence in these relatively remote, medically underserved villages. During our last stay, we had brought our six-year-old son Nathaniel with us, and in three short months, he’d lost 12 percent of his body weight. While Philip and I wanted to give Nathaniel a sibling before long, bringing another young child to the Beng region any time soon seemed an increasingly distant option.

Yet my fieldwork had always been *en famille*. Inspired by the rural African parents I have known—who keep their children by their sides as they work, hold meetings, celebrate, and sleep—I have tried to blend the parts of my life that our society tells me I should separate. Never having considered doing fieldwork without my husband and child(ren), I felt in a quandary.

While I agonized over how to keep both my family and my career healthy, our small household expanded in ways that simultaneously brought us closer to, and farther from, Bengland. When we’d last lived in Côte d’Ivoire, I had hired Bertin Kouadio, then a Beng college student and the now-grown son of one of our village hosts, as my research assistant. By the end of that summer, Bertin confided to us his fears and frustrations as the nation began scaling back

its commitment to education—and canceled most college scholarships, including his. That fall, we managed to sponsor Bertin as a student at our university in Illinois, and he brought a thick slice of Africa into our American lives.

Welcoming Bertin into our home and family meant honoring the promise we had made his parents that we would in effect become Bertin's American mother and father. I had to resist the temptation to practice my Beng and forced myself to speak English with him—to improve his chances of passing the English language test that stood between him and the scholarship that our university had provisionally committed for him (see Gottlieb and Graham 2012). Though Bertin kept us close to the Beng community despite the ocean separating us, another reality made returning to Bengland any time soon improbable: Ivory Coast's political system was fissuring.

Shortly before Bertin moved to the United States, Côte d'Ivoire had lost its long-standing president, and his successor introduced the politics of ethnic resentment, religious schism, and regional divide. The possibility of our returning receded farther into the distance when our daughter Hannah entered our lives. A healthy baby, Hannah clarified our travel options. Living in remote villages in the West African rain forest where reliable medical care was many hours away was now impossible for another six years at the least.

I also started having doubts of another sort. Was it advisable for me as a scholar to devote the next decade or two of my professional life to these villages? Would I keep finding enough new issues to write about, or was I in danger of writing version after version of the same anthropological story for new audiences? The topics I had treated over my career to date had been heterogeneous, as I had deliberately sought novel issues to ponder, fresh bodies of literature to delve into. After producing six books and dozens of articles, how many notable scholarly contributions might I still make, inspired by the Beng? Painfully, I forced myself to consider that most anthropologically heretical of thoughts: The Beng and I might not have that much more to say to one another.

Anthropologist Moshe Shokeid acknowledges such a quasi-taboo possibility. Reflecting on his long-term involvement with a community of gay Jews in New York, he recently wrote:

It dawned on me that my ethnographic mission had been accomplished: I have exhausted my professional interest in that particular field. At the same time, it seemed that I could not contribute any more to the people who now maintain the social and cultural scene of "my" fieldwork site. (2007:220; and cf. Shokeid 1995)

Yet even as I began to grapple with my own sense of such an inevitability vis-à-vis the Beng, I wondered: Was a switch to a totally new research area academically acceptable?

I felt heartened when I recalled that my first college mentor, Irving Goldman, had in a sense changed fieldsites: after doing extensive fieldwork with the Cubeo in the Colombian Amazon, he had completed two more books, each set on a different continent—one about ancient Polynesian political organization, the other about the Kwakiutl *potlatch* (Goldman 1963, 1970, 1975). Although the latter two works were based on extensive library research rather than fieldwork, I remained impressed that, in midcareer, my beloved teacher had mastered two new, entirely unrelated and extensive bodies of literature, two new sets of cultural mindsets, in carrying out these ambitious studies.

My other major undergraduate mentor had also switched research agendas in midstream. After conducting extensive fieldwork in the Himalayas with the Sherpa (1978, 1989, 2001), Sherry Ortner had “returned home” to conduct fieldwork in and about her native suburban community in New Jersey (2005). One of the most celebrated and brilliant scholars of her generation, surely her peripatetic imagination was worth emulating.

Indeed, the more I considered it, the more I realized that nearly all the anthropologists I admired had moved at least to a second major fieldsite and, in some cases, to far more than that. During the years that I worked with him, my graduate mentor, Victor Turner, had branched out well beyond his celebrated work among the Ndembu in Zambia, conducting research in Brazil, Japan, and Israel. Rayna Rapp had begun her career studying life in French villages and was now doing research in American doctors’ waiting rooms, while Emily Martin had moved from rural China to geneticists’ labs in Baltimore. In my own department, my revered senior colleague, Edward Bruner, had started his career working with Native Americans, made his name based on research in Sumatra, and then began globe-trotting in places as far-flung as Ghana, Kenya, and Hong Kong, constructing an anthropological approach to modern tourism (see chapter 7, this volume).

And it wasn’t only my elders. In my own generation, some of my scholarly friends and contemporaries were beginning to chart major research moves—from Niger to “African New York” for Paul Stoller (see afterword, this volume); from Guinea-Bissau to Williamsburg, Virginia, for Eric Gable; from Melanesian villages to scientists’ offices for Rena Lederman. All of these scholars switched scholarly gears, and continents, in midlife, and the moves had hardly crushed their careers. Quite the opposite—the changes had re-

invigorated them as scholars. Clearly, my old-fashioned One Scholar/One Fieldsite idea was, at best, outmoded.

And so, while waiting who knew how many years for the possibility of returning safely to the Beng, I decided to consider conducting research in another region of the world. But where, and on what? Suddenly I felt liberated to revisit my original motivations for becoming an anthropologist.

Raised in a politically engaged household, and active in a variety of political movements from the age of twelve, I had found myself drawn to anthropology in high school as a way to think about alternative models of creating a society that reduced imperialism, racism, and patriarchy. While my youthful idealist self acknowledged more subtleties and complexities over the years, I have always retained a basic commitment to looking for ways to improve some corner of the world through my writing and my teaching. A new project in a new place might allow me to renew my aspirations to contribute to social change through my scholarship and my pedagogy. I began imagining myself in other parts of the planet, analyzing different issues, even learning new languages.

*Francophone Africans living in New York?* After some twenty years of internal exile to the flat middle of the country, that plan appealingly combined my long-standing interests in francophone Africa, and my knowledge of French, with a return to the city of my birth—a city I'd missed so much that after I left it for graduate school, I wrote my MA thesis about its early colonial history (Gottlieb 1978). With a project based in a slice of "African New York," I could see my hometown through new eyes. At a scholarly level, I could contribute to wider conversations gaining importance in the United States surrounding race, class, and immigration. Still, I found the idea of urban fieldwork challenging. Having thoroughly charted the intersecting genealogies of every resident of the first Beng village in which I'd lived for fourteen months, its population under three hundred, what methods would I need to craft to find informants and identify "communities" in a global city such as New York?

*Tribal rituals of Wall Street stock investors?* This project would also bring me back me to my native city. And at the scholarly level, it would allow me to undertake a new research agenda with enormous relevance to just about everyone on the planet. Viewing the bastion of capitalism as a primitive tribe complete with irrational, magical practices, I could apply the cultural and interpretive approach I had honed in my writings about rural African religions to an arena normally subject, instead, to macroeconomic analyses by neo-classically trained economists. With such a project, I might illuminate hid-

den realities and contradictions of the capitalist world system, and chip away at the easy confidence so many in the modern world have in it. Politically, such a project could not only critique the absurdities of capitalism but could also serve to combat widespread prejudice against non-Western peoples who supposedly maintain a monopoly on “magic” and “superstition.” Yet I might need to read thousands of pages of economic theory simply to participate in conversations with my informants, and their conversations with one another; I feared these texts could prove either intellectually offensive, incomprehensible, boring, or all three.

*Francophone Africans living in Paris?* This option would allow me to bring my French and Africanist training to bear on immigration issues in Europe. The prospect of frequently visiting, and perhaps living for a long period in, my favorite city in the world offered a further advantage. (As a graduate student, when I first told my family of my intention to conduct research in the rain forest of francophone Africa, my worried mother had responded quite seriously, “Don’t they have culture in Paris?” I laughingly dismissed her suggestion as both impractical and anti-anthropological. Perhaps she was ahead of her time.) With my commitment to avoiding translators, however, a Paris-based project might require me to study some new African languages, as the francophone West African diaspora in Paris included no Beng speakers. Was I up to learning Bamana, Songhay, or Wolof?

*Lusophone Africans living in Lisbon?* In my life as an Africanist scholar and teacher, I had given short shrift to lusophone Africa. This project would offer me an intriguing way to deepen my understanding of the African continent and to compare the French and Portuguese colonial projects. It would also delight my husband, long infatuated with all things Portuguese, who had faithfully followed me to France and francophone African villages for over twenty years, and who cowrote *Parallel Worlds* with me, our memoir from Côte d’Ivoire (Gottlieb and Graham 1994)—all while longing to enjoy the *sh-sh-shs* of European Portuguese. With my knowledge of French, I imagined it shouldn’t be too hard to learn the equally Latin-derived language of Portuguese . . . though there was an ancient linguistic score I’d have to settle, from back in 1971.

That first year in college, a Portuguese classmate had, in my mind, polluted a French literature seminar I was taking. The daughter of a diplomat, she was far more worldly, better educated, and more impeccably dressed than I (improbably wearing Coco Chanel outfits to every class). But, just turned

seventeen, I was still working on a pretentious Parisian accent, and I ethnocentrically graded all spoken French on a Parisian scale. Absurdly, my Portuguese classmate received a failing grade in my private, Paris-based test, and her Portuguese-inflected French set me up for three decades of unabashed prejudice against the sounds of European Portuguese. I'd have to set aside this silly but long-standing bias against the nasalized tones of the Portuguese language.

*Sephardic "Crypto-Jews" and descendants of "New Christians" living in Portugal?* While drawing on my expertise in religion, this plan would dramatically expand my ethnographic gaze historically, linguistically, and geographically. At the same time, it would allow me to connect with a somewhat submerged aspect of my own identity. Though as far as I knew, my family tree contained no ancestors from Iberia, encountering Sephardic Jews would offer an exotic means to connect with my own Ashkenazi biography. And, being based in Portugal, such a project would thrill my lusomaniac husband.

But the scholarly demands of this plan scared me. Not only would I need to learn that problematic language of continental Portuguese, I might also need to learn to read Hebrew, and I would surely have to engage with a huge chunk of Iberian history as well as with Judeo-Christian ritual practice. Could I possibly imagine such a linguistically and historically ambitious project at this busy stage in my life? Even if I had the time, was my aging brain capable of it? Maybe it was no coincidence that most of the midlife fieldsite switches I knew about brought my colleagues closer to home—not farther away. And except for an absurd rumor I could scarcely believe about Michael Herzfeld becoming fluent in Thai in midlife (see chapter 5, this volume), no colleagues' fieldsite switches I knew of involved learning even one new language, let alone two.

*Autographing rituals among authors?* This idea grew out of another submerged aspect of my identity. Before becoming a social scientist, I had fancied myself a writer. In high school, I had cofounded and published a literary magazine; in college and graduate school, I published some poems and even won an award for one of them. Since then, I had gained my literary pleasures vicariously, by hanging out with my writer-husband and his social circle. Pursuing this project would allow me to actively bridge the humanities/arts/social science divide. As such, it would be family-friendly in a different way from the Portuguese-based research I was contemplating: it would allow me to become professionally engaged in my husband's literary world, interview-

ing his friends and colleagues. As with the Wall Street scheme, I could apply an interpretive approach to a contemporary, urban ritual, shedding light on Western forms of magic to challenge the easy Western condemnation of non-Westerners as superstitious. But was there enough of an idea here to make this into a long-term research agenda that might produce a book and not just a charming article or two?

Despite the drawbacks that potentially compromised each of these projects, I relished the prospect of pursuing any and all of them. As the possibilities multiplied, I felt heady, like a first-semester freshman selecting classes in college. So many new places to travel to, vocabularies to dip into, issues to contemplate. . . .

Yet I was also nervous. Any of these choices would mean mastering new bodies of scholarly literature and, in some cases, one or more new grammars and dictionaries; making my husband and children adjust to new places; forging relations with dozens of new colleagues I had yet to identify. . . . As a researcher in search of a new fieldsite, was I any less pathetic than the title group in Pirandello's absurd *Six Characters in Search of an Author*? Part of me was happy to postpone the difficult choice as long as possible.

I also remained ambivalent about abandoning the Beng, much as I realized the risks involved in returning to them. I felt forever close to my former Beng friends, neighbors, and adopted family, and I still loved writing about them. As I seesawed back and forth between proliferating options for new fieldwork and unrealistically imagining ways to travel back to Côte d'Ivoire, I spent ten years writing two new books based on my previous research in Bengland (DeLoache and Gottlieb 2000; Gottlieb 2004). I was finishing up the first book and getting back to the second when, in 1999, Côte d'Ivoire suffered a military coup. In 2002, full-scale civil war broke out, and brokered truces preceded broken truces; my distress about how my old Beng friends and neighbors were faring in this new nightmare could find no safe outlet. The time had definitively come to choose another fieldsite for myself and my still-young family. My years of productive procrastination were over.

#### A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA

In the end, I chose a project that I thought offered the greatest intellectual payoff, speaking to the widest set of scholarly issues. An offshore outpost of Africa that allowed me to draw on my Africanist training yet keep my family in a malaria-free zone, Cape Verde also opened up new worlds of historical in-



trigue and contemporary significance. On the surface, Cape Verde might appear an outlier, exceptional—and an especially odd choice for a francophone Africanist. These islands, 385 miles off the west coast of Africa, are so geoculturally liminal that the nation established a unique “special partnership” with the European Union in 2007 (Vieira and Ferreira-Pereira 2009), following a proposal seriously introduced in 2005 by a former prime minister of Portugal, Mário Soares, that Cape Verde ought to enter the European Union; and the possibility of Cape Verde joining NATO, while rejected by government officials, was also seriously raised recently by journalists (FORCV 2010). At least one scholar has suggested that the archipelago’s racialized, cultural, and linguistic history bears more resemblance to the island nations of the Caribbean than to mainland Africa (Batalha 2007); another has pointed out that the islands’ cultural riches, especially in literature and music, are almost a “miracle of uniqueness” in the face of the nation’s extreme economic poverty and few natural resources (Pratas 2007).

But the more I read of the archipelago’s history, the more I became convinced that these nine islands—while largely unknown in the English-speaking world, and rarely addressed in scholarly works even by Africanists—represent the epitome of modernity. Before the Portuguese occupation beginning in the 1460s, the islands were uninhabited, so the first generations were largely a mix of Europeans (mostly men) and West Africans (both men and women). Strategically located in the middle of the Atlantic—a rollicking space of pirate- and storm-laden danger through the eighteenth century—the islands served as the first major stopping-off point for ships bound from Europe for the Americas bearing all manner of cargo—including slaves. Serving as the Atlantic’s major slave depot for the first century of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Cape Verde islands became instrumental in forging early triangular ties among Europe, Africa, and the Americas. As such, the worldview of the population that became Cape Verdean—in effect, the state of being Cape Verdean—was tied up from the inception in a modern mix of populations—in other words, in hybridity, travel, diaspora. As the historian Tobias Green has recently suggested, Cape Verde may well be the place where “we” became modern (2007). Given the singular historical and cultural positioning of the islands, my own move from working with a relatively isolated group in the rain forest to a diasporic population at heart excited me for all the theoretical and historical issues with which I could now engage.

Beyond offering me an ambitious foray into five hundred years of globalization history, my choice of a Portuguese-speaking nation thrilled my husband. We found a Brazilian tutor and began studying Portuguese together,

setting aside a grand total of one hour on those Sundays when we could spare the time. During some lessons, the semester's relentless claims on my sleep caught up with me, and I'd catch myself dozing off on our couch as our patient tutor explained for the fifth time the rules for which syllable to stress in a word. Between lessons, Philip and I spent spare moments drilling each other on verb conjugations as we drove to pick up our daughter Hannah from school or sauntered down the aisles of the supermarket in search of the week's groceries. Many weeks, overwhelmed by our writing projects, students' papers, committee work, and parenting, we remembered to start our homework only minutes before our next lesson. By the following Sunday, we'd forgotten the new prepositions we'd started learning the week before. I joked with our tutor that we must be her worst students ever. Knowing French did help me learn to read Portuguese—but got in the way of learning to speak it. I despaired that I'd ever get a quarter as comfortable in Portuguese as I felt in French. Still, learning a new language in midlife proved a great adventure; eventually, while Nathaniel was off at college, Hannah joined the family study group.

When Philip and I combined our sabbaticals with some grants for a year's leave, I was able to begin my new project in Lisbon, where I planned to locate Cape Verdean immigrants now living in the postcolonial metropole—though I hadn't yet decided which aspect of the Cape Verdean diaspora to research. I knew that race, class, gender, and religion were all critical to Cape Verdeans' lives, but this time around, I wanted to avoid a serious misjudgment I had made in my first research among the Beng, when I settled on a research project before contacting the community, based on theoretical issues I had identified from scholarly literature. The difficulties that resulted from that act of hubris formed the continuing theme behind the memoir I coauthored with my husband (Gottlieb and Graham 1994). Determined not to repeat this mistake, I deliberately kept my project open-ended, applying for "seed grants" that would allow me to identify a suitable topic in a new fieldsite.

I spent the first several months meeting Cape Verdeans across class, race, and gender lines and getting to know scholarly colleagues who specialized in Cape Verde. Secretly, I expected to carry out what I imagined as the easiest of the projects I had sketched out: a study of children. With infancy in rural Africa the focus of my research and writing about the Beng over the previous decade, it made sense to draw on the thematic expertise I had already amassed and take it to a new context. Of course, the new context was hugely different, but that made the project exciting; the comparativist's payoff seemed tremendous. As I discovered, though, other scholars of Cape Verde had also found

the childhood project appealing, and I found myself disappointed to consider researching a topic that colleagues in several fields had already tackled.

By contrast, no one knew of any research on another topic I had considered: Cape Verdeans who had Jewish ancestry. In studying the archipelago's history from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I had read that the earliest European settlers on the uninhabited islands included Iberian Jews fleeing anti-Semitism in both Spain and Portugal . . . but I had yet to read about any contemporary Cape Verdeans who could trace their family line back to that moment, or who even knew about it. Would I find any live Cape Verdeans who cared about this subject?

From my first days in Lisbon, I started tentatively mentioning this potential topic to colleagues. My Cape Verdeanist colleagues all knew of the early Jewish era of the islands and encouraged me to pursue it, optimistic that I would find some Cape Verdeans who traced their ancestry back to those early Jewish immigrants. So I started asking the Cape Verdeans I met about this. To my surprise, they, too, knew about the Jewish history of their island nation, and urged me to focus on this line of inquiry. But they didn't know anyone who actually descended from those Jewish immigrants. Not being a historian, I wanted a living community to work with. If I couldn't find any living Cape Verdeans who counted themselves as Jewish—or who at least acknowledged the Jewish branch of their genealogy—I wouldn't take on this project. My quest to find Cape Verdeans with Jewish ancestry eerily echoed another quest on which I had unintentionally embarked over a quarter century earlier, when I had spent a month roving across Abidjan in search of a single member of a tiny minority ethnic group, the Beng, whose lives I had arrived to study. Was I doomed to choose obscure groups hiding in invisible corners of complicated ethnic landscapes?

One day, I spotted a notice in the Lisbon newspaper advertising a book signing for a study about Portuguese Jews by a local historian. (“Book launches” held in shopping malls are a favorite pastime of the Portuguese, Philip and I had discovered to our delight.) Might I spot some Cape Verdeans in the audience? If I did, would I have the courage to approach them and introduce myself?

In the bookstore section of the department store where the signing would be held, I eyed the empty seats and led my husband and daughter to a row from where I might glimpse everyone entering the open area. Soon enough, two men entered who I guessed were Cape Verdeans. Although the “phenotype” of Cape Verdeans is strikingly variable—thanks to the diversity of groups that mixed to create the islands' population—I'd had good success so

far in identifying Cape Verdeans when the opportunity arose. What if I stumbled now? The thought of embarrassing myself publicly kept me in my seat.

Luckily, the two men sat down in the row directly in front of us, and I was close enough to eavesdrop. Straining my still-poor understanding of Portuguese to the limits, I managed to catch enough of their conversation to be convinced that my hunch was right: they were Cape Verdean. And since they were at a lecture about the history of Jews in Portugal, was it too much to assume that they might have Jewish ancestry themselves, that they had ventured out on a cool night out of curiosity about their own family histories?

As the author of the book began his short lecture, I found my attention commuting back and forth between his summary of his research, and the occasional whispered comments in front of me. Suddenly my project felt alive, feasible . . . mine.

Just as suddenly, the prospect of actually shaping a project around Jews in Cape Verde seemed daunting. The doubts and concerns I had already cultivated about beginning a new research project assailed me as my first two potential consultants sat, unknowingly, in front of me.

Still, by the end of the talk, I found the resolve necessary to approach the men. I introduced myself with some small talk about the lecture, then declared my professional identity and asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview some time. Both men nodded eagerly, then scribbled their names, cell phone numbers, and e-mail addresses in my notebook.

Whatever doubts and anxieties I might still have, it was too late for them to claim me now. My research project had begun in earnest.

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Choosing a project theme because it intrigued and excited the community—rather than appalling them, as my first research on traditional religious practice had done with the Beng so long ago—was the beginning of what I hoped would be a more egalitarian, hence more ethical, basis for my new research project (cf. Lamphere 2004). But beyond the many intellectual pleasures that the project offers me, it has entailed several tectonic shifts for me as a scholar. While in Lisbon, the most immediate difference was the task of pursuing consultants across a city of almost three million—rather than finding curious neighbors standing right outside my front door in a village of a few hundred. In Ivory Coast, once I'd finally found a Beng student in the nation's capital, he'd sent me a letter of introduction to his uncle up-country, and Philip and I had moved into the uncle's compound for a few weeks, then into another vil-

lage down the road. From then on out, “the Beng” surrounded me as neighbors.

In Lisbon, the space of research proved quite different. Cape Verdeans live spread among many neighborhoods on both sides of the Tejo River, and Cape Verdeans with acknowledged Jewish heritage are even more dispersed, only partially an acknowledged group even among themselves. The first two men I met led me, one by one, to friends and family all across the metropolitan area, taking me on new subway lines, to new neighborhoods, as I followed their widespread ties. My challenges in identifying a somewhat hidden and dispersed community may not be endemic to all urban anthropology projects. Many cities do contain bounded neighborhoods in which relatively homogeneous groups live—working-class Mexicans in Chicago, second-generation Chinese-Americans in New York, Korean-Americans in Los Angeles. . . . But such is not the case with Cape Verdeans in Lisbon.

Indeed, although I grew up in New York and considered myself a “city girl,” doing ethnography in a European metropolis often left me breathless. For my first few months in Lisbon, I wasn’t even sure if, or when, I’d actually “started fieldwork.” In recent years, a growing number of cultural anthropologists have pondered their own version of such “Where does ‘the field’ start and end?” conundrums, and I had even taught some key texts on the theme.<sup>1</sup> But reading and teaching articles, and living their lessons, were two entirely different endeavors—as countless generations of students and scholars before me have well known. Did learning to find my way through the metros and buses of a new city constitute “ethnography”? Or figuring out which pronoun to use (or not use) when greeting people? What about knowing when to predict that the car speeding up the hill was likely to screech to an unlikely stop at the crosswalk, rather than run me over?

And then there were the evenings. Just two weeks into our thirteen-month stay in Lisbon, Philip and I celebrated our thirtieth wedding anniversary by going to a concert by the great Cape Verdean musician Tito Paris, who lives in Lisbon and was playing at a downtown club. Could I claim our anniversary celebration as the official beginning of my project, or was that personal ritual too intimate to share the discursive space we call “research”?

Scholars such as Behar (1996, 2007), D’Amico-Samuels ([1991] 1997),

1. For an intelligent selection of such writings, see, e.g., Amit (2000); *Anthropology Matters* (2004a, 2004b); Dresch, James, and Parkin (2000); Gupta and Ferguson (1997); Marcus (1998d); Ortner (1997); Rasmussen (2003); Stoller (1997). In this volume, Lepowsky, Seligmann, and Stoller also reflect on this issue.

Stoller (2004), and others have wondered aloud whether the search for boundaries between our personal and professional lives even makes analytic sense (cf. Hanisch [1970] 2006 for an early feminist articulation of this position). Likewise, I came to see my fieldwork in Portugal as a complicated space suspended between domestic and scholarly entanglements. I might spend one hour helping my daughter study for her sixth-grade history test (in Portuguese) about the Portuguese colonial empire in Africa, the next conversing with our Cape Verdean housekeeper, the next meeting with a Cape Verdean diplomat . . . all the while plotting in my mind how to ask for paper towels the following morning at our grocer's, using minimally decent-sounding Portuguese (cf. Murano 2007).

To be sure, from our first days in Lisbon, any time I interacted with anyone—filling out bank forms to open up an account, buying pots for our understocked kitchen, making arrangements for an Internet connection in our apartment—I struggled to expand my fledgling Portuguese by mentioning my plan to conduct research with Cape Verdean immigrants in Lisbon. From such casual conversations, I observed a range of people's reactions to the project. Some whispered tedious warnings to “be careful” in “those neighborhoods,” which were notoriously “crime-ridden.” Others offered to introduce me to their Cape Verdean house cleaner, or brother-in-law, or colleague. No matter what the reaction—from crypto-racist to supportive—everyone had an opinion about my planned research with Cape Verdeans, and that fact itself was of ethnographic interest.

Contacting Cape Verdeans meant an initial telephone conversation or e-mail note—both communications in Portuguese, a new language with which I was still doing mighty battle (cf. Graham 2009). In striking contrast to a range of expertises to which we may have become accustomed in middle-age professorship, a midcareer fieldsite switch may produce a shocking but ultimately welcome reminder that we are always students at heart, that the business of learning is as important to our careers—as scholars and as professors—as is the business of teaching.

After two decades with relatively firm collegial networks, I am enjoying forging relations with new colleagues in several arenas of scholarship (including Jewish studies, lusophone studies, migration studies, and European studies). Then, too, my project has me working with people along the “race” spectrum, who have complicated relations to their own racialized positions (rather than with a single group of people easily classified as “black”). I am now reading in critical race theory to approach issues that were previously relevant to my research more as background than foreground.

The class position of my consultants has also changed drastically from that of my previous research group. I am now largely working with middle-class professionals and highly educated elites—rather than farmers trained in the oral tradition; this shift to “studying up,” as Laura Nader first termed it (1969), produces its own challenges.<sup>2</sup> In the short term, I struggle to identify appropriate goods or services to provide, in exchange for my consultants’ precious time. The dried fish or bar of soap that was richly appreciated by a peasant Beng woman would be an insult to the Cape Verdean elites I interview. Beyond offering coffee or lunch in a café as we chat, I anticipate that a copy of an article I have written that draws on our interview will be the most appreciated gift for many of my consultants; for others, a digital copy of a photo I took of them, or a reference to an obscure publication about Cape Verde, is the best gift. Moreover, I find it much harder to maintain the fiction of expertise in the face of my “informants’” education (they can often draw their own genealogies faster than I can, using their own visual shorthand), and their desires to read everything I write about them. Of course, they merit this right, but I am just beginning to foresee the complications that may turn my writing into more of an ongoing conversation than a last-word publication “when they read what we write” (cf. Brettell 1996).

My new project also entails studying a highly mobile population spread across four continents—rather than a highly rooted community with enduring ties to place, as the Beng were. The new generation of anthropologists is trained to work with such diasporic groups from the get-go; catching up with my students’ techniques is exciting . . . and humbling.

The breadth of my consultants’ lives in space is matched by their depth in time—a new source of knowledge for me. Among the Beng, written records were few and far between: I once spent two weeks in the French colonial archives and managed to find only a single document mentioning the Beng region in passing. By contrast, both Cape Verdeans and Jews have richly documented histories. My new project compels me to master a daunting array of historical eras in Jewish and Cape Verdean histories and diasporas. Indeed, over the course of my year in Lisbon, the project asserted itself by popping out in new directions, taking me to new continents, new centuries, new literatures at a dizzying pace. In this lifetime will I ever be able to claim expertise in all these fresh paths of discovery?

2. For more recent discussions of anthropological work with elites, see, e.g., Carter (2007); de Pina-Cabral and de Lima (2000); Fumanti (2004); Ignatowski (2004); Marcus (1992, 1993, 1998a); Marcus and Mascarenhas (2005); Ortner (2010), Shore and Nugent (2002).

For example, initially I thought my theme was relations between Portuguese Jews and Cape Verde. But many of the “Cape Verdeans” I have met are not fully “Cape Verdeans,” though in some contexts they claim to be. The life story of one woman I met early in my stay in Lisbon, Maria, pushed me to expand my definition of “Cape Verdean.” Born on the Cape Verdean island of São Vicente, Maria moved to Guinea-Bissau with her parents at the age of five. There, she later married a man born in Guinea-Bissau, whose parents had also emigrated from Cape Verde. Despite considering themselves Cape Verdean, the couple lived for the next thirty or so years in Guinea-Bissau, where they bore and raised their seven children. After independence, the family managed to attain Portuguese citizenship, and they all moved permanently to Lisbon. Soon after they moved, they felt prosperous enough to finally plan a vacation: Maria, now a grandmother, “returned home” to Cape Verde, where she spent a month getting to know her homeland for the first time since her early childhood. Her children and grandchildren have never been to Cape Verde—indeed, they live dispersed across several countries and two continents. Nevertheless, at least one of this couple’s grown daughters, who has never set foot on the islands, considers Cape Verde “home” and says she feels enormous nostalgia and homesickness—*saudade*—for the islands whenever she hears music from the homeland of her grandparents.

Since hearing about this family’s history, I have discovered that their life course is quite common. I had already read about epochs in which ties between Cape Verde and the nearby continental former Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau were especially active. My readings had focused on the period immediately preceding and following independence from Portugal, in which the charismatic, Cape Verde-born leader, Amílcar Cabral, had united the island and mainland colonies in a political struggle that earned him, first, international fame and honor, then assassination (Chabal 1983). Now I discovered that the connections linking the mainland and island communities ran far deeper than Cabral’s biography and political struggles, and had existed for far longer than I had realized. Reading the history of the past half millenium taught me that studying Cape Verdeans necessarily means studying Guinea-Bissau as well.<sup>3</sup>

As I seek out Cape Verdeans with Jewish heritage—and Portuguese Jews with experience in Cape Verde—I find that the two diasporas, of Jews and

3. Several chapters in one scholarly volume document the extensive, and often competing, nature of these ties between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, dating back to the early sixteenth century (Santos 2001).



Cape Verdeans, are both so persistently mobile that neither stands still for me (Gottlieb 2007). For example, early in my Lisbon year, I met a Portuguese Jew who was born and raised in Mozambique. Although she had no ties to Cape Verde, her network and her stories led me to other Portuguese Jews—and other Cape Verdeans—who did migrate, sometimes for short periods, sometimes permanently, from Cape Verde to Mozambique. To trace the networks of these peripatetic lives, I can now contemplate fieldwork not only in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, but in São Tomé, Angola, and Mozambique—the other outposts of the former Portuguese empire in Africa—and, farther afield, in Brazil and even Goa, where some of my consultants also have relatives. A different historical era could take me in yet other directions: to Morocco and Gibraltar, where another group of Cape Verdeans trace their “Sephardic” ancestry to Jews who fled from Morocco’s nineteenth-century economic and political woes to Gibraltar, and thence to Cape Verde; and to other European cities where sizeable groups of Cape Verdeans now live, including Paris, London, Rome, and Rotterdam.<sup>4</sup>

Closer to home, the project is also taking me to New England, the site of a robust Cape Verdean population that can trace its origins to the first group of African Americans to arrive in the United States as free migrants (rather than as slaves), via the nineteenth-century whaling industry. I have recently begun engaging with the Cape Verdean community in New England, now over a quarter-million strong, and consider the Providence-Boston corridor as my major fieldsite for the immediate future (Gottlieb 2010).

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When I contemplate my career to date, I am struck to realize how my field trajectory embodies that of the discipline writ small. From the malarial zone of West Africa to the flu zone of western Europe . . . from a small village to a capital city . . . from a local, ancestor- and spirit-based religion to a conjoined Judeo-Christian monotheistic one . . . from an insistent isolated and localized population to an insistent diasporic and mobile one . . . from a singular racial identity to a complex multiracialized one . . . from the neoco-

4. The project is also pushing me to question the easy divide between Ashkenazim (Jews with origins in Eastern and Northern Europe) and Sephardim (Jews with origins in Iberia, Turkey, and North Africa)—a dichotomy on which Jewish historians routinely rely. The transcontinental routes taken by Cape Verdeans with Jewish ancestry cross-cut these two geographic zones and challenge such a neat division (for a related critique, see Kaye/Kantrowitz 2007).

lonized south to the former-seat-of-empire north . . . from a single fieldsite to a multisited community . . . from peasants raised in the oral tradition to economic and political middle-class workers and even elites . . . the list of transformed, and transformatory, themes in my professional biography, as in the discipline's, goes on.

In short, as cultural anthropology has come to terms with a globalized world, so have I—and, as the other contributors to this volume suggest, so have many colleagues in midcareer, in their varied ways. The discipline itself continues to challenge its models, methods, and modes of thought—just as we, as individual scholars, continue to develop our own intellectual paths. In trading midlife expertise for second- (or third-) time-around neophyte naiveté, we lose claims to authoritative knowledge . . . but we regain that sense of wonder that drew many of us to anthropology to begin with—and that, both as scholars and as teachers, we lose at our peril.

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