Community Formation among Recent Immigrant Groups in Porto, Portugal

By

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Abstract

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The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in migration to Europe, primarily by refugees fleeing conflict in the Middle East and Central Asia, but with significant flows of refugees and other migrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa as well. Portugal is not among the primary European destinations for refugees or immigrants; possibly, in part, because there are fewer migrants in Portugal, it is an E.U. country where new arrivals are still met with a degree of enthusiasm. Hard right, anti-immigrant parties—on the rise in other parts of the E.U.—have not gained much traction in Portugal. This work looks at the relative invisibility of immigrants in Porto, the country’s second largest city, which may make those immigrants a less visible target for intolerance and political opportunism, but may also impede a larger, more self-determinant role for immigrants and their communities in greater Portuguese society.

A major contributing factor to immigrant invisibility is the absence (outside of Lisbon and southern Portugal) of neighborhoods where African immigrants are concentrated. In Porto, communities do not form around geography; instead, communities form around institutions. The role of religious institutions in community formation is examined—Institutions such as Protestant and Catholic churches, Catholic seminarian education, and one of Porto’s two mosques. Some of these institutions are attended mostly by non-Africans, but nevertheless appeal to sub-Saharan African immigrants on an aesthetic and/or affective level. Others are attended mostly or exclusively by immigrants. The roles of charismatic and well connected individuals in facilitating further connections between immigrants and their communities is also examined, as are aging shopping centers—the centros comerciais—which offer a secular space where Africans might gather together, socialize, and share information in the course of patronizing African groceries, cafés and hair salons.

Porto’s African immigrants have created or nurtured communities through common goals, interests, and beliefs. In the absence of geographic concentration, they have managed to find ways to share information, support one another, and celebrate their shared experiences.
Dedicated to Ada and Oscar.

In so many ways, I write this for you.
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Introduction

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20 King James Version)

For various reasons, this dissertation has taken me a long time to compose. At the time I conducted my fieldwork—a summer visit to Porto in 2006, followed by an extended stay of close to a year from 2007-8—there were murmurings of unease in Europe regarding immigration. There had been the European connection of the 9/11 plotters, and then, in subsequent years, a succession of attacks—the assassinations of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh, the bombings of trains in London and Madrid—that implicated Muslims, some who were immigrants and some citizens, leaving immigrants in general on the defensive as nationalists politicians and parties gained strength and sympathy in France, the Netherlands, Austria, Hungary, and elsewhere in Europe (Long 2017:6–9).

This was a political moment when the French center-Right government of Jacques Chirac passed the law “concerning… the wearing of symbols or garb which show religious affiliation in… schools,” (quoted in Verdugo and Milne 2016:18) which effectively banned Muslim headscarves from French schools. It was also reported that rising conservatism in Europe in the aughts was a consequence of a continental existential crisis, which has followed the loss of national sovereignty—renascent nationalism, attributed to the decline of the nation as a concept of practical relevance (e.g. Mols and Jetten 2014).

That was the situation at the time of my fieldwork. In the years that have since passed, the relationship between Europeans and immigrants has become increasingly complicated. As I write, in 2015, Europe is experiencing a refugee crisis that has accelerated at a dramatic pace in recent months, as refugees and migrants from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, and elsewhere struggle to cross the Mediterranean and find safety in Germany or other countries of the European Union. In the first eight months of 2015, more than 500,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe, with another 2,800 estimated to have been lost at sea. By year’s end, it is probable that the number of arrivals in Europe will be twice as many in 2015 as in 2014, which itself had exceeded any previous records1. In fact, the movement of people in Europe will be the largest since the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, and the first of this scale to involve non-Europeans (Chan 2015).

The situation escalates rapidly, destabilizing an already fragile European Union and bringing the nativists out as well as the compassionate. Divisions are exposed: predominantly Catholic Eastern European countries reject Muslim refugees despite the full-throated

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1 I did not record my source for these figures when I wrote in September of 2015. By the end of that year, however, the U.N. High Commision on refugees reported that “some 1,000,573 people had reached Europe across the Mediterranean, mainly to Greece and Italy, in 2015. Of these, 3,735 were missing, believed drowned…. In addition to the sea crossings, recent figures also estimated that a further 34,000 have crossed from Turkey into Bulgaria and Greece by land.” (Clayton and Holland 2015)
encouragement of Pope Francis for all Catholics to welcome and give succor to migrants and refugees (Pullella 2015). Center-right political parties are becoming more extreme in response to challenges by nativist groups, while parties on the left have been reacting primarily to austerity measures imposed during the European economic crisis and moving farther leftward. Europe’s economic crisis has meanwhile been further exacerbated by the refugee crisis, and between the right’s dissatisfaction with bailouts, the left’s frustrations with austerity, and both sides’ anxieties in the face of the current influx of refugees and cultural changes they might bring—at once too conservative for secular Europeans and too Muslim for Christian Europeans (Lucassen 2005:2–4)—the European Union itself is at risk.

As I write this, I can’t predict how the situation will develop in coming years. Unfortunately, I cannot envision an improvement anytime soon. It would take the near simultaneous collapse of both the Assad regime and ISIS, along with newfound stability in Afghanistan, to staunch the two largest flows of migrants, and even if this happened, refugees would still flow, fleeing repression in Eritrea, multiple conflicts in Sudan and in South Sudan, and violence by Boko Haram and other Islamist groups in Africa. Violence and intimidation by the like of Boko Haram can further provoke disproportionate and indiscriminate counterviolence by state actors trying to reassert control. And there are other conflicts which we hear less about of late, but which could reignite with alarming ease: Mali, the Central African Republic, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo… In short, I fear that a refugee crisis that was almost invisible to most American media three months ago will only escalate in the coming months and years.

In the face of chaos and uncertainty, I wonder what I have to say that can be constructive. My research objective in Portugal was to understand more about sub-Saharan African immigrant communities. More specifically, I saw Porto, Portugal as a place where an immigrant presence was a relatively new phenomenon, where immigrants had not had the time, and perhaps hadn’t even the inclination, to settle in one neighborhood, but might find value in being part of a community made up of people with shared backgrounds and experiences. I thought, based on what I saw in the U.S., that one place for such a community to coalesce might be in immigrant churches. What I discovered was interesting, and sometimes inspiring, but I don’t claim to be able to recommend groundbreaking policy initiatives, nor have I written something that creates a miraculous new empathy for immigrants on the part of readers—I don’t expect this work to be read by more than a handful of people, all—or almost all—already empathetic.

I do think that Portugal has managed to sidestep much of the European refugee and migration crisis as it has played out this last decade. Some of this may be due to wise policy-making—certainly, the elevation of António Guterres from U.N. High Commissioner of Refugees to Secretary General suggests that the international diplomatic community may see Portugal as a role model on this issue. Much of Portugal’s success in this field, though, has to be attributed to the relatively low numbers of migrants and refugees in the country, and, as we shall see, to the relative invisibility of those that are present. One gets the sense that the Portuguese are not particularly threatened by the immigrants they do not see. Furthermore, the country has seemingly pulled itself out of the financial crisis of the early 2010s. The current Portuguese economy is a case for cautious optimism—it is hardly a breeding ground for nationalist xenophobia.
What I will have to say in these pages will be less a slice of life, taken from the experiences of immigrants in Porto, and more of a sliver. I am under no illusion, nor should be the reader, that I have uncovered some essential truth about these people’s lives in Portugal, but I believe I have gained a greater understanding of what sustains people in a difficult position, far from the families and friends that supported them at home and the churches and mosques where they made their connections to their higher power for most of their lives. Because I was curious about religion, my focus for most of this work is on the spiritual lives of these immigrants, and how they found (or founded) a community of faith in an unfamiliar country. I tried to avoid limiting myself to just looking at faith communities, and ultimately I found community formation in the secular sphere as well, but I am very aware of how a different scholar’s interests, foreknowledge, or even identity might expose her to entirely different networks of emotional, financial or even spiritual support. We bring who we are, what we know, and where we come from to the field with us, and what we learn is both informed by and limited by ourselves.

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A Brief History of Africans in Portugal

Slavery was a part of Portuguese life from the country’s beginning; slaves were captured during the reconquista, in raids on North Africa and in more amicable exchanges with Arab merchants (Tinhorão 1988:43). The business of slavery was further advanced by the invasion of Ceuta in 1415, which facilitated the taking of slaves along the Moroccan coast and in the Canary Islands in the following decades (Thornton 2006:30). By the time the Portuguese slaver Gil Eannes rounded Cape Bajador in 1434 and initiated the “discovery” of Africa by Europeans (Thornton 2006:30), the slavery had been firmly established in the metropole, and the Papal Bulls Dum Diversas (1454; quoted in Hood 1994:117) and Romanus Pontifex (1455; see Davenport 1917:9–26) insured the approval of the Holy See with regards to the reduction “to perpetual slavery” of non-Christian peoples in all lands conquered by the Portuguese. As A.C. de C.M. Saunders succinctly put it, “…by the end of the Middle Ages most commentators on Roman and canon law were agreed that the appropriate authorities, in any country, Christian or infidel, could reduce prisoners of war and criminals to slavery; that children of slaves were slaves themselves; and that slaves could be bought and sold like chattels” (1982:35).

Though the historical record makes many mentions of slaves and freedmen living in Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries, there is little to elucidate exact numbers or distribution until the 1530s (Saunders 1982:50); at this time, parish registers and burial lists begin to fill in some of these details, though with severe limitations (non-Christian slaves are conspicuous by their absence). During this time, according to Saunders’s conservative calculation, there might have been 35,000 slaves and freedmen of African origin in Portugal, 2.5-3 percent of the national population (1982:59). More significant, though, are estimates of metropolitan demographics—according to Suanders, 10-12% of Lisbon’s residents, and around 6% of Porto’s, were slaves or freedmen (1982:53 and 55). Slave labor was distributed across many sectors of the economy; they served nobility, religious houses, merchants, farmers and laborers. Slaves and freedmen created communities in Lisbon, Porto and elsewhere, based around their common labors and hardships, intermarriage, and a widely spoken Creolesque variant of Portuguese called fala de Guiné. Though Whites and Blacks were allowed to interact and even intermarry, and friendships
between Blacks and Whites were far from uncommon during this period, a belief in the innate physical, intellectual, and “temperamental” superiority of Whites over Blacks is documented from the beginning of European incursions into sub-Saharan Africa (Saunders 1982:166–167).

By the mid-18\textsuperscript{th} century, a combination of factors led to abolition of slavery in the metropole—these included the ever increasing need for labor in Brazil, and a perception that slaves were dangerous sources of lawlessness, who furthermore took work away from young men in the kingdom, who themselves would turn idleness into crime and disorder (Silva and Grinberg 2011:432–433). The general theory is that freed slaves in Portugal intermarried with White Portuguese, and by the beginning 20\textsuperscript{th} century there were no longer any recognizable descendants to be seen (e.g. Saunders 1982:179). This idea seems unsatisfying to me, and possibly inspired more by the problematic concepts of Gilberto Freyre’s Lusotropicalism than by solid scholarship (cf. Almeida 2004:58–63). In any case, there were almost no Portuguese of obvious African descent to be seen by the late 1950s. By that time, a combination of factors—drought in Cabo Verde, and mass emigration from Portugal as a result of expanded opportunities in greater Europe, represssion by the Estado Novo and, later, the threat of conscription for the colonial wars—brought to pass a new flow of immigrants into Portugal from Cabo Verde (Batalha 2008:65–66). This flow was primarily to Lisbon, and the neighborhoods of Amadora, Oeiras, and Loures developed growing Cabo Verdean neighborhoods (Esteves and Caldeira 2000:99–100). When the Estado Novo collapsed in April of 1974, the wave of decolonization that followed resulted in a wave of emigration from the newly liberated colonies—many retornados, or colonial settlers of European descent, but also Asians and Africans who might have been implicated as collaborators with the colonial government (Bosma, Lucassen, and Oostindie 2012:128–133). In the years that followed decolonization, civil wars in Mozambique and Angola made emigration an attractive option for those who could afford it, though the end of Apartheid in South Africa during the early 1990s allowed some diversion of migration to that country (Wotela and Letsiri 2015:103–104). Portugal became part of the European Economic Community (later to be the E.U.) in 1986, and in the aftermath the Portuguese economy picked up substantially, making the country that much more attractive for those seeking good jobs and a better life (Lopes 2003:284–285). At the same time, the Schengen Agreement opened borders across the European Union—Portugal opened its border as of 1995—and thereafter, Portugal and other southern European countries were seen as easy entry points for immigrants and asylum seekers with France, Germany, or the U.K. as an ultimate goal.

At the time of my research, the Portuguese census shows a flow of African migrants mostly out of Portugal, presumably returning to countries of origin. While there were small increases in numbers of immigrants from Cabo Verde and São Tome Principe between 2001 and 2011, other PALOP countries saw more nationals leave Portugal than arrive during this decade, and particularly Angola and Mozambique, which saw reductions to their Portuguese expatriate communities in the thousands of people. According to the Portuguese Instituto Nacional de Estatistica, this was in large part due to the end of the conflicts in Mozambique and Angola in the 1990s and 2000s, respectively (Moreira 2014:103–105). The Portuguese economy has been on an upswing for the last few years, however, and I would not be surprised to see new waves of immigration to Portugal arise. All depends of the stability of economies and the strength of governance, both with Portugal and at the level of the E.U.
My family and I had a difficult time together in Portugal, and I think it is worth mentioning some of our ups and downs as I describe my fieldwork. If I am too confessional, know that my research was conducted in a country still very influenced by its Catholic history, and that much of my time was spent with seminarians, nuns and priests. Confession and absolution precede grace; I am not sure if this writing ever finds its way even as far as absolution, much less beyond, but it is worth the attempt. My first chapter will begin with my family, searching together for sub-Saharan Africans in a town where everyone says there are no sub-Saharan Africans. How have Africans attained invisibility in Porto? And what (if anything) would Ralph Ellison—author of *Invisible Man*—have to say about this?

The next several chapters describe churches, a mosque, a Kingdom Hall...places where I found sub-Saharan Africans meeting together, worshipping, sharing important parts of their lives with one another. Their journeys—to Portugal, to God, or both—are described, and there are ceremonies and celebrations to experience—a baptism, a parade, a casting out of evil, and more.

Before I conclude, there will be an examination of some of the institutions, events, and individuals that speak to the interconnections between sub-Saharan Africans in Porto, but are located in a more secular sphere of interaction. There is also a discussion of the ways that commerce, entrepreneurship, and a little bit of good fortune have created space for community in Porto’s aging mini-malls.

I will finish by drawing some conclusions, and making some suggestions for possible future inquiries—in finding a few answers, I have created a hundred questions. I like to think of this as a mark of success.

Before I move on, I want to clarify some terminology that I will use herein. There are some who find the expression “sub-Saharan Africa(n)” to be problematic. I want to acknowledge this, but also to note that the phrase is still in common use among African academics, and in many cases, especially when talking about Iberian history and its ramifications, it is almost essential to distinguish between North Africa and “the rest.” Admittedly, I will myself often refer to “Africans” when I mean “sub-Saharan Africans,” but I hope that this is always done where the meaning is clear from context.

“Moors” or “Moorish” are words that are freighted with centuries of hostilities, and they are not particularly precise. They offer a very specific meaning in particular historical contexts, though, and I have tried to limit use of these words to such contexts.

Finally, the big word: “community.” Ted Bradshaw’s article on “post-place community” does a good job of separating the word from implications of a physical/geographic space, and instead imagining communities based upon social relations and solidarity, that might be sited anywhere (a church, a workplace, a dance club), or nowhere (in the case of online communities) (Bradshaw 2008). Some of these post-place communities seem qualitatively lacking in comparison with the classic ideal of small-town *Gemeinshaft*, but realistically, there are a lot of small towns that fall well short of that ideal as well. “Solidarity,” Bradshaw says,
“...implies a common identity and set of shared norms and values. A common identity means that people need to be able to identify whether they are part of a community or not, that becoming (or remaining) a member of a community is a significant act, and that others recognize the claim to membership…. Community identity is not permanent or exclusive, and individuals may have varying degrees of identification with their community. …community has shared norms and values or some of the attributes of culture…. A group of people that forms a community is stronger when that group of people shares multiple areas of interest and norms, rather than single ones. While people in a community do not need to like each other, they do need to be bonded in a common enterprise.” (Bradshaw 2008:9–10)

Bradshaw suggests that transitioning from place-based paradigms of community to the idea of the solidarity-based community means jettisoning the binary of either being “in” or “out”—as one would be in a neighborhood—in favor of a variable scale of engagement and belonging (Bradshaw 2008:13).

“Community” is a slippery concept, and I went into fieldwork with a Justice Potter Stewart definition to work with: I would know a community when I saw it, even if I couldn’t immediately say why exactly it was a community. Like “culture,” “community” is open to a great deal of interpretation, but, at least for anthropology, the stakes are a little lower—we’ve loaded “culture” with so much meaning that it can hardly move. “Community” is a somewhat more agile word than “culture,” but I still found myself thinking more of “spaces where community is possible” when the scope or nature of group solidarity was unclear. Perhaps the distinctions will be clearest in the contrast of potential communities with actual communities that follows.
Observing the Invisible:

Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and the Unseen Immigrants of Porto

“I thought…that if literature has any general function within any society and throughout the world, it must serve at its best as a study in comparative humanity. And the role of the writer, from that point of view, is to structure fiction which will allow a universal identification, while at the same time not violating the specificity of the particular experience and the particular character.” – Ralph Ellison, “On Initiation Rites and Power: Ralph Ellison Speaks at West Pont” from *Going to the Territory* (Ellison 1986:56)

Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man* and social philosopher, captured the conundrum of ethnographic writing in an address to West Point cadets: the writer and the reader of an ethnography both hope to understand something grand, something bigger than the historical moment and situation of the ethnographer’s specific field study. Reader and writer want to share understanding of a universal identification, drawn forth from a collage of particular experiences. The ethnographer is most often restrained from such elaborate over-generalizing, or should be; unlike the novelist, the ethnographer’s dialogue is taken from real people in real places; universality must take a back seat in ethnography to the immediate and the particular. Ethnography is not undiluted fact, but it is not fiction, either.

This being said, there could be a role for fiction in the process of ethnography, if the source is wielded with great care and insight, and, overall, with the greatest transparency. In this chapter, I describe the kind of invisibility that conceals, and sometimes shelters, the African immigrants of Porto, Portugal. In trying to understand my own field experiences in Porto, and particularly the first months of fieldwork, Ralph Ellison’s magnum opus offers insights through understanding and discussing “invisibility”—the varied definitions of invisibility found in the novel and in comparative humanities.

My first foray into the intersection of *Invisible Man* and my fieldwork began in California, with early words of advice and caution from UC Berkeley faculty. As I applied for funding and prepared myself and my family for field research, professors with knowledge of Portugal’s demographics and socio-geographic diversity repeatedly made a case for study in Lisbon, not in Porto. The message was that Africans in Portugal lived overwhelmingly in the capital city; this is where previous research had been done, where experts lived and taught, and where the ethnic neighborhoods were located. I countered their skepticism with my position that the size of the community was not as important to me, nor was the concentration of immigrants in particular *bairros*; I was more interested in community formation in areas of sparser immigrant populations.

In fact, the greater Porto and Aveiro\(^2\) metropolitan regions are statistically a very homogenous area, with immigrants making up only about 2.6 percent of the population, at least

\(^2\) The district of Aveiro, to Porto’s south, is more or less a continuation of Porto’s suburbs, and statistically relevant to this study. African immigrant population size tends to be proportionate in Aveiro district as a percentage of overall population to the same ratio in the district of Porto.
according to statistics provided by SEF (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, the Portuguese equivalent of the U.S.’s now defunct Immigration and Naturalization Service) and by the Instituto Nacional de Estatística Portugal (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras de Portugal 2017; Brinkhoff 2017). Immigrants from PALOP (Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa—Portuguese-speaking African nations) make up only one fifth of one percent of the population (non-PALOP Africans do not measurably affect this total). And it is true that Lisbon has more PALOP immigrants than Porto—they make up about three percent of the metropolitan population, or about 15 times their percentage in Porto. But the smaller scale of Porto’s immigrant landscape appealed to me. My original research topic focused on Mozambican immigration to Porto, but this expanded gradually as I realized the Mozambican community was too small to examine separately from other African immigrant groups. I broadened my scope to include a significant population of four thousand Portuguese-speaking Africans in Porto, and in time I found more and more Francophone and Anglophone Africans moving in the same circles, part of interlocking networks and communities.

Porto’s African community was small, yes, but it existed, despite what my contacts in Berkeley had said. Once my family and I arrived in Portugal, we continued to hear advice that I was in the wrong place, that I was wasting my time looking for African communities in a city that had none. This news was incongruent with the experiences that my family and I began having on a daily basis. In shops, on buses and metros, and on the street, we saw many Africans. For a while, there was some lingering doubt as to whether these were African immigrants or Afro-Brazilian immigrants. Eventually, though, I began to be more confident and bold as a fieldworker, and I began to introduce myself to people in public spaces. As it happened, I met many African immigrants in this way, but I never came across a Brazilian in the course of a spontaneous introduction. We were also starting to join in to the activities of a healthy American expatriate community in Porto; this, despite the fact that the American resident population of Porto is less than a tenth the size of the African presence in the city and its environs; it is comparable to the Mozambican population of greater Porto, the smallest group out of all the PALOP countries (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras de Portugal 2017). If Americans could create community, surely Cabo Verdeans, with six times their numbers, could do the same.

Why was it that residents of Porto (Portuenses), America-based experts in Luso-African cultures, and even some African immigrants themselves, held the resolute belief that Porto had a dearth of African immigrants? This made me wonder if I gave the Portuguese and the immigrants too little credit: perhaps they were not making a statement about the absolute scarcity of immigrants in Porto, but merely pointing out the comparative numbers in the two major cities. No matter what I was seeing in Porto, it would be folly for me to think that their numbers compared with those in Lisbon, where immigration from Africa has had a deeper history and a more visible demographic impact.

The problem with this idea is that in time, many African immigrants in Porto made it apparent to me that they were well aware of not being recognized in accurate numbers, though they did not theorize why this might be so. Also, the White Portuguese with whom I spoke

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While figures are available for immigrant population on an annual basis, the district population as a whole was tabulated in censuses conducted in 2001 and 2011. To analyze figures for the period of my fieldwork (2007-8), I used immigrant population totals for 2008, and averaged the total population as of the 2001 and 2011 censuses. This is inexact, but works to give a reasonable snapshot of the demographics involved.
generally took little time for reflection before advising me to go to Lisbon. Common knowledge seemed to supplant a critical perspective on demographic shifts in Porto; it seemed as if most Portuenses had heard themselves that Africans lived in Lisbon, not Porto, and so they chose to helpfully pass this along without much consideration.

I also wondered if my family’s use of mass transit and foot power allowed us to see more of life in Porto than is seen by the average, middle-class Portuguese person, who is likely to travel by car, often using the cintura (beltway) to bypass the congestion of the older parts of town. As recent immigrants, many people from Africa worked lower wage jobs than native Portuguese, and thus would be more likely to use mass transit. Buying a car might also be an unnecessarily extravagant move for the immigrant who does not intend to seek permanent residence in Portugal—several Africans with whom I spoke were using Portugal as a gateway to other E.U. countries, especially the U.K. and the Netherlands. An end result seems to be that Porto’s diversity is manifest on sidewalks and trains, yet unseen by motorists in their isolating automobiles.

The inability or resistance of White Portuguese to see the Africans in their midst brought to my mind the idea of the invisible Other, as described by Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man*, a seminal work of African-American literature. Ellison’s protagonist, both eponymous and unnamed, describes himself as invisible “simply because people refused to see me” (p. 3). What does it mean to be unseen, to have one’s physical presence and visual image aggressively denied and rejected by all around? Do the complexities of Ellisonian invisibility inform a greater understanding of the lives of Africans in Porto?

In this chapter I am looking to fiction as a tool, useful here to better examine the interactions of Porto’s increasingly diverse residents. To do this, it is crucial to understand Ralph Ellison’s concept of invisibility as it is developed in the novel. It is also necessary to ask if this concept, utilized to describe a socio-psychological condition of African-Americans at a moment in time immediately antecedent to the 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* and the subsequent Civil Rights Movement, can be of use in describing the condition of immigrants in Western Europe in the first decade of the 21st century. In response to the latter challenge, I cite a number of other scholars and journalists who have used invisibility in new ways, to better understand a variety of phenomena far removed from the experiences of mid-20th century African-Americans. For example, in “Ralph Ellison and K. S. Maniam: Ethnicity in America and Malaysia, Two Kinds of Invisibility,” Tang Soo Ping contrasts *Invisible Man* with Indo-Malaysian novelist Maniam’s *The Return*; in so doing, Ping uses Ellisonian invisibility to analyze minority identity in Maniam’s work, and uses both works to comment on ethnic identification in two very different contexts (Ping 1993). Folklorist John W. Roberts invoked Ellison in his 1998 Presidential Address to the American Folklore Society; he sought to “draw…an analogy between folklore’s struggle to achieve individual disciplinary status and the struggle for individual identity by the protagonist in…Invisible Man” (Roberts 1999). And in “An Afrofuturist Reading of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,*” Lisa Yaszek looks to the intersections of Ellison’s work and the Afrofuturist literary movement to describe African-American experiences in unique ways (Yaszek 2005). And mere months after my fieldwork wrapped up, David Samuels (2008) was writing in the *New Republic* about Barack Obama’s *Dreams from My Father*; Samuels heard echoes of Invisible Man in Obama’s writing, and examined the then-candidate’s electoral strategies through the lens of the novel.
Beyond *Invisible Man*, there is a long history of anthropological use of literature to comment on field observations or structure ethnography—not always with the best of results. Bronislaw Malinowski’s relationship to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* has been subjected to a dressing down since the publication of his Trobriand Island diaries (e.g. Stocking 1968:190); the staying power of *Argonauts* and its continued status as part of the anthropological canon are not undeserved or unexpected, but Malinowski’s sub-textual engagement with Conrad’s novel, which itself meets with such ambivalence from post-colonial critics, is, if not a flaw, at least a distraction. Even were we to ignore Malinowski’s fascination with Conrad, the title itself—*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*—is an allusion to literature itself, and a gratuitous one at that, as Malinowski makes no reference to the Argonauts in the text.

More complicated than *Argonauts* in terms of unrevealed uses of fiction is the classic ethnographic film *The Hunters*. Almost forty years after making this documentary on a Khoisan hunting party, director John Marshall explained that, “The vignettes of the men on the hunt came from reading *Moby Dick*… Some of the leafy narration is absorbed from Faulkner” (2012:36). To his credit, Marshall looks back on his first ethnographic film in a long career with many self-criticisms, suggesting that, were he to use “the rules of filming I use today, The Hunters would have appeared as a slowly expanding series of events rather than a narrow story” (2012:36). In attempting to find a coherent narrative strand to his filmed observations, or attempting to make those observations evocative of Melville’s plotlines, Marshall “ignored much of what was going on that was important to the hunters.” In Marshall’s words “*The Hunters* was a romantic film by an American kid and revealed more about me than about the Ju/'hoansi;” (2012:36–39).

So the question remains: Can I use ideas from fiction without being gratuitous, or imposing narrative where none exists, or generally overstepping the mandate of the ethnographer (a fragile thing even in the best of situations)? I assert that *Invisible Man* is useful here, only as, and exactly to the extent that, it holds parallels with situations on the ground, in the lives of immigrants whom I have met. My responsibility in using this tool is to make clear its utility, but even more so its greater limitations. If I fail in this, I am guilty of a rough irony, as the core message of *Invisible Man* contains a warning against seeing in a single person with black skin the embodiment of all that is perceived to be “African-American”. I wish to examine the possibility and the advisability of using Ellison’s “invisibility” in a different context, without suggesting that the experiences of the multitude in the African diaspora are interchangeable. I see value in drawing some analogies where they are reasonable; if there are obvious parallels between the lives of some of Porto’s Africans and the narrative of Ellison’s novel, then the novel will be useful. Foregrounding Ellisonian invisibility may also help this ethnographer to navigate the dangerous territories of representation; it helps me to remember that the individual lives of the people I met in Portugal are *a priori* individual, and the common threads of their narratives may be described as interwoven only with the greatest care. Indeed, the Ellisonian visibility of those written about is dependent on the ethnographer maintaining a visibility of a different sort, as an artisan, throughout the text, and an open discussion of fiction here may help to undermine, in the valuable ways, the presumptions of undiluted truth that implicate ethnographic practice. I therefore strive for a careful and concise use of literature as tool, and I make every attempt to find and expose the disjuncts between the lives herein described, and the novel and its own creative milieu.
Proceeding, then—what are the manifold and overlapping meanings of invisibility, both to Ralph Ellison and to his protagonist? People refuse to see the narrator of this novel, yes, but in what sense? *Invisible Man* is written as a Bildungsroman, showing the narrator’s search for a role to play in a society structured by White privilege. As he proceeds, he finds little rationality in his interactions with either Whites or Blacks; rather, he finds that his expected role is dictated to him by Whites, both racist and progressive, as well as by older and/or more sophisticated Blacks who have learned how to function and succeed in a society where Whites control the distribution of power. It is tempting to jump to the conclusion, given the novel’s confrontations of race and class, that the narrator is an invisible man because those with status and power are compelled to avoid his gaze and deny his existence. This interpretation calls to mind Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, which suggests that recognition of slave by master mitigates the absolute power that master has over slave, and conversely that power is maintained by denying the humanity of the powerless. Such a manifestation of invisibility is found in *Invisible Man* in passages such as this one, describing the protagonist’s entrance into a *Radical Chic*-style Communist cocktail party:

“I felt extremely uncomfortable, although after brief glances no one paid me any special attention. It was as though they hadn’t seen me, as though I were here, and yet not here....” (Ellison 1952:229)

Still, this first inspection cannot be the complete definition of invisibility in *Invisible Man*; the novel’s protagonist is rarely able to remain unseen by the powerful. Instead, his destiny unfolds in moments of attention from Whites and from other Blacks. In Ellison’s own interpretations and his sources, one finds that neither a Hegelian lack of recognition nor ironic commentary on the unavoidable visibility of Black skin in a majority-White country is the essential aspect of invisibility in this novel; and yet, these ideas form the foundation of more complex concepts—as base and cornerstone, they cannot be disregarded. Indeed, for purposes of examining the world beyond the novel, any or all perspectives on invisibility may have their uses.

Ralph Ellison was himself not shy about discussing his book and its themes. In one interview, he points to an unfolding of the invisibility concept, from an ironic play on sociologist Robert Park and his theory of “high visibility” races, to something more specific to the protagonist, his actions and his agency:

“The invisibility, there is a joke about that which is tied up with the sociological dictum that Negroes in the United States have a rough time because we have high visibility....High pigmentation, so the formula has it, which is true....But the problem for the narrator of *Invisible Man* is that he creates his own invisibility to a certain extent by not asserting himself. He does not do the thing which will break the pattern, which will reveal himself, until far along in the book. So he is not a victim. At least not merely a victim. He is a man who is wrong-headed.” (Ellison, in Kostelanetz 1995:96)

Invisibility, then, emerges from a different sort of dialectic, “from the racial conditioning which often makes the white American interpret cultural, physical, or psychological differences as signs of racial inferiority; and, on the other hand...from great formlessness of Negro life wherein all values are in flux, and where those institutions and patterns of life which mold the white American’s personality are missing or not so immediate in their effect” (Ellison 2004:24). The invisible man is invisible because Americans see their own idea of what a Black man is, or
should be, when looking at this individual. This is true whether the American is a White racist, a White philanthropist, or a Communist “brother” (or whether that American is a Black educator or a Black nationalist)—all “see” the protagonist as an instrument to further their own ends. Simultaneously, the narrator is invisible because he sees his own destiny and capacity to succeed not in his own emerging personality, but in conformity to the plans and expectations of others. “…in his passion for leadership, in his passion to prove himself within the limitations of a segregated society—(he) blunders from one point to another until he finally realizes that the society, the American society, cannot define the role of the individual for the responsible individual. He had to come to that sense of self-consciousness and, thus, to a sense of conscience, which is the fate of us all” (Ellison 1986:49). At the end of the novel, when he has passed through multiple lives and names as if they were so many changes of clothes, the narrator flees the projections and expectations of others and takes refuge in the safe basement hideaway where he first introduced himself, in the preface. He is still invisible, in a sense, in that he is alone and unseen; and yet, free of the controlling gaze of others, he is visible to himself, and preparing to rejoin the world transformed by his own sense of self.

It is clear that invisibility has multiple and layered meanings to Ellison. We might also look to his own sources for additional clarity. Robert List creates an impressive catalog of these sources on his own path to arguing the preeminence of James Joyce in this company; he includes Homer’s *Odyssey* (on its own as well as via *Ulysses*), Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, and Fyodor Dostoevsky, as well as Ellison’s colleague Richard Wright, and the African and African-American folklore that Ellison studied in school and collected in the field, working for the WPA’s American Guide series in New York (List 1982:63–65). These sources cross-pollinate both outside and inside Ellison’s text: in *Invisible Man*, the trickster of Black folklore is sharing a road with Odysseus as the book follows an episodic trajectory that alludes to the *Odyssey*. The invisible man of the novel’s introduction and conclusion, holed up in a New York basement illuminated by 1369 lightbulbs, is Wright’s man underground, is Brer Rabbit in the briar patch, is Odysseus in the cave of the cyclops; he is sequestered and safe, yet trapped and cornered, and ultimately he is stripped down to an essential being by this solitude and this retreat from others’ eyes. Unseen by others, he is at his most genuine, and unlike Dostoevsky’s “underground man,” he feels hope in this transformed invisibility. In Kierkegaard, Ellison found the existential quest for the authentic self, unburdened by DuBois’s double consciousness or the Hegelian call for a dialectic that included the “master” in movement towards self-realization.

We return at last to the African immigrants of Porto, their own realities ironically made invisible up to this point by discussions of fiction. How is the invisibility from whence we started, the inability of Portuenses to recognize the African communities in their midst, related to the varieties of invisibility that are found in Ellison’s writings and his sources?

Meditating on invisibility while in Porto, while also looking for Africans in every public space, helped me to be aware of a notable absence; although I saw Porto’s African immigrants everyday, walking down the street or riding mass transit, these immigrants were not active in most sectors of society (economic, political, religious) that would attract the attention of middle-class, White Portuenses. In a town with hundreds of cafès, where I myself must have visited fifty-plus establishments during my stay, I recall seeing Africans working in perhaps six cafès; four of these were “Afro-centric” establishments: African-owned restaurants with regional dishes on the menu. Even so, one African restaurant had both Portuguese and African servers, and in
the months before I left, the café and cultural center Espaço Moçambique had replaced their Mozambican baristas with a couple of Portuguese college students who had never visited Africa. By the same measure, I never saw Africans working in banks, or at market stalls at the Bolhão or Bom Sucesso markets, or at movie theaters; I very rarely saw them working in grocery stores or retail shops. Africans did appear on the television with some regularity, but mostly within certain contexts: in historical documentaries such as the acclaimed “A Guerra” by journalist Joaquim Furtado, which recounted the stories of participants from all sides of the Portuguese colonial wars; in shows aimed at African audiences, such as music and news shows, which were carried nationwide and usually taped in Lisbon; or in the occasional news report, many of which focused on violence at African clubs or other negative portrayals of African immigrants.

In this way middle and upper class White Portuenses have little contact with individual Africans in their daily lives, regardless of how many Africans there might be in Porto. As mentioned earlier, Whites in these class strata drive the cintura, and see few of the Africans, who are more likely to take mass transit or walk. These Whites most often go to jobs where their co-workers look like them; they shop at groceries where the checkers and counter-workers also look like them. Many live on streets named after African countries, towns or rivers (Rua de Moçambique, Rua do Limpopo), and yet these are reminders not of the cultures living in these places today, but rather of the once-mighty Portuguese empire. That is, if these names evoke any memories at all.

These streets named for African geographies, filled with White Portuguese, stand in ironic contrast to another factor in African invisibility: Porto’s African immigrants have not chosen, or have not been able, to live in particular neighborhoods with their countrymen or with other Africans. This is certainly a difference between Porto and Lisbon, where outlying neighborhoods such as Buraka in Amadora and Vale da Amoreira in Moita have, from the time of the first waves of African immigration in the 1960s, developed into enclaves for Cabo Verdeans and other African immigrants. In Porto, only the South Asian immigrant community has a critical mass in a single neighborhood, the Sé, so named because it is adjacent to the city’s cathedral. In addition to being a recognizable majority in the area, the predominately Muslim Pakistanis and Bangladeshis here have opened Porto’s first Halal butcher shop and the town’s second mosque within the Sé. But even this community stays mostly out of the public eye; while the bustling São Bento train station, the fashionable Rua Santa Catarina shopping area and the iconic Porto cathedral are at the edges of the neighborhood, a lingering and exaggerated reputation for crime, poverty and urban blight keeps many White Portuenses from entering further. Indeed, with few shops or restaurants of general interest, and major thoroughfares passing on the outskirts of the neighborhood, there is not much reason to traverse these quiet residential streets. It is possible to speculate that even if Porto’s African immigrants were to form their own enclave, they would not necessarily become more visible to Whites.

While Porto’s African immigrants do not live in the same neighborhood, they do see each other regularly, in large groups, at businesses that cater to an African clientele. We shall examine the world of African entrepreneurship in another chapter, but for now, it is relevant to note that the majority of these shops—small grocery stores that sell African products, hair salons that specialize in popular African hair styles, the supply stores that sell African hair care items, and the cafes that offer Cabo Verdean, Angolan or Guinean specialties—are located in small, dilapidated shopping centers (centros comerciais), and often are the only tenants therein. White
Portuguese shoppers have very little reason to enter these shopping centers without premeditation. Even I, who was intentionally looking for African immigrants, did not find these centros comerciais until half a year in Porto had already passed. There are some shops and cafés that are not in the obscurity of the centros comerciais, but even these are not immediately recognizable as African businesses with African clientele. The café Novo Ambiente, for example, is owned by Cabo Verdeans and serves African specialties from multiple PALOP countries; and on Saturday nights Cabo Verdean musicians play a mix of music, heavy on the Cabo Verdean folksongs. But if one visits Novo Ambiente on a weekday, and the waiter on duty is one of a few White Portuguese employees (the ratio seems to be about half and half), a visitor not in the know could easily have a snack and a coffee and never realize that they were dining at a sometimes-hub of African social activity. The café names in Porto are also not terribly informative; the “New Ambience” café is far more “African” than, for example, a café named “The African Woman” (A Africana), which was named by a former owner who was a retornado and under its current ownership has no connection to Africa at all, or “Café Bissau,” which likewise is owned and operated by White Portuguese (who may or may not be retornados), and has nothing that is uniquely Guinean on its menu. If the “African” cafés don’t look “African” to the passerby on the street, and non-African cafés have the most “African” names, then it is easily seen why the Portuguese do not recognize these businesses or notice the clientele inside.

By the same token, the churches and the mosque that are the most “African” religious institutions in Porto are out of sight to most White Portuguese. The first modern mosque in Porto, Mesquita Hazrat Bilal, is also the place where, on a Friday afternoon, the largest number of African men can be found worshiping together; perhaps as many as a hundred sub-Saharan African immigrants join another 150 or so North Africans, Middle-Eastern Arabs and a few Muslims from South Asia and elsewhere to pray, called most weeks by a Guinean muezzin and led by a Guinean imam. The mosque is on a major thoroughfare, the most direct path for buses and cars between the city center and the Oriente train station, which serves all of Porto’s connections, local, national and international. But few Portuenses are aware that the city has any mosques (either Hazrat Bilal or the predominantly South Asian Hazrat Hamza mosque in the Sé—I myself never set eyes on Hazrat Hamza, though I probably walked within a block or two of this mosque on a weekly basis). Hazrat Bilal is completely unmarked on the outside, kept private behind a façade of smoked-glass windows and doors. When I first went to visit, I only positively identified the place after a peek through the crack between doorframe and door, which revealed a sign in Arabic and English directing visitors to remove their footwear. Believers know where the mosque is, and there is no benefit, and perhaps even a small risk, in being obvious to non-believers.

The two predominantly African Protestant churches in Porto are also well out of sight of White Portuguese observers, but for different reasons. The Church of the New Creation (Nova Criação), a non-denominational evangelical church founded by a Nigerian and attended by Portuguese- and English-speaking Africans and a few White Portuguese, is located in a storefront space in a mostly residential part of town. Signs in the window boldly proclaim their mission of evangelism and the times of services; and yet, Nova Criação’s location on a street that runs one block from, and parallel to, a major thoroughfare means that few Portuguese pass by unless they are going to a house on the street or, perhaps, to the seedy nightclub on the next corner. Some may also pass as they take a shortcut to the enormous 18th century neo-classical church a bit further down the road. While Nova Criação would love to draw in devout Catholics
or nightclubbing hedonists, it is doubtful that either group lingers there. Economics has played a part in keeping Nova Criação out of sight, just as it has in the case of centros comerciais; the value of “location, location, location” is recognized in Portugal as elsewhere, and so those with tight budgets have to accept spaces out of the flow of the day-to-day.

The Igreja Luso-Africana dos Metodistas no Porto (the “Luso-African Methodist Church) faces the same problem; this church was founded by Angolan pastors and is loosely affiliated with the United Methodist Church. A few years back, the church relocated from the high-traffic shopping street Rua de Cedofeita to a storefront at the base of a high rise in the Boavista neighborhood. Just a few meters away from the church is the massive and upscale Bom Sucesso shopping center and the Mercado do Bom Sucesso produce and meat market; within a few blocks is the Casa de Musica concert hall, the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, and the Rotunda da Boavista, a hub of transportation and shopping for the western part of the city. My family and I lived close to all of this, but, as with the centros comerciais, for months I remained unaware of the church even as I walked past it every few days. Though the church was at the center of so much, it was located in the back of everything—the shops, the offices, the streets. I “discovered” the church only when I saw the choir perform and met the pastors at two more public celebrations of immigration (these events we will discuss later).

Though not immediately visible, there is a vibrant community of African immigrants in Porto, with worship and commerce and camaraderie happening on a daily basis. The average Portuense is not in a position to stumble across this by accident, however; she passes by the sites of immigrant community like a New Yorker on the sidewalk above the invisible man’s basement. Some immigrants would like to change this situation; the Church of the New Creation has been known to leaflet cars around town, though I am the only attendee I know of who has responded to these fliers. Most immigrants seem to be ambivalent—those marketing African products don’t care much if Portuguese stop in or not. And some immigrants would rather stay out of sight most of the time, rather than potentially draw the anti-immigrant attention that others have faced in the rest of the EU—this was true in 2008, and I suspect has grown more true in the intervening years.

And here is a crucial difference between the experiences of an “invisible” African-American in Ellison’s novel and those of the invisible Africans of Porto: the African-American has only one homeland, where acceptance as an American among Americans is crucial, however complicated and fraught with internal and external conflict. Immigrants from Africa to Porto and elsewhere, however, have a homeland—they may not ever plan to return, but there is no overriding existential dilemma in not fitting in, nor do they make a de facto social or political statement in choosing not to do so, except by implicitly highlighting the fact that they have such a choice. Further, if an African immigrant to Porto did feel the compulsion to be accepted as a Portuguese on the same terms as a native Portuguese—if she were in the same position vis-à-vis cultural citizenship that Ellison’s invisible man is in—she would be facing a vastly different definition of cultural citizenship in Portugal than in America. Indeed, Portuguese cultural citizenship and Black skin may be mutually exclusive, even diametrically opposed, in a country where the apex of the nation is seen as the “voyages of discovery.” The Black American has little choice but to find a way to be a part of America or to be without a nation—“…there was always that sense in me of being apart when the flag went by. It had been a reminder…that my star was not yet there…” (Ellison 1952:298); the African in Portugal cannot have an insider’s
role in the Portuguese national narrative, but can take solace in the existence of a homeland, a “flag” of his own, as a potential reference for identity.

In Portugal, it is not only immigrants from Africa whose identities are shaped by African events. While the vast majority of African countries had achieved independence by the mid-sixties, Portugal, under the dictatorship of the Estado Novo, fought throughout the 1960s and up to the Carnation Revolution of April 1974 to maintain control of its colonies. The colonial war is often credited with destabilizing the Estado Novo by eroding public support for the government in Portugal and by draining the treasury. Many of those who fought in the war, or whose family members fought, carry with them a subtle but undeniable hostility towards the former colonies and their inhabitants; they recognize a certain inevitability to decolonization, but resent it nonetheless. The abrupt decolonization of Lusophone Africa following the end of the Estado Novo also resulted in the influx of at least 650,000 retornados—former colonists of European descent from the Portuguese-speaking African countries, who were unwanted by newly independent African states and received with contempt by a weary and taxed Portuguese population (Mezei 2001, p. 1040). The latter blamed the retornados for an instant spike in unemployment. Many of the retornados look to the colonial era as a time when peace and prosperity reigned in Africa, and believe that the troubles that their former homeland countries now face are a result of inept and corrupt African rule, while disregarding or downplaying the aftereffects of colonial policies of intentional underdevelopment and destabilization, as well as the proxy struggles of the Cold War that further undermined African institutions and liberal democracy. For the generation of White Portuguese who either fought in the colonial war or fled Africa following it, it may serve a very Hegelian purpose to treat African immigrants as invisible—to acknowledge the immigrant could be to humanize an enemy long seen as an abstract, and lose power over one’s own carefully maintained identity and narrative. On the other hand, it may simply be that former soldiers and retornados feel the addition of insult to injury in immigrant influx; they lost the battle and left Africa, and now they feel “invaded” themselves. Better to ignore Africans, deny their existence, than to take one more blow to their collective ego.

So far in my examination, it seems that African immigrants in Porto are invisible because the Portuguese want, or need, them to be. And yet, there are ultimately some very good reasons for choosing invisibility, taking command of one's identity and exposing only what is necessary, on one's own terms. There are certainly ways in which Porto's African communities attempt to maintain power over their visibility, to varying degrees of success. It has already been noted, for example, that the mosque, Hazrat Bilal, is unrecognizable from the street. At the same time, the director of the Centro Cultural Islâmico do Porto, Dr. Abdul Rehman, has spent almost a decade as the public face of Islam in Porto. Dr. Rehman speaks at events celebrating immigration and diversity in Porto, and has “represented” Islam in public performances as well (again, more on this later). Dr. Rehman also makes efforts to bring school groups and other curious parties to the mosque itself, to hear the Imam speak and to understand the religion better.

Dr. Rehman's appearances and actions on behalf of the Centro Cultural Islâmico do Porto show a sophisticated relationship with the public. Indeed, they show a conscious effort on the part of leaders within Porto's Muslim community to present the community in a positive light, while protecting the privacy and security of worshipers. A smoked-glass facade keeps potentially hostile eyes from settling upon the mosque itself, while public appearances describe
Muslims in Portugal as productive members of the society, and essentially similar in goals and values to their Portuguese hosts. Like the invisible man, the Muslims of Porto have learned to use invisibility to their own advantage, while still being shackled to others' expectations when they do appear—trying to ward off on these occasions the public's anxieties of terrorism and to preempt the encroachment of European anti-immigrant political currents. Meanwhile, the face of Islam that is presented outside of the mosque, and even the face of Dr. Rehman, is not a Black African face, despite the fact that Guineans and other sub-Saharan Africans are the majority in the mosque’s congregation. In a Europe where the Muslim is often a target of social disapproval, perhaps it is easier to bear only the stereotypes of the “African” rather than adding the stereotypes of the “Muslim” to the mix. Still, to have an important facet of one’s life remain unrecognized at all, to be an observant follower of Islam and not be acknowledged as such by those around, is to endure a certain cognitive dissonance with the shahada—the public declaration of faith that is essential to Muslim faith and practice. The small gains in security that come with invisibility may sometimes be offset by the implicit self-negation.

Writing on the potential for a mainstream breakthrough of Portugal’s far-right and anti-immigrant Partido Nacional Renovador (National Renewal Party), José Pedro Zúquete (2007) identifies a number of factors that could contribute to rising nationalist sentiments:

“The steady decline of trust in mainstream politics, coupled with increased fear and anxiety about a rapidly changing and globalising world – aggravated in times of economic crisis and unemployment – may originate new lines of conflict, arising from novel and salient issues and thus serve as an auspicious scenario for an extreme right party committed to the ‘self-defence’ of the threatened national community.” (Zúquete 2007:190)

The invisibility of African immigrants in Porto may serve to soothe these fears and anxieties, at least in the short run, making this group a smaller target for demagogues and those seeking a scapegoat for a stagnant economy and rampant unemployment. The trade off is that Porto’s African immigrants have very little organization for the promotion of communal self-interest; whether by design or happenstance, these immigrants keep their heads low and get by, but have little opportunity to be heard. The invisibility of Porto’s Africans even to some immigrants themselves implies that, if immigrants were often unclear on their own numbers, they were likely not gathering with one another in any organized, politicized groups. Ironically, then, if the PNR does make gains, the immigrants who are targets of their rhetoric will have difficulty responding quickly with a cohesive voice.

What other consequences arise from the invisibility of African immigrants in Porto? One result is that a simple invisibility—whereby White Portuguese and immigrants rarely share the same spaces—contributes much to Ellison’s more complex invisibility. The less personal interactions the Portuguese have with immigrants, the more likely they are to hold fast to their stereotypes and preconceptions of what an African “is” and “does.” The day may come when many Portuguese finally encounter Africans at work, or school, or elsewhere, and they will bring the baggage of their unexamined stereotypes with them, along with the social capital to ask that Africans conform to those presumptions—the price of limited advancement in Portuguese society. And the invisibility of Blacks in Porto makes it difficult to imagine just what a “Black Portuense” would look like. Having no visibility now makes a complex and integrated future society difficult to picture.
One of the ways that modern Portugal is most reminiscent of Ralph Ellison’s mid-century America is in the ubiquity of Black musical forms, even in spaces that are ambivalent towards actual Black people. The Angolan dance and musical style *kizomba* seems to be gaining in popularity with young Portuguese; many clubs are experimenting with having an “Africa night”, while fliers advertising “African dance lessons” invite Portuenses to learn *kizomba* at gyms and dance studios. American hip-hop is also a strong influence in the country—in particular, Da Weasel, a band composed of both Afro- and Euro-Portuguese members, rhymed its way to preeminence at the time we were in Porto. African musical groups playing “traditional” regional music or popular styles from their homelands play with frequency at Porto venues ranging from small, artsy cafes to the imposing Casa de Musica concert hall. But the limiting effect of such bounded exposure has been extensively discussed in the case of the United States, and is readily apparent in *Invisible Man*—if Black faces are only seen on stages, or (another Portuguese commonality) on sports fields, then Africans can be relegated to positions as entertainers and kept well removed from substantive power. The ultimate Ellisonian irony is that these individuals are seen by tens of thousands of Portuguese, but in such limited roles that they are the model of the unseen, unshaped self-consciousness that defines invisibility in the novel.

In *Invisible Man*, the most layered and sophisticated definition of invisibility is that of the individual to himself; the protagonist futilely attempts to find himself in the empty costumes that he is given by others. This invisibility is in every way a power relationship; it is like a passive chameleonicism, where the protagonist is made to blend into his shifting milieus by the people in power around him, White or Black, and the flawed gauge of success in so blending is a feeling of being a functioning part of a greater whole. But such success is built on personal inauthenticity and cannot endure; eventually the invisible man “is defeated in his original purpose but has achieved some perception of the nature of his life. He hopes that...his memoirs will, once they are read, allow him to enter into the world of things known, will serve to define himself” (Ellison 2004:30). For the protagonist of *Invisible Man*, visibility is the vulnerable or even dangerous condition of asserting power and thus standing out. For most Africans and other immigrants of Porto, there is no explicit White subjugation as there was in 1940s America, encouraging them to keep their heads down and their profiles low through conformity to expectations or threat of violent repercussion. Nevertheless, few among the Africans of Porto attempt to attain power or influence even within their own immigrant communities; and beyond these communities, opportunities for real political or social ladder-climbing are notable for their absence (Oliveira, Carvalhais, and Cancela 2014). Nor are there conspicuous efforts by Portuguese factions to groom or mold immigrant leaders, or to utilize emergent leaders to further their own ends, with one notable exception that appeared in my observations. The invisibility that Ralph Ellison described is most “evident” at Espaço Moçambique, the Mozambican cultural center and café. At the Espaço it is notable that White people, Portugal-born or *retornado*, have been the founding influences and have exerted increasing control over daily operations during the year that I was a patron. With this escalation of control has come greater visibility of Whites at Espaço events; for example, most Saturday dinners there are now solely attended by Whites. By setting agendas and maintaining a greater presence at Espaço Moçambique, Whites become more visible there and Blacks become gradually more invisible, in the Ellisonian sense, losing control of day-to-day operations and any sense of dominion in “their space”.

The use of Ralph Ellison’s concepts of invisibility to better understand the relationship, or lack of the same, between Portuenses and the African immigrants in their midst, is a limited
but at times illuminating approach. At the same time, however, it must be acknowledged that using this particular work of literature within an ethnographic project is an act of hubris, steeped in irony. Ellison critiques those sectors of society that would paint the diversity of African-American experiences with a single brushstroke; my ethnography singles out individuals and worship communities as worthy of inclusion based on melanin levels and origin in any of 40+ countries, and relies on the same superficiality to make a connection to Ellison’s book. As with any ethnography, any research at all, for that matter, I must be on my guard to speak to my own observations and communications, and not to generalize beyond the immediate—in this case, the words and actions of those with whom I work. If I succeed, I might increase the visibility of those who wish to be seen on their own terms. If I fail, it may be, in part, because my own ideas about the immigrant experience might overpower the voices of those who live their own, unique experiences as individuals, for whom immigration status is a single facet of complex lives.
New Protestants in Porto

My family and I started our time together in Porto as guests in a beautiful house just meters from Porto’s synagogue. When we got a flat of our own, we were a block away from one of the city’s oldest Catholic churches. But when the time came to attend an actual service together, as a family, we went to the Anglican Church. I am a cradle Episcopalian, and I have attended services through the years at Anglican-affiliated churches in Switzerland, New Zealand, and India. I knew that—somehow—going to church with the old British expats in Porto might be helpful in my research, but I think that I was motivated more by a desire to experience the familiar liturgy and feel closer to myself in a place that could sometimes feel alienating. Even as immigrant religious communities in Portugal were still quite theoretical to me, I felt the pull myself to seek familiarity in worship.

That Anglican Church represented one of the original toeholds of Protestantism in Portugal, a country which resisted the Reformation for the better part of three hundred years. In the late 15th century, when marriage was arranged between King Manuel I of Portugal and Isabella of Aragon, Isabella’s parents Ferdinand and Isabella included as a precondition that Portugal would adopt a more “Spanish” approach to Catholic orthodoxy. Where Portugal had briefly been a refuge for exiled Spanish Jews, the command was given to convert, leave, or die. And to demonstrate even further this commitment, Manuel asked the Holy See to install a Portuguese version of the Spanish Inquisition, an institution originally meant to police the faith of Spain’s recently converted Jews and Muslims (Alexander Herculano 1926:272). Manuel’s request was not granted until 1536, after the king’s death (Shaw 1989:419). The growth of Protestant movements in Northern Europe happened in parallel to the birth of the Portuguese Inquisition: the beginning of the 16th century saw Luther’s rise in Germany, Calvin in Switzerland, and the Anglican schism in England. The Catholic Church reacted with calculated force, and the Inquisition was a primary factor in preventing the Protestant Revolution from gaining a foothold in Portugal, at least for several centuries.

In the 17th century, British traders made multiple attempts to obtain limited freedom to worship while in port, and to likewise be excused from Catholic practices that were otherwise obligatory for Portuguese subjects. While the royalty was often indulgent, the Inquisition was not, and Protestants remained continued to be restricted in their ability to practice their faith (Delaforce 1982:3–5). The 18th century Portuguese Enlightenment ideology of the Marquis de Pombal likely set the stage for more tolerance of religious thought outside the Catholic mainstream, particularly if those ideas antagonized the Jesuits (Maxwell 1995:66).

But it was the coming of the Peninsular War (the invasion of Iberia by Napoleon’s troops) that gave Portugal’s British allies an opportunity to establish their own religious institutions in the country. At the war’s end, the Portuguese monarchy remained in Brazil, where they’d fled from Napoleon’s advances. The British, the primary force in the coordinated expulsion of the Napoleonic forces, filled the power vacuum, and it was during the war that the Portuguese King signed a treaty that included the provision of religious freedom to the British (Delaforce 1982:33–34). Even so, the Catholic Church maintained great influence and as a result the British Protestants were kept from proselytizing among the locals, and their churches were kept non-descript and unchurchlike, with no church bells, as a condition of their establishment.
The British did in fact build such a house of worship in Porto, to be known as the Church of St. James and erected adjacent to the British cemetery, behind high walls which kept the British further out of sight—at the time, they benefitted from their own invisibility. Work was completed around 1818 (Delaforce 1982:44–46).

Following the Portuguese “Liberal Wars” of the 1820s and 30s, the new government turned anti-clerical, a change of attitude that was expressed in part by an opening of the country to greater religious diversity. The 19th century would see the opening of other new churches—the first Methodist church in Porto was opened in 1877, and was the first Protestant church in the city that was opened to Portuguese worshippers and not just to foreign nationals (Lago 2009). Not long after, the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church of Portugal was founded as a reaction against the doctrine of papal infallibility, as promulgated by the First Vatican Council. The Lusitanian Church swiftly became a part of the Anglican Communion (Massa 2006). Through a dizzying number of power-shifts, Portugal continued to accept Protestants, with some hostility and continued discrimination; even during the aggressively pro-Catholic Estado Novo, Protestantism was restricted but not banned altogether (Manuel 2002:81). After the fall of the Estado Novo, the Portuguese Constitution of 1975 provided for freedom of conscience, and in the intervening years many Protestant denominations have established a presence in the country, or expanded their operations where already present (The Constituent Assembly of the Portuguese Republic 2005).

St. James

And so it came to pass that the family and I made our way to St. James’ Anglican Church on a sunny Sunday morning in September—Oscar’s stroller bouncing roughly over curbs and cracked jagged pavement; Ada holding her mother’s hand as the occasional car swooshed by us, reminding us of the narrow breadth of the sidewalk we walked. We made it to the church’s gate, and into the church, and then we sat and kneeled and stood, and sang and prayed, and took communion. When the service had run its course, we had pastries and white Port and coffee in the meeting hall behind the church with the regular congregants, who were mostly elderly, British, and charming. As the crowd thinned, I introduced myself to the Reverend Sumares, who offered his assistance with regards to my studies, and suggested we might lunch after church another Sunday.

The Reverend Doctor Manuel Sumares was ordained originally in the Lusitanian Church—the Portuguese church that is a part of the Anglican Communion. St. James cannot help but have ties to the Lusitanian Church, being part of a shared communion and sharing an organizational structure with the Archbishop of Canterbury in a position of nominal authority. But St. James is not a Lusitanian Church; it is Anglican without mediation. Unlike the Lusitanian Church, St. James was not really intended for the Portuguese, but—as we have seen—it was established so that British expatriates could worship in their own language and maintain their separate, Protestant tradition in an environment dominated by Catholicism. In some ways, this makes St. James the most immigrant-centric church out of all I visited in Porto—a place to celebrate British holidays, to sing patriotic songs (this was the first place I heard William Blake’s “Jerusalem” sung as a hymn), to speak English among English speakers. There were occasional
visits by English speakers from America, and some (white) South Africans in the congregation, but Portuguese congregants at St. James were limited to one or two spouses of British people, and the Reverend with his family.

The Reverend Sumares never told me how exactly he was chosen to lead St. James. It seems possible that there was some consideration of strengthening ties between the Lusitanian Church and St. James. The lineage of presiding clergy before and after the Rev. Sumares is a long line of English names. Sumares is also an Associate Professor of philosophy at the Universidade Católica in Braga, which connects him, despite his Protestant affiliations, to the Catholic Church.

We took the Reverend up on his offer of lunch—after church the following Sunday, my family joined the Reverend and his wife for a meal at the Oporto Cricket & Lawn Tennis Club, more commonly known as the British Club. The British Club was originally formed in the 19th Century as a gathering place for British expatriates in Porto—like St. James, it was and is a place created to maintain ties to a distant homeland and to spend time with a community that shares a history rooted in immigration. This was the funhouse mirror version of what I was looking to study—instead of immigrant communities made up of formerly colonized peoples, the Reverend Sumares was introducing me to an immigrant community made up of former colonizers.

As I have said, our first visits to St. James and our lunch with the reverend were early events—we’d barely established ourselves, were probably still unpacking our suitcases, and I think I was still in much more of an observational mode than an interrogative mode at that point, so I didn’t consider why we were brought to that place in particular for lunch. The Reverend may well have brought us to the British Club in order to challenge the assumptions I’d built into my project about what it means to be an immigrant. As a professor himself, and particularly a scholar of philosophy, interrogation of my initial premise would not have been surprising behavior from him. Or, he might just have taken us to the lunch spot where he had privileges—a part of his vicarage, I believe. And certainly, it was good for the reverend to be seen within the same community as his congregation—perhaps even more so when the reverend was the first such to come from a non-British background. It might have been a regular and important part of performing Anglicanism, demonstrating his bona fides by eating with the flock. Or perhaps he wanted to impress us with the opulence of the place (it was not gaudy, but definitely had an aura of money and history about it). Or he wanted to put us at ease by surrounding us with English speakers. In the end, I suspect that we ended up at the British Club out of some combination of these motives, and as I did not think to ask, I will never know for sure which combination it actually was.

My awkwardness as a seeker of knowledge carried through our entire lunch. The Reverend was one of the many Portuguese who thought me naïve for seeking African immigrants in Porto rather than Lisbon. Though I had yet to get a firm idea of the extensive networks that Porto’s African immigrants moved in, I was already getting a bit tired of hearing that I was in the wrong city. One bit of information I did get, in passing, was that the highly influential Portuguese anthropologist João de Pina-Cabral was the son of a bishop in the Lusitanian Church. As it happens, Bishop Cabral was the bishop of southern Mozambique in the
years leading up to independence, repatriating to Portugal after Mozambican independence. The ties between Anglicanism, Anthropology and Lusophone Africa run deep.

We went back to St. James several times during the following year, but mostly this was a place for the family to feel, if not “at home”, then at least on more familiar footing in a country that could sometimes feel emotionally isolating. It was not ever going to be a central part of a study of African lives in Porto—maybe it was the inextricable link between the Anglican Church and the colonizing country that gave it its name, but for whatever reason, St. James seemed to be a very White, very British place of worship on an essential level. But it was a place to enjoy Christmas Carols and Easter egg hunts in their seasons, and these events even brought in some of the other Americans living in Porto. Some of these other Americans were not regular church goers anywhere; others preferred evangelical worship in a style that eschewed the ceremony of an Anglican service, but like us, they were attracted to the familiar at pivotal moments.

For the most part, St. James Anglican Church in Porto, like the Oporto Cricket & Lawn Tennis Club and the Oporto British School, is an institution that evokes the strange, oft-times dysfunctional relationship between the U.K. and Portugal over the last few centuries. It is very much an immigrant church, and yet so different from the other churches to which we will turn our attention. Where the other churches represent gathering places for immigrants with little political or social capital in Porto, St. James is home to immigrants whose native country was at one time a savior and subsequently an occupier of Portugal, a native country that was close to a colonizer of Portugal in terms of trade and power imbalances (Buettner 2016:198). Future research on immigrants in Porto might find a fertile subject in this community, and its relationship to the city around it.

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We settled into routines in our first weeks in Porto. We felt lucky to be so centrally located—so close to a metro stop, to a frutaria and a carniceria, within reasonable walking distance of a larger municipal marketplace and a shopping mall. It took us too long to get the internet set up in our flat, but there were cafes close by with wifi and the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Porto was also just down the street—UP was my host institution in Porto, so I had access to wifi at their buildings. The internet was essential, not just for research but perhaps more importantly as a connection to friends and family back home. We struggled to stretch my financial aid. M. and I cooked at home (admittedly, M. cooked much more often, and better, more inventive meals). While we tried to adjust to local foods, we also learned which stores had which American imports—things like cheddar cheese, American-style bacon, pickled jalapenos, peanut butter. These were our comfort foods, as we saw autumn descend and our moods started to get darker.

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**Riverside**

The aging Brits of St. James were far from the only English speakers in Porto. Our first (overwhelmingly gracious) hosts in Portugal, the Santos-Hurst family, introduced us in our first
week in Portugal to friends of theirs—an American married to a Briton—assuming (quite correctly) that we might want to know of some fellow Americans in town. These new friends further informed us of the American International Club of Porto (AIC), and in our first weeks in Porto they invited us to a rugby game hosted by the club. We met a number of pleasant expats, and several of these were American missionaries, sent by smaller missionary organizations and churches to spread the Word in Porto—to Portuguese and immigrants, Catholics, non-believers, and those whose beliefs were not aligned closely enough to their own evangelical viewpoint. Missionaries can be a little hard to take when one’s own beliefs are heterodox. Thankfully, though, the American missionaries in Porto were generally on the mellower end of the fire and brimstone spectrum. They rode motorcycles, joined in Halloween events, and had a beer or glass of wine when social occasions involved libations (and most AIC events did). They were in Portugal with their families—wives, children—and they had accepted, it seemed to me, that living in this country would be easier if they allowed themselves to assimilate at least a little bit.

The missionaries, hearing of my intention to learn more about religion in Portugal, and perhaps sensing an opportunity to shepherd some souls towards the light, invited my family to come to Sunday worship with them. They met in late afternoon in a suburb called Aguda, south of Vila Nova de Gaia, about 30 minutes from Porto by train. Of course, when we decided to visit their congregation, it took the usual time to prepare the baby and his accoutrements, and more time to ride the Metro halfway across town to the train station, and then we waited for the train, and…by the time we arrived in Aguda, we were already exhausted and the children worn out and cranky. And we still had to walk a ways from the train station to the house where worship was happening. Another auspicious fieldwork experience…

Riverside International Church – Porto worshipped in a large and comfortable house in a fairly upscale neighborhood. It was an offshoot of another expat church in Lisbon, founded by British believers but encouraged by missionary organizations in the United States (Riverside Porto International Church 2015). The children (those old enough, anyway) went to an upstairs room with one of the missionaries’ wives for Bible study, while adults, teens, and babies stayed in the living room. A projection TV showed lyrics to modern praise music that seemed commensurate with my limited knowledge of the musical offerings at American churches. There was a sermon—a relatively gentle warning that Halloween could be a time when children might stray from the proper path if parents were not vigilant. This was a message of caution, but not one of endangered souls—the American International Club would host a Halloween party a week or so later, and the missionary families would bring their kids in costume and enjoy themselves alongside the rest of us.

I do not remember there being any sort of altar call—the Riverside group may have been a bit too intimate for that, not needing to perform faith so spectacularly since everyone knew each other. Instead, the ceremony was basically the homily, a few extemporaneous prayers as people were so moved, and lots of singing. After worship, there was a meal, with wine and soup and general bonhomie. We felt very welcomed by everyone—overwhelmed, really, by the many introductions to the 20 or so in attendance. On other occasions, there were people of color from Angola or other parts of Africa in attendance—one or two at most—but at this first service we attended, the only “Africans” were a White couple from South Africa.
St. James Anglican and Riverside International served two distinctive groups of English-speakers. St. James was mostly British, and very formal, very “traditional”, in worship style, liturgical content, and musical selection. The congregation, even more so than other Anglican churches, was aging, with most attendees over 50. Riverside, like most non-denominational evangelical congregations, eschewed formalism, preferring modernized music and less apparent rigidity in the structure of worship. Riverside’s leaders were probably in their 50s, but most congregants were in their 30s and 40s, with children. While the backgrounds of Riverside congregants was somewhat more diverse, ultimately neither congregation seemed to be attracting many immigrants from underdeveloped countries (White South Africans being a qualified exception for both churches). St. James wasn’t really trying, as far as I could tell, but the missionaries who were a major part of the Riverside organization held prayer services with immigrants—primarily Eastern Europeans—on a weekly basis. I ended up going to Riverside three or four times, and I don’t recall ever meeting any of these Eastern European immigrants at a service in Aguda.

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**Reino de Deus**

The summer before I brought the family to Porto, I came to do some preliminary scouting of the city along with some immersive language learning, joining a summer study abroad program with a number of other Berkeley students. Our studies were frequently experiential, taking us out into the city to learn about Portuguese history, architecture, economics, culture, etc. One afternoon saw us touring the Sé—a neighborhood named after the city’s cathedral which loomed above it. Passing through a small courtyard, we noticed a sign on one building—“Espaço Moçambique.” Intended as a cultural center for Mozambicans, the Espaço was immediately noteworthy as place for someone with my interests to meet people and make contacts.

When I returned the next year with the family, Espaço Moçambique was an immediate destination. It took a few months to catch the Espaço open and to actually get to know anyone there, but eventually it did in fact turn out to be a very good place to pass time and to get deeper into my research. In my early visits to Espaço Moçambique, someone—maybe Teófilo, the Presidente da Direcção (Chairman of the Board), or maybe Carolina who worked behind the bar—told me that Teófilo’s wife Rosália was an attendee at a church called alternately “Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus” and, in Portugal specifically, “Centro de Ajuda Espiritual”; the motto “Pare de Sofrer” was also used to such a great extent that it almost came across as another alternate name for the church. Because Rosália, who was my one real inside source for information about the church, referred to it as Reino de Deus, I will continue to use that name here, though the church goes by Ajuda Espiritual more frequently in Portugal (Swatowiski 2009:4). The church has a complicated reputation among those who do not respond to its message. Many Portuguese and Africans alike with whom I spoke found it suspicious, mostly on account of its reputation as a proponent of the “prosperity gospel.” In an early conversation, Rosália herself told me that Africans like Reino de Deus because the church gives credence to the workings of malevolent spirits, just as many Africans do.
Reino de Deus was founded in the mid-1970s in Brazil, and grew incredibly rapidly, if their own literature is even close to accurate—they claim a presence in 200 countries, and a following of over six million devotees. Per Donizete Rodrigues, there are two main tenets of Reino De Deus theology. The first is that evil and suffering afflict human beings by way of demons, which take up residence in people’s bodies and must be expelled through exorcism. The second is that the relationship between God and believers is bolstered through tithes and offerings—10% of all income as a starting point, but believers are encouraged to contribute more and more offerings on top of tithing (Rodrigues 2016:142–143). This latter doctrine is the primary source of skepticism for so many Portuguese.

I didn’t have a chance to attend a Reino de Deus service with Teófilo’s wife or any other believers—our schedules did not align, and I didn’t even manage to pencil in an interview with Rosália until May 2008—but once I’d realized how close my family’s flat was to a Reino storefront church, I knew I would be attending. Unlike St. James, or the Catholic Church at Cedofeita, where the family had gone to mass one Sunday early in our stay, I had no intention of bringing the M. and the kids to Reino de Deus until I had a better idea of what went on, and how kid friendly the service was, the message was, the performative aspects were…. So I went solo, a good move—more because things were extremely kid- tedious than for any more sinister reasons.

It was mid-December, a grey and damp time of year in Porto. My first attendance at a Reino service was a Wednesday evening service, dedicated specifically to study of the Bible (each day of the week has a particular focus in Reino de Deus), and so it was already nearly sunset when I walked to the church. From the outside, the church’s space appeared small—almost claustrophobically so, in fact. There was a small foyer between the outside door and the inner door that led to the actual worship space. The foyer had glass windows, and inside was an easel with a “Pare de Sofrer” sign and Reino literature positioned so that covers and titles could be seen through the glass by passerby. (Reino is known for their well-developed media operations—they publish magazines, broadcast radio on their own stations, and in Brazil they have their own TV channels operating in major markets.)

While the church seemed small from the outside, once one moved past the foyer into the main room, it was not small at all; a large room had chairs enough for a hundred worshippers, maybe more. This particular service only had 30 to 40 congregants, but they were not shy about taking seats towards the front, so the room did not feel particularly empty during the service. At the front of the room was a stage, and on the wall behind this stage, in the center, was a large cross with the silhouette of a book—presumably a Bible—superimposed over it. To the left of the cross was a decoration shaped like a menorah, also in silhouette. To the cross’s right was a representation of the 10 commandments.

The service was a mix of preaching and singing—it alternated between each with enough regularity to keep everyone engaged, though I was possibly the only one in the crowd who was not fully excited by the preacher’s message. The majority of the congregation raised their hands in prayer, a posture also favored by Riverside worshippers, that I had not considered at length before, but realized that I had seen in pictures of, and occasional encounters with, evangelicals over the years. My language skills were too poor to follow much of the message, but I took in as much of the scenery as I could. The pastor had a little bit of rock star to him; he wore a black turtleneck with an overcoat that could be shed when things heated up. His hair was slicked back.
It seemed like he found some inspiration in a 70s Elvis performance, at least as far as stage presence and attitude were concerned. He moved across the stage and in and out of the audience with a smooth grace, his words escalating from conversational calm to crescendos of fervor and then descending again, the congregation surfing along the tops of his oratorical waves. A youngish man moved around the stage as well, keeping as low a profile as possible and functioning as a roadie would, keeping cords straightened and adjusting equipment when needed. Towards the end of the service, there was an altar call. At least 4/5 of congregation went up for prayer at this point. After a little more singing, we adjourned.

After church, I tried to make contact with the only African I had seen in the crowd, but she moved too swiftly and I was in the meantime engaged in conversation by Maria. Maria was a 40ish Portuguese woman who seemed to be approaching me, an unfamiliar face, in at least a semi-official capacity. She spoke enthusiastically about the church, and she explained their relationship to wealth and prosperity without any particular prompting: “If God is a true God, he will give you blessings when you give all that you have at his altar”. At this point, I had already heard quite a bit about Reino’s focus on tithing and accumulation of wealth, so Maria’s statement was unsurprising, except perhaps in how straightforward it was. I was used to American televangelists of the 1980s, who seemed audacious in their appeals for money at the time, but to my memory rarely if ever made faith as blatantly transactional as Maria described.

Other than their relationship with money, the other bit of common wisdom about Reino de Deus is, that they’re quite aggressive in trying to recruit new members and explain their theology. I experienced some of this with Maria, who in our conversation after church entreated me to “drop the intellectual approach and accept with (my) heart.” She called me a day or two later to chat some more. I was putting the baby to sleep and I asked her to call at a better time, but she never did. In the end, Maria did not really live up to the church’s reputation for being “pushy,” even though I’d have been happy to talk to her more at length, were the time more auspicious. I never heard from her again after that, and since Maria’s congregation did not have noteworthy participation by African members, I didn’t follow up with her.

I did attend another service with Reino de Deus, this time in a converted movie theater on Rua São Dinis on the north side of Porto (Reino de Deus is well known for buying old movie theaters and converting them into churches). This time, I showed up on a Friday. Rosália had told me that a shared belief in malevolent spirits, as a source of bad luck, was a factor that brought Africans to Reino de Deus, and Friday is the day that (according to Rosália) the church focuses its services on casting out of evil spirits. The church actually says that Friday is devoted to “Limpeza Espiritual,” but the negatives to be cleaned include items such as “negative energy, insomnia, nightmares, envy, curses, (and) witchcraft” (Centro de Ajuda 2016)—they are not explicit on their website about the agency of malevolent spirits, but if one did believe in such entities, this seems like a list of symptoms that would be associated with them. Following Rosália’s line of thought, then, more African congregants might attend Friday services than, perhaps, on other days with other themes.

I entered the church just a bit late for an afternoon service, but things were already rolling onstage—based on my very limited experience, they may like to start early, or at least

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3 The quote is a paraphrase; from informal interview with author on 12/19/07.
compulsively promptly. One of the pastors at this service was the same pastor from my previous service at the other location, but here at São Dinis there was a second pastor helping him out; there were also 4-5 helpers moving about, sometimes on the edge of the stage and sometimes on the fringes of the audience. There was a piano player as well, where the other location had relied on recorded music or on an organist.

At arrival, there was preaching going on, not loud or “wound up” yet, just at an amplified but conversational level. It was very shortly after arrival that there was an altar call of sorts. The music slipped into a minor key, almost spooky—I wrote in my notes that it was reminiscent at this point of music from a scary movie, like the theme from *Halloween* (1978). My ability to understand Portuguese was a little better by this time than it had been my previous visit, and my take on the pastor’s speech at that point was that he was identifying particular problems that might be in the audience. The two pastors moved across the front rows, each pastor laying each hand on the forehead of a worshipper in one of the front rows and praying over them. They would also entreat the worshippers farther back to put their own hands on their own heads and “sweep away evil” (I am uncertain if this was the accurate translation, but it was a close approximation of what I heard, informed further by the physical actions of congregants).

As this round of healing was completed, the music went back to a major key. The congregation sang a song about sweeping away evil, with hand gestures—sweeping evil off the back of our shoulders. At this point, red ribbons were handed out in the audience, somewhat selectively—maybe just to 1st timers? The person nearest to a ribbon recipient tied the ribbon to the recipient’s wrist.

The service went on, with a familiar alternation between preaching and singing. There was, at one point, a call for offerings, and congregants came forward with envelopes to give their donations. I could not see if the congregants’ names were on the envelopes. That certainly makes a huge difference—if you are contributing anonymously, there is less pressure to meet the church’s expectations. There was also a call for testimony from the audience. One woman, who appeared to be from Africa, seemed particularly excited or anxious to give her testimony right away. She gave thanks to God for help with immigration issues.

When the service wrapped up, I tried again to meet and introduce myself to one of the African congregants, but again I was unsuccessful. It doesn’t seem unlikely that people saw the stranger headed their way and made a graceful exit at the first opportunity. I did not attend Reino

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4 One internet source quotes Reino founder Edir Macedo elaborating on red ribbons: “According to Macedo, points of contact are elements used to awaken people's faith, so that they have access to God's response to their desires. Many people find it difficult to put their faith into practice, so they need points of contact (Doctrines of the Church, p.101). Contact points include, in addition to the use of magical objects, the use of elements of Brazilian popular superstition…. (Macedo writes) ‘Come to the Universal Church to receive a ribbon to put on your arm. You who have a red ribbon today, come the next week to receive a blue ribbon, on which it is written: I persecuted my opponents and I conquered them. Come on, because on Sunday you will receive the blue ribbon, the color of heaven. Let go of the ribbon of Bonfim, of the saints, and come and receive our blue ribbon.’ (Folha Universal, 2002, p.27).” (Bernardo 2012) I did not personally hear anyone suggest that I should bring my red ribbon back the next week for a blue ribbon, and Macedo’s ribbon exchange doesn’t seem likely to resonate outside of the Brazilian context, where the ribbons of the church of Nosso Senhor do Bonfim, Salvador are well known and associated with Catholicism and Candomblé simultaneously.
de Deus services again. I did, however, learn more about the role of the church in the life of Rosália, Teófilo’s wife, when we sat down for a conversation.

Although Rosália grew up attending a Swiss Mission (Southern African Presbyterian) church, she and her mother became Catholics when she was in her late teens or early twenties. Rosália was catechized after she had settled in Portugal, but then her mother, still in Mozambique, was taken by friends to Reino de Deus when she was ill. After laying on of hands by the Reino pastors, she recovered.

“That church helped her very much. She woke up. It’s a positive part of the church. The person is down going to the church, wakes up and fight for the life. Because they teach that. You must fight. You must fight to achieve what you want. They teach that in the church.”

Rosália began attending Reino de Deus services as well, in Mozambique with her mother and in Portugal. The church offers two major, interrelated draws for Rosália, and she implies that the same aspects of their services appeal to other Africans as well. The first is fairly direct—Rosália prefers Reino de Deus to the Catholic Church in which she was first baptized, because the Catholic service, to her is too “melancholy”: “the songs are not happy, don’t make the people feel happy.” Reino de Deus has music that makes her “feel happy.” In addition to the general happiness Rosália takes from a Reino de Deus service, she also speaks of a specifically therapeutic psychological effect that she and others gain: the pastors at Reino de Deus

“…run the services in a way that reinforces confidence. They use psychology to build self-esteem….

“I think it’s like the same, if you are going to a psychologist. (Interviewer: …yeah, you have a problem, you go see a professional, or…) So in Mozambique you have a problem you go to the church.”

Rosália likes Reino de Deus, particularly in Mozambique but also in Portugal, for the happiness it brings and for the positive psychological and/or emotional effect she gains. She also identifies another aspect of Reino de Deus that she feels is especially attractive to Mozambicans in general, if not necessarily to herself especially—Rosália says that Reino de Deus is better than other churches at acknowledging the “traditional” beliefs of Mozambicans in spirits:

“In Mozambique Reino de Deus is very important because people of Mozambique, they believe in traditional beliefs—they work with spirits. And the Reino de Deus, work with spirits, too…. When they have a person suffering, they use spirits, they may think that person, that she has or he has the bad spirit. They use that. And people believe, and still go, they go and go to the church. It feels good; I think it’s psychology…. Because they believe, something wrong with them. They go to the church. The priest…liberates the spirits. And they feel good…they feel in heaven. And they…feeling that way, they can give, out of….uh, how can I explain…feeling that way, they gives some of…a lot of money to the church…. The church absorbs their problems. The pastor makes the spirit leave them. The bad spirit, the pastor speaks to it, and it leaves—some people believe in this.”

Rosália isn’t saying that she believes the same, nor is she saying that she doesn’t believe; however, when I ask if she prefers to go to Friday services at Reino de Deus, when casting out of spirits is the order of the day, she says that she does not—she is more inclined to attend on

5 Quotes are from interview with Rosália at Espaço Moçambique, 5/14/2008
Sundays. This may be a point at which she is less comfortable talking to the White American about beliefs that have been subjected to much contempt through years of European occupation and indoctrination. As an educated, middle class Mozambican woman living in the metropole, Rosália may have a lot invested in distinguishing herself from the people back in the rural areas of her home country. In fact, it may be indicative of the fragility of her position in the middle class that she is less willing to identify with this aspect of Reino de Deus—Rosália is a sympathetic member of a church that draws heavily from the disenfranchised in Brazil, Mozambique, Portugal and the USA—she acknowledges the aesthetic draw for her of Reino’s music and worship, but is less direct in including herself as a Mozambican who also believes that good or bad fortune are affected by the spiritual world. Examples of ambivalence (emphasis mine): “…some people believe in this (driving out of bad spirits by Reino pastors)” “We do believe this, in Mozambique (pouring out libations for the ancestral spirits)”.

While Rosália seems to be on the fence about the existence or operations of spirits in the world, at least in what she expresses to me, when the topic turns to Reino de Deus’s prosperity gospel she is far less circumspect: “To prove that you want your happiness, so you must, to give money, a sum of money to achieve that thing. I think, is wrong…. I think that part is wrong….” She says she gives money to God through more traditional charitable giving:

“I take my salary and put away a small quantity for the church. But for me that small quantity for the church, it can be for the (orphans). It can be for elderly people suffering for anything. I think that is church. That is God…helping those who needs. I can do that but I can’t…give (all the tithe) to the church because I don’t know what he will do with my money…. I go to the hospital and I see people with illness and I can give that money to help.”

On the other hand, Rosália does not dismiss the church’s focus on tithing outright. She implies that if the church is able to give psychological healing to her mother and herself, then perhaps they are justified in asking for some compensation—if the services of a psychologist or psychiatrist are worthy of payment, why shouldn’t the church expect something as well for similar services rendered?

Though the external critique of Reino de Deus is that they are first and foremost a cash cow for their clergy, Rosália acknowledges both what works for her in this church and what doesn’t, along with what works for others. She still sometimes attends services at other churches, like the living room services run by American Lutheran missionaries in Vila Nova de Gaia. She maintains a great deal of autonomy in her spiritual decision making, and she does not present herself as limited to one denomination’s doctrine or worldview. There may well be others who are more vulnerable to exploitation by Reino de Deus’s economic theology, but Rosália is not among their number.

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About a month into the family’s time in Porto, we did some reevaluation of the grand plan. It had already become apparent that we would not survive solely on student loans, and M. had begun taking freelance editing work to supplement the family income. We had originally planned for M. to homeschool Ada through some kindergarten basics while I worked on my research, but freelancing, while necessary, interfered with the original plan. Instead, we did some research, visited a few schools, and found a place—Grande Colégio Universal—that seemed
welcoming, and was within a short walk of our flat. We were impressed to find out that the school was in a building that had once been the home of Portugal’s great Romantic playwright and novelist Almeida Garrett.

Somewhere in my past someone suggested to me that young children could be dropped into an environment where they were immersed completely in a foreign language, and they would adapt immediately. Ada did not do this at Grande Colégio Universal; she felt mostly isolated, and sometimes freakish—older students would surround her, and harass her to speak English so they could learn. She eventually made two or three good friends at school, but she was not happy there, most of the time, and she never learned Portuguese.

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**Nova Criação**

One day, while dropping Ada off at school, I noticed a flier sitting by itself on a bench in the school’s antechamber. In the afternoons, this space would be full of parents and younger siblings, but in the mornings parents dropped the kids and then left without pausing further, and so the room was empty, at most shared with a couple of other families saying their morning goodbyes and be-goods. The flier was photocopied onto light blue paper, perhaps a third or fourth generation copy, as it was legible but looking a little streaky or grainy. It was about 4 ¼ by 5 ½ inches—these fliers were presumably copied four per standard-size page and then cut to size. “Igreja Evangélica Nova Criação,” the flier said at the top, and then, also in Portuguese but in smaller type: “Participate this week in one of our meetings of liberation and miracles. Come, and God will supply all your needs. Remember that a Word from God will be able to change your finances, your family, your destiny and your health forever.” The flier continued in the same vein for several more sentences, promising relief from trouble and strife, before listing the schedule of “Nossas Reuniões”: Tuesdays at 3:00 are “meetings for inner healing, and curing envy, curses (*bruxarias*), and discouragement (*desânimo*).” Wednesdays are “meetings of the Encounter with God” at 7:30. Thursdays at 3:00: “Powerful prayer (*oração forte*) against illness, suicidal tendencies, legal entanglements, unemployment, and vice.” Saturday at 3:00: “Powerful prayer against financial problems.” Sundays had two services listed: “meetings of the Encounter with God through the Word of God” at 10:00, and then “Meetings of powerful prayer for the family” at 6:00. After the Church’s address, phone number, and e-mail address, a few last words: “Come as you are…and you will be blessed (*abençoado*)” and “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and will be eternally (*Jesus Cristo é o mesmo, ontem, hoje e será eternamente*).”

The flier probably would have piqued my interest just on the basis of the mention of *bruxarias*, but more intriguing to me and to my research was the grainy picture that took up much of the right half of the flier, showing a Black man in vest and tie holding a microphone, apparently preaching. If the flier was any indication, I’d found—through dumb luck or through Nova Criação’s thorough evangelism—an African-led church.

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As with Reino de Deus, I was too uncertain of Nova Criação’s environment to bring the family along. I went alone on a Wednesday night. Nova Criação is on a residential street, about four blocks behind the massive Neoclassical church of Our Lady of Lapa and its sprawling cemetery. There are Protestant churches in Porto that present themselves to casual passerby as houses of worship—for example, the First Baptist Church on the Rotunda de Boavista, or the Methodist Church of Mirante—but Nova Criação, like the worship spaces of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Nazerenes, or the African Methodists or Muslims who we will meet later on, was an unobtrusive operation. It was basically a storefront, with some space in the back for an office. Signs in the front window listed the service times and the name of the church, but a pedestrian on the other side of the narrow street might pass without taking any notice at all. I think that Nova Criação was probably hidden away mostly by necessity—the rent was no doubt cheaper in such a low traffic area, and there were quite possibly limitations on the size and placement of signs in as residential zone. But the church for whatever reason ended up being another example of invisibility. Perhaps, along with the break in rent, there were strategic advantages to staying mostly out of sight—reaching out to get new congregants, rather than hoping for random passerby to hear the calling.

My first service at Nova Criação did not start promptly at 7:30 PM, despite it being the latest of the weekly services. It seemed more like the pastor waited until a smallish congregation of about ten others had strolled in. They came one or two at a time. A few recognized me as a newcomer and came to shake my hand, but introductions were minimal—one congregant already played soft organ on a keyboard, and many on arriving went to their plastic stackable chair of choice and turned to kneel, with backs and butts facing the front of the room and faces buried in the seats of the chairs. I never completely understood this practice, except that the chairs might have been too close together sometimes to pray facing forward.

The service was a little over an hour long, and alternated prayers, preaching by the Pastor Henry (who was in fact African—Nigerian, I would learn), and hymns sung by the whole congregation. Hymns were accompanied by keyboard, as well as by a boy of about 12 or 13 playing a drum kit with boundless exuberance that well outpaced his sense of rhythm. Especially on account of the drums, the music at this and subsequent Portuguese services I attended was cacophonous, but still enthusiastic and joyous.

After the service, I had a better introduction to some of the congregants. I would find in time that the Portuguese services generally brought in the same small group of people every day; this group came from Portugal, Mozambique, Brazil and Cabo Verde. Among the core group were:

- Roberto, a Portuguese man of about 60 years. He would come to the church accompanied by a woman about the same age whom I took to be his wife. I would learn eventually that Roberto was considered to be a pastor, though he took no major role in that first service nor in most others that I attended. Roberto had solid white, somewhat long hair, and a skinny body. He spoke no English. While I managed to have several (basic) conversations with other Portuguese-speakers, Roberto remained mostly

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6 I was to find out that Nova Criação has a service in English once a week—this isn’t listed on the fliers. Thus, I will be distinguishing between the English service and the Portuguese services from here forward.
unintelligible to me. I took Roberto to the local café to discuss his life as a Nova Criação attendee one time, but I barely got a word in edgewise. Roberto used the opportunity to evangelize, which I suppose is fair—I shouldn’t always get to lead the conversation, I guess. His evangelizing took the form of preaching straight at me, one-on-one, which was off-putting to me but maybe might have been effective to someone more receptive to his flavor of “a palavra”.

- Rebecca, a Mozambican woman in her late 20s or early 30s. Rebecca was very nice to me, saying hello and engaging in short conversations in Portuguese when we saw each other at the church. I could never schedule an interview with Rebecca, and eventually I decided that she might be uncomfortable being seen with a man outside the protective context of the sheltering church. I never got to find out how she came to be in Porto, or how she found out about Nova Criação. In our brief moments of conversation, Rebecca seemed quite insightful, and I regret not having the opportunity to know more.

- Pastor Henry’s son, who I will not name here, was the drummer at the Portuguese services. He was not the greatest drummer (though he may have become quite good in the intervening decade), but he was incredibly smart and charming. Henry seems like a very devoted father.

- Other regulars at the Portuguese services could have been African, Portuguese, or Brazilian—or from somewhere beyond Lusofonia. I would see the same people at different services, but these were reserved towards me. Enough congregants at Nova Crição were open to meeting me and speaking with me that I never felt a need to get closer to the “introverts”. In the end, I didn’t get as much of a chance to talk with Rebecca, nor did I come away with anything useful from my one-way conversation with Cardoso, so it might have been good for me to try a little harder to get to know some of these people. I imagine, too, that this is an issue that every ethnographer confronts—how representative are the stories and histories that come mainly from the extroverts? Add this to the list of factors that curtail what can be generalized from fieldwork.

After my first service at Nova Criação, I also met Pastor Henry for the first time. Henry is friendly and generally very open to talking about his church, his mission, and his own background. He is the head of the church—he established it, though he may have seeded it with remnants of an earlier congregation not of his creation. As best I could tell from conversations with Henry and with Pastor Paul (whom we will meet soon enough), Henry made most, if not all, of the decisions concerning the direction of the church. Originally from Nigeria, Henry was led down the most roundabout path to Porto by a series of visions. Henry’s story is worth relating in some detail.

**Henry**

As a child, Henry says, he suffered from sickle cell anemia. Every two or three months he was in the hospital; and doctors told Henry’s parents that he probably wouldn’t live past the age of 25. At that time, Henry’s family was not particularly religious. When he was around ten, Henry was introduced to Islam: “…some of their chiefs, their rulers, they promised they could
heal me. I am ready to pay any cost, to get healed.” Then he tried the religion for about four years—he prayed five times a day, did the fasting of Ramadan, but nothing happened.”

Then, Henry was “introduced to Hare Krishna—the one that shave their head…. “The Hare Krishna told me that I have to chant every day,” Henry told me, with a laugh that seemed dismissive, almost scornful. “I did that for complete two years…. And I still found myself in the hospital every two or three months, with severe pain and everything.”

And then—just before Henry’s 16th birthday,

“...one night I—I can’t say it was a dream because I wasn’t sleeping at all, (Interviewer: uh huh?) I just sit down, just waiting some few, few seconds. It looked like I got a vision but to me, back then, it looked like a dream. I saw two angels, you understand me, I saw two angels, and they...began to sing a song, the song...that bring fear to me, I don’t know what it means.”

Henry went back to the priest of Hare Krishna and related his vision; the priest replied that this meant that Henry was himself meant to be a Hare Krishna priest.

“But deep down within me I was not satisfied. I was not satisfied, there was that kind of a vacuum within me that put a point of interrogation within me—question mark. …

“Until one night, I think a week after...I was having a severe pain, severe pain, and there was nobody by me that can...call. No (unintelligible word) for me, nobody...severe pain, sweating.... I thought that that night was the last night of my life, I was on the floor. Something happened that had never happened to me before. I said, ‘God, I don’t know if you really exist; I have tried different ways. If you exist, can you give me peace—one. Can you take away all this pain that I feel right now. If you do that, I am going to do whatsoever you want me to do.’ The moment I say that, it looked like someone had a barrelful of cold water, I mean COLD water. Pour it upon me right from the crown of my head down to the soul of my feet. The pain disappear. The heat I was feeling—all my joints, I normally feel pain. Everything disappear, just that way. So, that continued the process of my new journey. So within me, now, I begin to hear my heart begin to say, this must be GOD.

“There is God. Which are the god? Is it Krishna? Or is it Allah? Which?”

A boy—Henry says the boy was 10 or 12—gave him a copy of the New Testament. “That was the first Bible that entered my hand in my life. He gave it to me, said ‘read.’” The boy told Henry to start with book of John. “I began to read it—I began to see the love of God. That was what changed me completely.”

Henry started going to one church, but he watched the pastor try to beat the sin of fornication out of the pastor’s daughter and a young man, in front of the congregation. Henry said to himself, “I don’t have the strength to be beaten. I have a lot of sin. So, there is no hope for me.” But he found strength in the Bible to continue with Christianity; he read about redemption in verses like 1 John 1: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness...” He found another church that better suited him, and he began to have a series of dreams:

“The dreams that comes often, is just one type of dream; it comes often. Was that, in the church that I attend, because, like, in metaphor—that church, there is a forest. Naturally, there is no forest (in real life). There is a forest in the front of that church, and that forest always has fire, or that

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7 Henry spoke to me on 5/29/2008, at Nova Criação.
forest burn, and people begin to shout—cry—for help. In the side of the, of the church was a tank, that when, normally when the rain fall, water dropped into that tank. Naturally there is no tank (in real life). But I see it in that dream. So each time I try to fetch water, to quench the fire, I always fell inside the tank. I don’t know why. I get upset then, all my prayers are wet and I am not able to save. It comes like that; these things bothers me, and I said, ‘Lord, why do I have this dream regularly, and I am not able to fulfill it.’ The mission, the reason—and I hear within me, ‘The reason is, you cannot be able to give what you don’t have. You must have something, before you are going to want to give it up. So the reason you fall inside the tank, is there is a necessity for you to be soaked. The water is my word. If you don’t have the word inside you, you can’t be able to give it up.’"

Interviewer: “Had you been baptized yet?”

“Yes…. I had been baptized. So that creates a hunger, of the word—passion for the word within me. To—not only to memorize, like as I was saying, but to be a pa—a doer of the word.”

Interviewer: “You need to carry that—that word, to those who needed it…."

“Exactly. So, God began to tell me, ‘one of the way to do that, is to share that which you will have; the passion to which I foresaw.’ And most especially, to reach out for people who are discouraged, disappointed, with a bitter life, bruised, these areas I began to see the Lord begin to lead me into. These are the people, also, that comes to me.

“So, that was how the whole thing started. In the age of 16, I started my first group, as a house fellowship, with ("word indistinct") to become a church.”

Henry’s first flock grew, he says, to 100 or 150 people. But the Lord spoke to Henry and told him, “leave,” and he was sent to Togo as a missionary. “That is how the whole thing started.”

In the service of the Lord, in following his calling wherever it leads, Henry has been to quite a few places. Leaving Africa, he made his way to Saint Martin, in the Caribbean, where he continued his mission. While there, Henry prayed for a wife, and “the Lord told me that my wife…is in Por-tu-gal.” Henry managed to fly to Lisbon for a week, but, “I did not see her; I did not know her.” He returned to St Marin, and prayed more, and the Lord clarified: “‘…but I didn’t ask you to go there. I would have told you that your wife is there.’

“So that same day…I got a phone call from a friend…. He told me, ‘We call—I call last week, I was told you went to Portugal; you visited our church?’ I said, ‘You have a church in Portugal?’ He said, ‘yes’. He asked me, ‘Where you went to;’ I said, ‘Lisbon.’ He said, ‘No! In Porto!’ And I heard within me, said ‘That is the place she is….’

“So, I came (to Portugal again, this time to Porto), and that was where she is….

“So I get married with her. And after I get married in ‘95, I moved her out, and went…to Holland….”

Henry and his wife spent six years in Holland. He started a church, and got it running enough that he felt it could continue without him. His son was born shortly before the family moved to Brazil, where they opened another church and lived another three years. At the end of 2003, Henry came back to Europe without the family, and for a year he “only did evangelistic traveling around; I didn’t do nothing. I just (spent that time?) in Italy, Holland, France, Germany, and, come back” to Portugal, where his wife and son rejoined Henry in Porto.

After hearing Henry’s story thusfar, wherein each step of his long journey was directed by a message or command from God, I felt comfortable cutting to the chase and asking directly, “…how was that revealed to you, that it was time to come back (to Portugal)?…”
Henry said that even before he left St. Martin, “God told me three specific things—the reason why I’m coming to Portugal…. One of the reasons was to have the church, which is the former church. And, the second reason, was to learn the language…the Portuguese language. And the Lord told me in a quote, ‘…because of the mission I have for you.’ ….and the third one was to get married.”

Henry’s family opened the church that would develop into Nova Criação in 2005, with just English language services at first. It wasn’t until 2007 that Henry expanded into Portuguese language services—given that I was experiencing the first year of this ministry, the sparse attendance at the Portuguese services was not surprising, and taking into account that there were Portuguese services almost every day of the week, which presumably spread the flock even more thin, Henry was actually doing pretty well on that front. The next goal of Henry’s ministry, he told me, was to establish a church in Lisbon—“we have a pastor that will be taking the…taking charge of that now,” he said.

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I attended Portuguese services at Nova Criação several times, visiting on different days of the week to get a feel for how the congregation might change from one service to another, and how the preaching and order of service might vary based on the different themes ascribed to each day’s service. In general, I did not observe much variation in the weekday services—Tuesday seemed like Wednesday seemed like Friday, though the staggered service times through the week made some services more of a nighttime affair, while others were at least partially lit by the twilight reflecting off the windows and walls of the flats that lined the street. The attendees did not vary much, either—they were generally the same group described above. Newcomers, when they did appear, seemed mostly to be new to me, but familiar to the regulars. There was little evidence that the community created by Nova Criação’s Portuguese-speaking congregation stretched beyond church, but the fact that these individuals were at the church for an hour or two almost every day nevertheless gave them the air of a “church family”.

In general, I would identify the Igreja Evangélica Nova Criação as non-denominational, neo-charismatic after the fashion of African independent churches but also with a certain Brazilian influence—they were not practitioners of the prosperity gospel, like Reino de Deus, but the weekly themes of the Portuguese-language services were similar to those of Reino de Deus’s, and the structure of a Nova Criação service, with its alternating preaching, praying, and singing, was basically the same as Reino’s. In addition to the almost daily Portuguese services, there was an English language service on Sunday afternoons—the remnant of Henry’s original congregation, but a substantial remnant, greater in numbers than any Portuguese service I attended. My first three or four visits were all to the Portuguese services, but eventually I would attend several meetings of the English service.

Though Henry had started his ministry in Porto with the English service, he had been joined shortly after the ministry began by a Ghanaian pastor, Pastor Paul, and as Henry’s Portuguese skills became better and he decided he was able to lead a Portuguese ministry, he passed the preaching responsibilities for the English service to Paul, whose own Portuguese is limited. Again, I choose to digress a bit and learn more about Pastor Paul.
Paul

Unlike Henry’s family, Paul’s family brought him up as a practicing, evangelical Christian. “My father was a Christian, my mother also was a Christian. So when I was growing up, I grew up Christianity. That is how I came so, when I got to a certain level, how I knew that there was God, and I have to give myself to Him.”8 When Paul was in his late teens or early twenties, he was called by the Lord:

“…the Lord called me, himself, when I was asleep. I heard a voice. I thought it was one of my brothers who—who was calling me, but… I woke up and I saw the Lord. I slept again, and then I heard a voice again. This one, not just a voice, but there was a tap, the person calling me, that mention my name—Paul? I woke up, and, what I saw was amazing. What I saw was very, very powerful, and I thank God for that. And I always bless God for what I saw. I saw a—a small light, at my doorpost.

You know, Africa, there are certain spirits that can also bring out that light, so when I saw the light at my doorpost, what came into my mind first, not being so sensitive to the spirit of God, I thought it was a witch, who was coming to (hunt?) me or put fear in me. So what I did was, shouted, ‘In the name of Jesus!’ But the more I shout the name, the more the light becomes big. The more I shout the name, the more the light becomes big. So all of a sudden, the room was…shining; the room was so bright that I cannot describe. I do—I cannot, I don’t know the color that I would give the—that light. But all that I know is, that it was shining, and it was very powerful. So I have to hide myself in bed. Yes, though the light was piercing into my eyes, I use my pillow to cover up my eyes, my head, I cover myself with my clothes, but yes, still, I took the bedsheets from the (bedstand?) to cover myself…

And… I I remember, I read a book of art, and I remember when Paul was, ehhh, on his way to Damascus, (Paul gives a very little chuckle of reverie) there was a light and God appeared to him and he was blind. So, when I remember that…condition, I say, ‘This is exactly what happened to Paul,’ because, I normally call him my senior brother (Paul and interviewer chuckle together). That is how it happens. So, when I was trying to hide my face from the light, then the voice came out again, and asked me to look at Him. It was there that I was able to sit down. It was 1 PM (AM?) midnight; sooo… I sat down that day, and there was conversation between me and the Lord. I was seeing the lights.

So—when he speaks, I hear the voice, then I also come out, with my (bedstand?). But, I don’t open my mouth… when He speaks, the light would just come and hit me, because it comes with lights, in the form of fire. So when it hit me, I hear what the Lord has said, then I also answer in the same way. And then, so, that is how we are communicating. I don’t see anybody else; all I see is the light, and it was very powerful….”

Paul and the Lord had a three-hour long conversation, and God told Paul “how and where to go; and…who to marry, and all other things. And what can bring me down in ministry, and what can lift me up in ministry. And not to be angry…if I becomes angry, I can spoil things.” But also, if Paul was going to be angry, it should be “in ministry, where people are trying to destroy his work.” Paul says that he was able, by virtue of this and perhaps subsequent revelations from God, to come to a happy life and to find a happy marriage.

After marrying, when he was still in his 20s, Paul was anointed as an Elder in his church—this was the point at which he entered the ministry, and thereafter he would go to villages to preach the gospel. By implication, this was basically a door-to-door ministry; if he

could gather enough believers in a community to create a “congregation”, his church would eventually “train somebody to take over.” Paul saw that he had to “do more than what (he) was doing.” His brother-in-law attended a bible school in Nigeria, and Paul recognized a qualitative difference in the brother-in-law’s preaching after this, so Paul also enrolled in a bible school, in Accra, receiving his license and ordination in 2000.

Paul’s path to the ministry was less circuitous than Henry’s; his journey to Portugal was also a bit more direct, though not without obstacles and challenges. Two years after his first conversation with the Lord, he had another—he was told that his destiny was to travel. “…thinking of this, and not matured to the things of God, I thought, ehh, it was perhaps (at) that time.” He applied for visas during the years of his ministry in Ghana—first, to the U.S., then to Germany, then England—and each time Paul was turned down. He almost got a visa to go to Denmark in 2000: “…they were supposed to give me the visa, which…I was looking for a ticket to come, but—I did not get the ticket, also…so, the visa also…went off…”

Eventually, a friend encouraged Paul to make the journey to Europe with him. In contrast to Henry’s journey, Paul’s was potentially more dangerous—I said to Paul, half joking, that his namesake’s journey to Damascus wasn’t nearly as long. Paul says that “if you are going on that road, and you have money on you, the journey is very easy. …but, if there is no money, it is very, very difficult. That is how I see it.” While not well-off by any standard, Paul seems to count himself in the category of those who had money to smooth their path. Passing through Cote d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia in 2001 was not easy—all were dealing with conflicts and instability at the time. Paul says that “those who are taking us know the route. They know where the rebels are, and where there’s a peace road you can pass. So, when we get to Abidjan, they, they…we jumped on a bus, to take us…across…through Liberia, through Guinea, and then—to Senegal.”

From Senegal, he took a “ship” to “Spain.” I use quotes here because I didn’t know enough about immigrant patterns from West Africa, which were not nearly as newsworthy in 2008, as I know now; I didn’t know the right questions to ask. Now I know that the “ship” Paul took may have been a small and crowded motorboat, and that the destination may have been the Canaries—a 2006 article on this sort of migration path suggests that the Spanish government often moves migrants to the mainland after a 40 day detention period (Chrisafis and Soares 2006). Whether Paul came to Spain via the Canaries or directly to the mainland, it took him “only” two and a half months to get across. “…I didn’t find it difficult, like people normally find it. Because one of our brothers…who is also in Spain now, it took him seven years to cross to Spain.” Paul made his way to Portugal—first to Lisbon, then to Porto, because he had a “brother” there (sometimes it is hard to distinguish between Paul’s biological family and his “brothers and sisters in Christ”). His brother helped him to navigate the immigration system in Portugal and obtain his “documents.”

In 2003, Paul returned to Ghana to attend an evangelical leadership institute, and then in 2005 he returned to Portugal and met Pastor Henry for the first time:

“And when I was coming (back) to (Porto), the Lord told me, ‘There is a church.’ Because, my plan was to come and start something…. I was thinking that, if I have everything now, then, if I come, I will start something. You see. And, my brother told me there is still no church here, and I was telling him, ‘there is a church.'
So, when I met with (Pastor Henry), he asked me my plans, and I—I told him that, ehh…when I was coming, the Lord told me there is a church here….I’m ready to join this one, and then we do things together. That is how we met. And by the grace of God, we are moving forward gradually.”

When Paul first started preaching at Nova Criação, he and Henry conducted the services together in English. But as Portuguese speakers began coming to the services, Henry made the decision to create the Portuguese congregation and to keep it separate from the English-speaking group. According to Paul, Henry’s rationale was that

“…the English section was taking over the service. We sing songs, we do prayers, and all other things…and they don’t understand. So, when they come, they don’t feel at home…. So therefore, he tried to separate the two. And because he speaks the Portuguese, and I don’t, they let, he take…he will take the Portuguese section, and then, I will take the English section.”

This continued to be the division of labor when I started attending the church. Paul worked during the week as a construction worker (a job that has been disproportionately identified with migrants going back to the 1960s), preaching on Sundays. His hope was to bring his wife, who remained in Ghana, to Portugal, as an important step to expanding his ministry and hopefully making it his full time job. The role of marriage in ministry was extremely important in Paul’s reckoning; he had mentioned that in his church in Ghana the role of elder—which was really the role of one who evangelizes in the “field”—was contingent upon being married. Paul spoke of being “very careful in moving with the opposite sex” in his work; the implication was that even if a pastor was steadfast, rumors and innuendoes could cause problems when the wife was not around; conversely, with his wife by his side, Paul could engage fully with his ministry, visiting houses and meeting with everyone.

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I didn’t make it to an English service until after my family left Portugal at the end of April—my first such attendance was in early May. The English service drew a substantial crowd of Nigerians and Ghanians. Except for a special “preacher’s Sunday” salute to Paul that brought the two groups together, there was almost no interaction between the Portuguese congregation and the English one, nor did I ever see a non-African attendee at the English service except at “preacher’s Sunday”. Nova Criação’s English congregation seemed to me to be a bit cliquish, with Nigerians hanging together and Ghanaians, who were in the minority, a little bit marginalized as best I could ascertain. When services were over, church members gathered on the sidewalk out front and conversed for half an hour or even longer, and it seemed that there were relationships among the English-speaking congregants that stretched beyond church; businessmen exchanged cards and networked, while women discussed topics of their own, beyond the reach of my male outsider’s ears.

I met quite a few of the regulars almost immediately, including:

- Church Secretary Samuel, who was Nigerian but was studying international relations, enrolled simultaneously with a Kenyan university and the Faculdade do Letras of the University of Porto. Samuel was very open with me and friendly; easy to chat with, but somehow we never managed to sit down for a more in-depth conversation. He may
have been too busy with his studies, since the major tests and end of year activities start up in May and run on into June. Or he may have not been as enthusiastic about telling me his story as he seemed.

- John was also a Nigerian. He sang with the choir at the English sessions—these services had more developed music than the Portuguese services did, particularly in the incorporation of a choir of about six or seven congregants.

- Grace, from Nigeria as well, was very outgoing after church, but again, I was unable to schedule a time to talk more in depth.

One English service attendee DID let me interview her at length. Ama, from Ghana, was soft-spoken but willing to discuss her life in Portugal in greater detail. Ama works at a salon in the back of an older centro comercial (mini-mall) in the Boavista neighborhood, relatively close to my family’s flat but also not very far from Nova Criação itself. This was where we agreed to meet for our conversation. These centros comerciais are worthy of further discussion, but for now, we are interested in Ama’s experience with Nova Criação.

**Ama**

Ama came to Europe in her early 20s, settling first in the Netherlands, where she lived for five years before coming to Portugal. She describes Holland in the late 90s or early 00s as a more dangerous place than Portugal, pinning the blame for this on other immigrant groups: “…there are some…cultures Holland-people colonized like Surinam, and, eh, Antilles… and, you know, they’re very harsh, and sometimes, if you go out, and you…come home late, you know, they attack you, and…and all kinds of…things…” When her friends decided to come to Portugal, she joined them, arriving first in Lisbon but quickly moving on to Porto, where she hoped to find a few more Ghanaians.

Ama was baptized Catholic when she was little—she says her grandmother was the proponent of Catholicism in her family, and that all her brothers and sisters were likewise baptized in the Church. Ama’s mother, however, was an Anglican when she was young and later switched her allegiance to the Presbyterian Church. Ama herself chose to become an evangelical when she got a little older, before she left Ghana:

Interviewer: “How did you, kind of, have that moment where you realized that you were…really more of an…evangelical at heart?”

Ama: “What played a role, was, I like Catholic Church, I like them because, Catholic people, they are good, I like them, I like everything about Catholic, because when you’re here in Portugal, the Catholic people, they help a lot of organizations, you know? I like Catholic. But the problem is, I like dancing, you know? Yes, I like to dance; I like to jump, sing. (slight chuckle passes between Ama and interviewer) You know, if I’m singing—see the way I’m doing. …and Catholic people don’t normally do that…kind of thing. It’s only the evangelic people that do that. And if you go into prophecy…Catholic people don’t normally prophesy…the evangelic people, they do all that. So as I’m going with my friends to the house and attending evangelic, ehhh, church, I just changed (right then?)”

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9 I interviewed Ama at her salon on 6/18/2008.
Here we can recall what Rosália at Espaço Moçambique said about her preference for Reino de Deus over Catholicism:

“The Catholic Church is very melancholy, very sad—the songs are not happy, don’t make the people feel happy…. So the evangelic ones, I feel happy…. The music makes people feel well… I go to the Catholic Church but I don’t find these things … (At Reino de Deus) you find an inner strength (força interior)—happiness, singing, playing…”

Ama and Rosália are from separate corners of the African continent, with divergent colonial histories, and some socio-economic distance both within Portugal and, probably, where they were positioned in the hierarchies back at home—Rosália being more comfortably middle class even in Portugal, while Ama was working class—not bad for an immigrant who doesn’t speak the language, but not as comfortable a lifestyle compared to Rosália’s. Despite the differences in the women’s lives, both express a similar dissatisfaction with the Catholic liturgy and the Church’s musical tradition that has pushed them away from their nominally Catholic upbringings towards new Protestant movements—worship environments that have the novelty and flexibility to provide more of the affect they require from an encounter with the Spirit.

And so, by the time she left Ghana, Ama had found a home with an evangelical church—evangelical, at least, in the sense that she compares it to Nova Criação in style. In the Netherlands, too, Ama attended a predominantly African neo-charismatic church. I asked her where the congregation at this church was from, and she replied that they were primarily from Nigeria and Ghana, but also there were some people there from Surinam and the Antilles. I was curious about this—why would Dutch-speakers go to a church with services in English? But according to Ama, some of the attendees from former Dutch colonies were “married to Whites. So sometimes when they are coming to church they are coming with their husbands or wives.” Currently, one can see preaching from this church on YouTube, not from the time that Ama herself was in Amsterdam but from about five years later—contemporaneous with our conversation. At that point, the preaching was still in English, but a translator just upstage and to the pastor’s right was translating the pastor’s words as he preached them, probably into Dutch (the audio is not clear enough for me to confirm this).

When Ama had moved to Porto, she stayed in a house with several other people, and she asked one of the housemates, whom she refers to affectionately as a “boy”, “Ahh, is there not any church here?” The boy was attending Nova Criação, so Ama also began to attend with him. Other than Nova Criação, Ama says she’s also attended services at Reino de Deus with friends on occasion, but her Portuguese is not very good so it is better for her to come to Nova Criação’s English service.

Ama also has attended services at the Jehovah’s Witnesses temple—in fact, one of the Jehovah’s Witnesses that I’d met before came to the salon to proselytize while Ama and I were in the middle of our conversation. He was on a first name basis with Ama, and they were acquaintance-friendly with each other, but once he was out of earshot, Ama admitted that she did not care for some of the interpretations the Witnesses bring to scripture. She spoke specifically about communion: “It’s like…in the Bible, God said we should eat His body and drink, eh, His blood to remember Him. But then…last time I went, they did not eat the bread, they do not drink…the wine; they just look…” Ama is describing the annual observance of “Passover” or the “Lord’s Evening Meal” as practiced by the Jehovah’s Witnesses; only those who identify
themselves as the “anointed” partake of the bread and wine at this meal. I did not see any observation of Communion at Nova Criação at any service I attended, but perhaps my timing was off, because taking Communion the “right” way appears to have kept Ama from engaging more fully with the Witnesses. It couldn’t have helped their cause that they are even less of a church for jumping, dancing, or prophesying than the Catholic Church.

Beginning at her church in Amsterdam and continuing with Nova Criação, Ama has been a member of the church choir—an outlet for her professed love of music and singing. She takes pride in being part of the choir, and it helps her, she says, to maintain regular attendance at church—in Ghana, she attended more sporadically, since no one relied on her for her musical or other contribution to the services. “…for Ghana, I don’t do anything in the church, so if I go or I don’t go it doesn’t affect the church. Because I don’t, I don’t have any activities to do in the church. But in Europe, I have a lot of activities to do with the church. So…it keeps me going every Sunday…."

I can’t extrapolate much from Ama’s experience at Nova Criação; I can’t presume that other members of the English congregation have similar attitudes about their faith, or have followed similar paths to get to this point of conjuncture. I know that Ama was sensitive to some dissonances between her Ashanti background and the culture(s) of her sisters and brothers in Christ from Nigeria. I asked Ama if she spent time with other people from church outside of church—“You know, like the Nigerians that go (to Nova Criação), or others, do you ever go out and just hang around with them?”

Ama: “Yes, yes, yes, sometimes, the Nigerians, I go to their house, I visit them, we eat together…Yeah…even though, it’s not easy, because, you know, every culture have their culture or the way the person was brought up. But, you know, it’s difficult to live here with people, like that, because everybody have different ideas…different feelings…It’s like, if you talk to somebody, if you don’t take care, the person will be offended. You understand? So…it’s very complicated, you know…”

Interviewer: “I know… (I laugh)”

Ama: “…to remember the different…cultures, but, you know, but, glory be to God, because, we are all worshipping one God, so, the understanding is there, so…we just come together.”

My cynical side says that these dinners with Ama and the Nigerians are very rare, maybe more aspirational than anything like a common occurrence. But maybe Ama does sit down for a meal with her churchmates on a regular basis. Importantly, she does not say that she never spends time with churchfolk outside of church, nor does she make a claim that she sees them constantly, as best friends. If Ama and other immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa lived in the same neighborhood, would we expect more of a relationship between neighbors than what Ama describes? I am inclined to think not.

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Once I’d attended several Portuguese and several English services at Nova Criação, I began to identify some differences between the two. Certainly, there were differences between Henry’s preaching style and Paul’s—this was to be expected, since they came to ministry via different paths and brought some very different life experiences with them. Brother Samuel, the church’s Secretary, also led some of the prayers during the English services; I wonder if his role is similar to what Paul’s was when there was no Portuguese service and Henry was still the focal
point of the English service. There were other structural differences between the services. The Portuguese services, even on the weekend, were somewhat shorter, and sometimes seemed a bit more enervated; the English section, in contrast, seemed to be more energized, even if they seemed long to this mainline Protestant. Some of the surplus enthusiasm may have come from the larger crowd, everyone singing together and “Amen”-ing, passing enthusiasm among us like a contagion of joy. The choir certainly helped to pump up the congregation as well, and tambourines were passed around the congregation to encourage participation in the music from everyone; those without tambourines clapped hands, and all sang, and the spirit certainly felt alive in that room. I personally felt more engaged in the service when I had a tambourine to play. There is a tingle I get, that works its way through my entire body, that comes when I hear a particularly moving piece of music or when I feel a connection to something big and beautiful. I was moved in just this way more than once during the musical parts of the English language service. Pleasant, but less overwhelming in affect, was the occasion when I responded to the altar call: “Paul started pointing at people in the audience, to come forward and receive prayer. He got really into it. After a few of these personal calls to the front, I was called. I squeezed Paul’s hand tight as he squinched up his face in impassioned prayer. It felt good.” (from my notes, written the same day)

I will note, also, that the English congregation included more children than the Portuguese congregation. These kids—some just babies, others pre-K or elementary school age—were remarkably well behaved (in contrast to how I would expect my own kids to be in such a long service). I don’t know if they paid much attention to the service itself, but they were never disruptive.

A final, and very striking, difference between the Portuguese and English services was that the English service put much more emphasis on healing. I observed on a couple of occasions something that appeared to be the “casting out of evil”—I’m not sure how Paul would describe these events, but that is what I observed. For instance: the same service at which I was called to the altar, after my turn had passed,

“I went back to my place, and soon the pastor made one more altar call. He described someone who had been here for four years, with no luck in coming closer to their dreams. He waited; it seemed like he was waiting for someone to recognize themselves and come forward. I asked myself if Paul was describing me, but I couldn’t identify myself without serious mental gyrations. After a minute or so, a woman in black and red came forward and stood before the pastor. He started praying for her, and after three or four minutes he either bopped her head with the evangelist bop or she collapsed backwards. John (another congregant who was also in the choir) was behind her in case this happened; he caught her and lowered her to the ground. For almost ten minutes thereafter, the woman writhed and rolled back and forth, while people moved chairs and (P.A.) equipment out of her way. Sometimes other women would gently hold her, though she would inevitably roll or wiggle away. Paul tried to heal another woman, but I think the acrobatics of the first interfered too much. He ended up stooping and praying further over the woman, until she calmed. After a bit, she quietly got up, still shaky and unsteady.” (from my notes, written the same day)

I’m not sure why Henry doesn’t do this kind of healing during his services. One possible reasons might include the greater diversity of the Portuguese congregation, which may not share a frame of reference that allows them to interpret what they are seeing—if half of the congregation sees casting out of evil and the other half sees distasteful religious melodrama, it
might be problematic for the long term goal of growing the congregation. On the other hand, perhaps it is just one of several stylistic differences between the two pastors—Henry did not grow up in a tradition of spiritual healing, and even though he was himself healed by the power of the Holy Spirit working in his life, it was a more private event for him, without the theatricality that Paul brings to healing.

Overall, Nova Criação was remarkable for bringing a version of neo-charismatic Pentecostalism to Porto that reflected in its humble way some of the more dramatic Protestant movements of West Africa. There may have been other African-led, Pentecostal-inflected churches in the city, but if so, I did not find them. Henry and Paul had cornered the market, as best I could tell.

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In my memory, the Winter months—December, January, February, and even March—played out emotionally attuned to the weather, which was generally grey and rainy, cold, cough and sniffle inducing (especially in the kids)—but broken by moments of spectacular warmth and sunshine. We found ourselves going to the emergency room every three weeks or so, especially when upper respiratory bugs made baby Oscar miserable. As the fall semester came to a close in America, the money was running out and M.’s freelance work became more important as a source of Christmas funding but also a new point of conflict between us, as she couldn’t work on freelance projects and watch the baby simultaneously. In order to fund my research, I ended up spending less time focusing on the actual research and more just keeping the family stable. And this was just the practical face of my divided life. The other side was the continually growing discontent experienced both by wife and daughter. Both were becoming increasingly alienated, feeling friendless and alone in a damp dark unintelligible place. Yes, there were beautiful moments and epiphanies during those months—but the charms of Christmas in Porto, and the sunny respites from the rain, and all of these good moments passed, and the damp cold became our normal—all around us, and between us.

It was shortly before Valentine’s Day that things came to a head. I don’t remember the trigger or triggers—could have been about money, or time, or general dissatisfactions—but instead of picking at each other’s flaws and inadequacies for an hour or two and then finding a point of détente, as we usually did, we instead found a new level of hopelessness dividing us. By the end of that afternoon, M. had called her friend in Texas and was preparing to move back with the kids as soon as the tickets could be arranged.

I moved through hours feeling foggy and despondent. I didn’t want my wife to leave, or to take my daughter, and worse still, I couldn’t bear to be away from my baby at such a young age. Oscar was at an age where the passing of each month brings a completely different baby. Miss that? That would be heartbreak.

M. left me at the flat with Oscar and went out for a walk, and when she returned home she had refined her plans. She didn’t want to sweep the children away and disrupt their lives more than had already occurred, and she needed to create her own closure. She had decided to make a trip, solo, to see friends in Paris and achieve a travel goal that she had wanted for herself.
for years. Later, after some time spent preparing the family, she would take the kids back to Texas, leaving me to finish up my research without the distractions of kids and spouse.

The next few months were a new and dark adventure in liminality. Trying to be good to one another; trying to provide our daughter with the best experiences during her last months abroad, trying to get through or at least get by. M. made her trip to Paris, had a good time, but nothing was resolved between us by her personal journey. At the end of April I took the family back to Lisbon. For two days, we played tourist, and then I accompanied M. and Ada and Oscar to the airport and let them leave for Texas.

On my return to Porto, I had to pack up clothing and furniture, many things that people had given us for the kids, some things that M. left behind so as to travel light. I felt energized, to be on my own and able to focus almost all my attention on my work. But I felt guilty that I felt energized, like a bad father and a crappy husband. Like many immigrants in Porto, I was now on another continent from my family. Unlike most immigrants, though, I was not there to make enough money to feed my children. My personal immigrant experience was insulated from uncertainty and true anxiety by my privilege. If I sometimes thought about my children’s faces and felt like crying, it was not because I couldn’t afford to fly home to them at a moment’s notice.

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**Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto**

The week after the family returned to America, I saw or heard (don’t remember exactly which) of an event at the Seminário de Vilar, to be held that weekend. The Seminário was the Catholic Diocese of Porto’s heart—to the extent it functions as a seminary at all, it is very much adjunct to a greater function of being a center for administration, including the diocese’s refugee and migrant services; diocese-wide activities; and the occasional conference. In my dealings with African Catholics and those who were their allies within the church, I had many opportunities to go to the Seminário. On this occasion, I had heard about an event organized by the Diocesan Secretary of Migrations, the Festa dos Povos. The Festa was billed on the fliers as an “Encontro de culturas” in Portuguese and in Russian. This was my kind of event.

The Festa did not disappoint—among other speakers and performers who will be discussed in other chapters, there was a performance by a choir composed primarily of Methodists from Angola. I tried, but I did not get much information on this group at the time, but only a week later I encountered the group again.

The occasion this time was CulturÁfrica, a celebration of African immigrants in Porto that took place over several days at the Mercado Ferreira Borges in the Ribeira. I spent quite some time at this event, which ended up being a true nexus for the activities of many of the immigrants I’d already met, and some of whom I was to get to know better in my last month in town. When the Methodists took the stage to sing for CulturÁfrica, I was excited to see them, and to have another chance to speak with their members or their leadership—as it happened, this was truly worthy of my excitement. Ultimately, too, this group would lead to the most frustrating, most heartbreaking part of my research and its aftermath—aftereffects of fieldwork.
that helped to derail my work, and worse, my trust in institutionalized religion. I am dealing with
the ramifications to this day.

When I made my introduction, in broken Portuguese, the leader of the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto\textsuperscript{10}, Pastor Miranda, was quick to offer his hospitality and invited me with no
hesitation to attend services at the church. I made a point of attending as soon as I could, late
afternoon of the following Sunday. As with Porto’s mosque and Nova Criação, IMAP was
mostly invisible to those who weren’t looking for it, and even to me, who most definitely WAS
looking for African churches. The congregation met in a small storefront space just behind the
Mercado Bom Sucesso, where the Roueche-Beards regularly shopped for vegetables over the
course of the eight months the family was together in Porto. The IMAP was also a mere half-
block—within sight of—Casa Agricola, a 200+ year-old farmhouse converted to a bar and
restaurant, and one of my favorite writing spots in the months after M. and the kids left. In fact,
the church was located practically at the centerpoint of my academic, social, economic and
familial activities throughout my months in Porto, yet it remained unseen until very close to the
end of my time in Porto.

I am sure it is easier to see structure and patterns from the perspective of the insider, but
to this outsider and relative newcomer to neo-charismatic worship, the pastors of Pentecostal-
inflected churches like Reino de Deus and Nova Criação seemed to move between preaching,
scripture and song as the Spirit moved them, in an almost improvisational way (one of my
earliest experiences with a service like this was at the Church of John Coltrane in San Francisco,
where the majority of the service actually consists of improvisational jazz). In contrast, the
service at IMAP was closer to the Episcopal/Anglican liturgy that I grew up with, which itself is
very close to the Catholic liturgy. Pastor Miranda was trained by Methodist missionaries from
the U.S., and in many ways IMAP was informed by the practices of the United Methodist
Church. I will clarify—from the outside, mainline Protestantism seems to change very slowly
with time, but the last fifty years have actually seen any number of debates and shifts within
denominations like the Methodists and the Episcopalians. Most of these debates have been extra-
liturgical—questions about how scripture is interpreted, about who can be ordained, about what
makes a denomination unique and with what other churches they might share communion. At the
same time, though, there have been substantial discussions, sometimes quite combative, over
liturgical content and practice in these churches (e.g. Tucker 2011:53–59), and while much
remains the same, it would be erroneous to say that the American-inflected Methodism that
Pastor Miranda learned in Angola some 30 years had not undergone some shifting in the
intervening years.

Pastor Miranda has been relatively isolated from changes in the UMC\textsuperscript{11}. He had a
contentious relationship with the Methodist Church leadership in Porto, which in any case was
aligned (as most European Methodist groups are) with the Methodist Church in the U.K. This
church is a separate and distinct entity from the UMC in the United States. Miranda didn’t seem
to maintain contact with the missionary group that operated the Methodist mission in Quessua,
Angola, from which he received his theology degree—later, when IMAP needed the kind of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[10]{I will abbreviate as IMAP hereafter for convenience, though I did not observe any use of the abbreviation
by church members or leaders.}
\footnotetext[11]{Much of this information is from an interview with the Pastor at IMAP on 6/3/2008.}
\end{footnotes}
support that might come from a connection to the American church, they were not able to draw
on any such connection. Furthermore, Pastor Miranda seemed to be more of a liturgical
perseverator, or at least more likely to bring his own measured innovations to his practices—his
uneasiness with the Portuguese Methodist church seemed to stem largely from discomfort with
their rigidity in how they expected their pastors to run their services and generally “perform
Methodism.”

Pastor Miranda and his wife and co-pastor Josefina were from the northern, Kikongo-
speaking part of Angola. Services at his church were conducted in Portuguese, but hymns were
sung in Kikongo, Umbundu or Kimbundo from a Methodist hymnal created especially for the
Angolan ministry. The Angolan hymns didn’t seem to alienate too many; the congregation was
well attended by Angolans from several regions, as well as a few Cabo Verdeans, and one
notable Portuguese college student—my namesake, Vicente. The Sunday service was often
followed by a late lunch and socializing; another service, on Tuesdays, was more basic, and had
less chit chat and no refreshments. Overall, there was not much evidence of interactions between
most congregation members beyond the church—with one very interesting exception: Vicente,
the Portuguese college student, was engaged to Pastor Miranda’s daughter Teresinha. I got the
full story eventually from Vicente.

Vicente

Vicente grew up an evangelical Protestant in Catholic Portugal. His parents themselves
were evangelicals, as was his father’s father. Vicente went to a non-denominational church in
Vila Nova de Gaia for most of his childhood. Like many teens, he rebelled against his parents’
beliefs when he was about 15. “I had that crisis of adolescence, rebel crisis…. And I left the
church.”

Vicente may have left the church he grew up in, but he never really strayed too far
from God; it was at an informal-sounding prayer meeting at the house of a friend that he met
Teresinha for the first time. “…so, we started to talk… Things were happening, big
time…(Interviewer: Uh-huh?) …yeah! (Vicente laughs a bit.)”

Vicente started attending IMAP soon after meeting Teresinha. I wondered if Vicente felt
odd, especially the first few times he attended, being the only White attendee. At first he
responded somewhat defensively, not hostile, but as if I was implying that he—all maybe all
Portuguese—are racists:

”…since I was very young, I…have very good…African friends in my church…. I was educated
by my fathers to—how do I say…to be with all of the peoples…no matter the races, without
problems. We are all human beings. I have no problem. I have no problem—with that…”

I tried to clarify the intent behind my question:

“…I didn’t think that you would have had a problem; it’s just that, you know, kind of wandering
into…the scene, and, you know, feeling yourself in a minority…is something that, you know,
White people in Portugal and in America…are not used to, a lot of the time. It’s usually the other
way around.”

Vicente spoke with me on 6/17/2008.
Vicente, though, is socially fearless:

I always try to integrate myself in the community, very fast.... I’m not a very—as you have seen—I’m not a very quiet person.... I talk a lot. And I...like to talk and to meet the people, and talk at them. And I think, for me, that’s a better way of integrating myself in the community. It’s talking...it’s ‘breaking the ice.’—you say you’re ‘breaking the ice.’ I like to talk and to meet the people. I think that we—that makes me more, closer, or near the people....”

Vicente is probably right on the money—he is outgoing, easy to talk to as a friend almost immediately after meeting him, and his background—a history of having African friends that sounded like more than just tokenism to me, combined with a life lived as a Protestant—has smoothed the path to his acceptance at IMAP. Miranda and Josefina seemed to be very affectionate with Vicente; I think he had charmed them with his guileless charm.

By the time I met Teresinha, Vicente, and the congregation at IMAP, Vicente had been attending the church for two years, and he was preparing to be baptized with several other congregants. I was lucky to meet him in this moment of transition—Vicente took this sacrament as seriously as anyone could, as a powerful and fearful, sometimes intimidating opportunity—a spiritual challenge:

Interviewer: “...so, you’ve been going to the church for two years, and...how is it that you have just come to be baptized?”
Vicente: “Because I had some learnings about that, and—I was going to be baptized in the last year. But I take...a step... (Interviewer: ...back...) ...back. And I don’t know—I don’t want to know—ehh, I don’t want to do that again. Because I think I am ready to...give that step. It’s like growing something. And, I feel that I have to be baptized, to—to be more involved—with God and with...the congregation. I haven’t had to have fear of that. Because—because we know when we are baptized, we have more responsibilities. We have to...I think I have to...make that step. It’s essential for me. This moment of, of my life....
“I want to do that, because...it’s a step, it’s like a wedding— it’s like a wedding with Christ, confirmation with the—to the congregation, that I am, uh...that I want to be fully engaged...”
Interviewer: “...and you’re becoming...fully a part of the family of the...the congregation...”
Vicente: “It’s that...that I want to do...without problems. It’s like, I don’t know, in this moment, what...God wants me to do. I will wait. He will tell me.”

Vicente did get baptized, with a number of other congregants. On a Saturday in late June, the congregation met at the church and then carpooleo to a spot in the northern suburbs of Porto, where the landscape reflected a transition between rows of working-class highrises and older, village-style farmhouses and fields. Teresinha and her friends had scouted the location a week or so earlier—it was a place on a slow-moving stream where cars could drive down and park under one of two adjacent bridges, with a stretch of sunlit water between. I rode with Teresinha and Vicente and a couple of their friends; whatever hesitations or doubts Vicente had been harboring before, he’d either worked through them or he had buried them deep inside, because he and everyone else were excited and full of joie de vivre on the drive up.

At the stream, those who were to be baptized, who had not already done so, changed into all white clothing. For the ladies, this meant a loose-fitting white robe-shirt over white slacks or jeans; for the gentlemen, white Levis with a white dress shirt. When all were ready, everyone began singing—in Kikongo, I presume. Someone handed me a tambourine, which I slapped
against my hip with enthusiasm. After a few minutes, Pastor Miranda moved to the streambank and we quieted. The pastor said a few words of greeting and thanksgiving in Portuguese, and then he and Josefinia climbed down into the water—there was a stone ledge at water’s edge; perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a canal than a stream, though that would not capture the charm of the area as well. They waded out into the water together, taking a position about three meters from the bank, and then, accompanied by new bursts of singing, clapping and tambourine-ing, one at a time, those who were to be baptized climbed into the water and made their way across to the pastors. Each one, in turn, knelt beside Pastor Josefinia in the shallow water. The singing subsided again, and Pastor Miranda, standing before the candidate for baptism, prayed over her or him, then moved to the side opposite Josefinia, so that together they might assist as the candidate let themselves fall backwards into the water, immersing themselves entirely before being pulled back up by the pastors. With each immersion, the singing began again—overall, it was one of the most joyous church experiences I’ve had the pleasure to attend.

As the baptism progressed, pedestrians—Portuguese suburbanites crossing the bridge to our east—stopped and stared. It was a bit odd to see the look of bewilderment on their faces. I could have been misinterpreting things, but I felt some anger at this—I got the very vague impression that these folks were judging my friends, or looking at them as if they were the most bizarre thing they’d ever seen. No one from the church seemed particularly bothered by gawkers. Some—including, perhaps, the pastors, and certainly including Vicente—saw the public baptisms as recruiting tools. Vicente told me what he’s heard about a previous baptism:

“...It was very beautiful, too, because...people...when they are not used...to see that...my pastor said that they have lots of people seeing the baptising near that part (of town). People were...curious about that. It was very beautiful. ...the people all dressed...in white.”

When all had been baptized, we helped Josefinia and Miranda out of the water and back up onto the ledge. Those who felt the need found spots to change into dry clothing, and then we loaded back into cars and pulled away—the drivers honking their horns in celebration of the newly consecrated as the baptismal stream receded behind us. We enjoyed a pleasant, if perhaps a little more fatigued, drive back to IMAP.

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Pastor Miranda came to Portugal from Angola in the late 80s, less than a decade after his ordination, on account of his having badly injured his arm. The pastor did not elaborate on the
nature of the injury, though his arm was plainly scarred and damaged—at that time, Angola was suffering from its interminable civil war, and Miranda’s injuries could have been related to that conflict, or to left-over ordnance from the Colonial War—or not to any of these conflicts. His injuries, he said, were so severe that he was unable to get adequate treatment in Angola, so he came to Portugal for medical attention. It was several years later that Miranda was encouraged by the “Associação Luso-Africano” to start a church that would minister to the spiritual needs of Porto’s growing African population. He says it was important to him that there was an opportunity, especially in the music, for people to worship in African languages.

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Jehovah’s Witnesses

When the family was still in Portugal, and we were still in our 4th floor apartment, we got a ring on the door buzzer one evening. It was almost unheard of for someone to ring us on purpose—the few people we knew who might come by unexpectedly would call first, or, occasionally, Maria from across the hall would knock on our door to give us a bit of information or ask us politely to turn the TV volume down. I answered with the intercom, expecting to have to determine that this was a mistaken ring using my weak Portuguese compounded by my bad hearing, which made phone calls or other electronically transmitted conversations much more difficult than face-to-face chats. The voice on the other end, though spoke English, though with a Portuguese accent. It was a Jehovah’s Witness. It was close to bedtime for baby Oscar, so not an ideal time to invite missionaries in, but I offered to let them call me to set up a time for further conversation.

I didn’t get to talk to the missionaries until after the family had left town. At that point, I met the Witnesses a couple of times for coffee, and came to their English-language service two or three times (I had coffee—the Witnesses wouldn’t even indulge in a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice, which I found disproportionately frustrating). My primary missionary contact was always a young man named Sergio, but his partner in mission would change from visit to visit.

The Witnesses in Porto train their young people—predominantly, but not exclusively, young men—one day a week for up to 10 years in the languages of major immigrant communities—Chinese (they did not tell me if they learned Mandarin or Cantonese), Russian, Hindi, Sign Language, and English. The Witnesses I spoke with were whip-smart and quite fluent in English, even though they were still in their early twenties. They had some success stories in their work—at their weekly English service, there were English-speaking Africans and perhaps a few other native English-speakers mixed into a sizable congregation of Portuguese Witnesses. I wasn’t sure if the Portuguese Witnesses came to improve their English skills, to provide strength in numbers, or for some other reason—it was likely a mixture of factors. Sergio, my main contact, attended services four times a week, so the English service was just one of many that added to his weekly spiritual development.

The African congregants I met briefly at the Kingdom Hall were almost all women, and the Witnesses may be more reticent than other denominations to allow observant women to
converse with men who are not related to them and/or part of the church. Or perhaps they just didn’t want to talk to a nosy stranger. Given how many people DID give me a bit of their time and knowledge, it is maybe more surprising that more potential interviewees did not turn me down. Of course, Ama at Nova Criação was an occasional attendee of these services, but as previously mentioned, Ama had little use for churches that did not have exciting music and perhaps a bit of dancing to keep things lively. The Jehovah’s Witnesses may have many things to recommend them, but the services I attended in Porto were no one’s idea of exciting.

I had one other opportunity to speak with a sometime-Witness from Africa. Barbara was a Ghanaian woman who operated a very small African “grocery”—maybe better described as a kind of Afrocentric convenience store. Barbara had also attended services at the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto, and comparing the two, she told me that she admired the Witnesses’ commitment to understanding and following the Bible, but that the music at IMAP was more appealing. Asked how she identifies herself spiritually, Barbara did not choose to identify with the Jehovah’s Witnesses OR the African Methodists—she says she is simply a “Christian.” For immigrants, especially English-speakers with limited choices for worship in their familiar tongue, there may not always be a perfect choice of church—especially given that the contrast is with plentiful choices in Accra, Lagos, or other African cities. Some may attend different churches off and on, trying to get the best of each—like Barbara, or Ama. Others may attend one church more often than others, but disregard the aspects of the church they don’t like or don’t agree with—like Rosália, in her relationship with Reino de Deus.

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There were two other Protestant groups with which I made even more brief contact in Porto. I visited the Mormon missionary center in town, and spoke with some of the missionaries as well as the mission president and his wife. They let me know that there was a missionary from Angola working in a town about an hour or two outside Porto—the type of inland town that would normally have an aging, conservative, and observantly Catholic population. I was definitely interested in how it would be to try to convert a population like that to Mormonism, especially if one was an African and the potential convertees were more likely to have encountered Africans as enemies during the Colonial War than in any other circumstance. I was never able to make the connection with this missionary and arrange for a visit and a conversation, unfortunately.

One last Protestant group that I met with, on a single occasion, was the Church of the Nazarene. I don’t recall now where it was that I first heard this, but I had been told that the Nazarenes had a century-long history of missionary work in Cabo Verde. The general consensus on the internet was that Nazarenes were the largest Protestant group in Cabo Verde, though dwarfed in numbers by the Catholic Church’s rolls. I attended one meeting with the Nazarenes, and while they were welcoming, and did have several Africans in their congregation, I learned about them so late in my research that I couldn’t imagine spending more time with them—I would have had to sacrifice attendance and conversation with other groups with whom I’d already developed a rapport.

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I took notes on my exchange with Barbara at her grocery store, in June 2008.
It is not surprising, but it is instructive, that African Protestants I met in Porto worship in diffuse groups with little connection to one another, headed by charismatic leaders. Their spiritual lives and the connections they find with one another thereby contrast with those of African Catholics in ways that mirror the differences between Evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism. The Catholic Church is sustained by a hierarchy and a history that are greater than any of its leaders, even including the Pope, while small Protestant churches, particularly those unaffiliated with older mainline denominations, can see their fortunes oscillate with the strengths and weaknesses of individual pastors and subtle shifts of belief among the congregation. To put it more simply, there is a feeling of precariousness within a church like the Igreja Metodista Africana or Nova Criação (or is this hindsight? We shall see…). The churches that have international organizations, and usually also a bit more history to them, felt more stable—not as reliant on individual pastors to keep everything together; able to cope with fluctuations and reorganizations of congregations without enduring an existential crisis.

There is so much more interesting work to be done in exploring the Protestant life in Porto—I barely scratched the surface of a single aspect. The intersectionality of marginalization deserves a great deal more scrutiny than I had time to give—the combination of being a racial or ethnic minority with being a member of an “outsider” church, a congregation that seems foreign and sometimes overtly in opposition to the “native” Portuguese Catholicism. Do adherents merely endure this marginalization because of faith—a belief that they are on the right path, even if (or especially because) society is at odds with who they are and what they believe? Or do they come to these churches because they already feel themselves to be outsiders, and the churches at least give them a space to develop a common community with other outsiders?

Even the most mainline Protestants have long been marginalized in Porto, seen as outsiders, equally shunned by Catholic Conservatives and secularizing Liberals. In some cases, such as that of Reino de Deus or the Jehovah’s Witnesses, or Nova Criação’s Portuguese services, the experience of being a religious minority seems to bring Portuguese and African congregants closer to one another. In other cases, Africans worship only with each other and may be even more excluded from the mainstream by virtue of their beliefs—a situation that parallels the modern Muslim experience in Porto. Still, Vicente’s story shows that bridges can be built, and immigrant churches can attract White Portuguese, at least with a bit of help from Cupid’s Arrow.

Vicente felt welcomed at the Luso-African Methodist church, and the church itself was welcomed at the various events where I first encountered it, and subsequent events after my departure. The Angolan Methodists may have been relatively invisible compared to the many operations and celebrations of the Catholic Church, may even have kept a lower profile than the predominantly White Portuguese Methodist church, but compared to other African Protestants—like Nova Criação or the Nazarenes—they were social butterflies—or maybe it just felt that way, when I started to see their choir every weekend.

Reino de Deus probably had a higher profile than any other Protestant group, but not nearly so much on their own terms as, for example, IMAP. Many Portuguese who were not affiliated with Reino de Deus knew that they were preachers of the prosperity gospel, which
tended to reflect badly on them in most circles. At the same time, Reino de Deus was associated with the marginalized populations in Portugal that attended the church (Rodrigues 2016:141) and a Brazilian origin, which is also considered a negative connotation by many Portuguese (See Padilla, Beatriz 2004). Reino was never a very sympathetic organization, and yet, there always seemed to be an undercurrent of classism, nationalism, maybe even racism, to the Portuguese opposition to Reino that made me almost sympathetic. In 1995, not long after Reino de Deus came to Portugal, they had an opportunity to purchase a large art deco auditorium in central Porto, the “Coliseu”. When word of an impending deal leaked to the public, a coalition of celebrities, politicians, “artists” and citizens mobilized, chanting, “O Coliseu é Nosso” (“the Coliseum is ours”). According to the Coliseu’s website, “It was the grandest and most emotional demonstration, which demonstrated to all that this theater was the inalienable patrimony of the people of Porto, and that they would fight until the very end to protect ‘their’ Coliseu.” A group came together to raise money for the purchase of the Coliseu, and it was “saved” from Reino de Deus “thanks to the struggle of all Porto.” (Coliseu do Porto n.d.)

I think of Rosália, or occasional Reino visitor Ama, and how the Coliseu struggle—a decade past already, but still fresh in the minds of many Portuenses—left them with a choice of allegiances. Porto’s Catholics—no matter where they were from originally—were spared such conflicts. African Protestants in Porto had spiritually weighty decisions to make—whether to stay out of sight, and not attract any negative attention, like the Nazarenes; or to represent themselves on their own terms, showing their best, like IMAP; or to assent to culture wars with a community that already perceived them in a negative light, as Reino de Deus seemed inclined to do.

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As an Episcopalian, I found myself to be most familiar with the rituals and words of the Anglicans, the Catholics, and the Methodists, even when the words were recited in Portuguese. The postures and gestures of prayer in the mosque were completely novel to me, and the preaching and healing of the Pentecostal-influenced churches was exciting to me, but not “comfortable”—not in a way that felt like I was connected to a spiritual home, where everything was in its right place and I knew my way around.

When I had been back in the US for just two months, right around the time we were settling into a new apartment and Ada was beginning public school in America for the first time, I received an e-mail from Teresinha from the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto. Teresinha spoke and wrote English with easier facility than her parents, and I assume this is how she was drafted to the task. The church was behind on rent, and seeking assistance from anyone who might be able to offer it. The ask was reasonable, and having experienced the warmth and commitment of the church’s leadership and congregation, I was as confident in the severity of their need as I was in their dedication to their mission and the joy they brought to worshippers’ lives.

For four months thereafter, I beat the bushes looking for help for my friends in Porto. No one in my family was working full time—we were mostly living on student loans—so sending any money of our own would have been a significant burden and probably would have hastened the eminent disintegration of my marriage, which was already strained by money troubles. Still, I had some ideas…. My mother was the administrative assistant for a Methodist church in
Colorado. I was attending a historically black Episcopal church that had shown itself willing to step outside of denominational boundaries in the past in the interest of social justice, by supporting a hospital in Palestine. And some basic research online showed that many people who might be able to help within the Methodist bureaucracy in America had experience in Angola, hopefully giving them a personal stake in the success of IMAP.

I spoke with the rector of my church, who had several ideas for finding IMAP some assistance and promised to begin exploring the options right away. I made contact with a priest from my teenage years for whom I’d always had great respect, and he also committed to trying to find some solutions. I exchanged e-mails with clergy at my mother’s church and administrators in the Methodist church at the regional and national levels.

For the Methodists in America, the problem was that there is a historically determined but still fairly strictly maintained global division of power. The Methodist Church in Angola was largely established by American missionaries, and it maintains administrative and financial ties to the Methodist Church in the United States. The Methodist Church in Portugal, on the other hand, was established by British Methodists living and working in Portugal, and was still connected to the British church, which seems in modern times to be almost completely unrelated to the American church. While IMAP had entered into discussions with the Portuguese Methodist Church that would incorporate the Angolans into local church structures, these negotiations had broken down along the way, apparently because the Portuguese Church insisted on taking away more autonomy than the Angolans were willing to sacrifice. Considering that Miranda Andre was old enough to remember the war of liberation in Angola, submitting to a Portuguese administration may well have had greater resonances.

In any case, though, the American Methodists were unwilling to provide any support, not for spiritual reasons but for specifically bureaucratic ones. Though the Angolans were individually part of an America-oriented flock, they were now on Portuguese territory and interference from the Americans would be the ecclesiastical equivalent of a diplomatic faux pas. And the Portuguese would not help because IMAP would not abandon their roots and submit fully to the local authority. It often seemed like the respective hierarchies considered IMAP’s objections to be trivial and unserious, and thus they were each unwilling to budge from their positions to assist a church that was ultimately fulfilling its evangelical mission. Bureaucracy prevailed over what could be argued was the actual mission of a church—the “fishing of men (and women)” mandated by Jesus.

My Episcopal contacts were unfortunately no more helpful, even though they’d made things sound at least nominally optimistic in our initial conversations. It began to seem as if they were avoiding my follow-up phone calls; I couldn’t get a response from anyone, and I began to wonder if I was being blown off. In time, I stopped pushing the family to go to church with any frequency. It wasn’t really that I was nursing a grudge against the church, so much as I was so incredibly disappointed that the denomination that had been my spiritual home since I was a child was now, apparently, unwilling to reach out a Christian hand when I asked it to do so, and unable to even look me in the figurative (or literal) eye and explain this choice. Maybe there was a very important reason that these men and the institutions with which they were affiliated were unable to help. Ultimately, though, it was the way they avoided any admission of powerlessness or unwillingness to assist that made me disillusioned. I’d seen people in Portugal who loved their
worship communities more than anything, save maybe their families, and who took so much strength and comfort from standing or kneeling together and praising their higher power. My own community hadn’t the guts to tell me that they were powerless and that they could at least ask for prayers and offer prayers themselves. What kind of community was this? Why did I want to be part of it?

And then, too, I had to wonder…even though I was representing IMAP from my own position of privilege in America, there may yet have been a stigma, of the people from the underdeveloped world asking those from the developed world for money. Over a decade of spam e-mails from Nigerian princes, alongside news stories about the Mugabes and Mobutus of the continent, who hurt their people while accumulating fortunes for themselves, have made Americans more distrustful of African motives. My own communications—e-mail or phone or in person—generally began with a description of how I knew that IMAP was on the up-and-up, and not scamming. But perhaps I never convinced anyone with enough certitude to really trust my friends in Porto when it really mattered. Over time, I gave up on trying to help IMAP. I had done everything I could think of; and I’d reached a point where I felt that any more follow ups were going to completely alienate any helpers who might yet have a sliver of will to help. My e-mails to Teresinha gradually fell away, until I went so long without writing that I could think of nothing to say. “Sorry that I am completely powerless” is so difficult to express, and seems so useless; ultimately, this statement that I never sent to Teresinha was what I judged my own clergy for never having admitted, so I suppose I myself was complicit by avoiding my own confession of impotence.

In the years since, I’ve continued to feel anger at the American churches, and guilt for giving up. A few times, I e-mailed the pastor of my current church and asked to meet, hoping to talk through some of my resentments. At this point, asking for help for IMAP was a hope that had long faded, and I was really hoping just to reconcile with an institution that had meant so much to me over the years. The pastor never e-mailed back. I still feel alienated from the church and disconnected from God. At times I consider going to immigrant churches here, or even to prayers at the Muslim community center a few blocks from my current address--but I don’t. If I did, I would be seeking to reconnect with another place and time, not trying to give myself to a congregation here in America.

As I was writing this chapter, in 2016, I decided to search for the Angolan Methodists on the internet. Writing about my frustrations at not being able to help them made me wonder if I would find anything at all, or if they’d lost their lease and drifted apart back in 2009. As it turns out, Pastor Andre did OK without my help. A newspaper for Angolans in Portugal reported that in 2012 Pastor Andre was one of the celebrants at service commemorating 10 years of peace in Angola (Culto Ecuménico no Porto 2012). The next year, according to a document from the Igreja Evangélica Metodista Portuguesa, Pastor Andre reconciled with the local Methodist hierarchy; the synod voted in secret ballot to “reintegrate (him) into the Presbyteral Council” (Documento Final do Sínodo da IEMP 2013). Hereafter, the pastor is involved regularly in activities of the Portuguese Methodist church in Porto (Igreja Evangélica Metodista do Mirante 2013; Igreja Evangélica Metodista Portuguesa 2014) at least through 2015(Igreja Evangélica Metodista Portuguesa 2015). The 2012 document referenced above names the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto, but all references thereafter are to the pastor alone. I am thinking either that the price of reconciliation with the Portuguese Methodists was giving up this unique ministry, or
that the church may have lasted four more years before losing its lease, after which the pastor took his gifts to the Portuguese Methodist Church rather than let them go to waste. In any case, Pastor Andre seems to be getting by, whereas my own spiritual health is still in need of repair. I’d prefer that we were both in better shape, but I will take the pastor’s survival skills as a sign that there is always a chance to hope. If I choose to believe in a higher power, I have to balance a belief in my Calling with the disappointments that make up entirely too much of most lives. It may be that I just need an excellent pastor to lead me back in the right direction. We shall see what the future holds.
Salat Days: African Muslims in Porto

Historically, the presence of widespread Christianity in Iberia during the first millennium is owed to the presence of the Romans, and to the Roman influence on the Goths who succeeded them in controlling the peninsula. One may argue that previous to the legalization and promotion of Christianity under Constantine, the early Church had already established itself in the region, but it would be disingenuous to claim that these early Iberian Christians had any substantial political strength or authority prior to Constantine’s 4th century conversion. The Moorish conquest of Lisbon occurred in 711; Afonso Henrique’s “reconquest” of that city was accomplished in 1147. It can thus be stated that, year for year, the Moors were the rulers of Southern Iberia for a longer period of time than the Roman and Germanic Christians before them. The idea of “reconquest” involves the framing of Portugal’s foundation as the expulsion of foreign occupation, but the reality was that the Moors had a more solid claim on the territory that eventually became Portugal than the Visigoths who preceded them (Dix 2008:67–70).

The foundation myth of the Portuguese is the story of the “Reconquista.” The “expulsion” of the Moors from what would become Portuguese territory is not only one of the two central historical pillars of Portuguese identity; conflict with Muslims in North Africa is critical at the start and finish of the other pillar, the “Age of Discovery.” Principle moments in the standard telling of the Portuguese Golden Age are:

1. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans cut off overland trade between Asia and Europe, necessitating the discovery of new sea routes;

2. The Portuguese more-or-less “had” to conquer the North African city of Ceuta in order to explore the African coast without fear of attack; and

3. The apex of Portuguese civilization, the Age of Discovery, was brought to an end when King Sebastião “disappeared” (died) during the Battle of Alcácer Quibir against North African Muslim forces. Like King Arthur, or Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (among many, many others), legend has it that Sebastião will reappear one day to lead Portugal back to greatness.

In this chapter, I will examine the daily operations at Porto’s first modern mosque. I will discuss the leadership’s attempts to maintain a particular concept of fidelity to Islam within the diversity of this congregation, and its careful movements to introduce Islam to a Portuguese populus that is not as fearful of the religion as many of their EU neighbors, but is underinformed and sometimes vulnerable to prevalent stereotypes—a populus whose national story is profoundly anti-Muslim, even if their day-to-day attitudes are not.

When I came up with my original research topic, before I’d experienced Portugal firsthand, my plan was to look at the lives and community structures of Mozambicans in Porto. I made an educated guess as to the demographics of Mozambicans in Porto: that they were much more likely to be middle to upper class, and to come from families with some history of assimilation to the Portuguese colonial imperative. Factors that played into this presumption were: physical distance of Mozambique from Portugal, a consideration of historical factors, and a basic understanding of modern migration trends in Mozambique. Mozambique is much farther
from Portugal than any other former African colony. It is conversely a border away from South Africa, and throughout the 20th century movement had been frequent across that border. During the colonial period, for example, Mozambican men found greater wealth to be had by working in South African mines than in subsistence agriculture (Isaacman 1996:181–184). My theory with regard to Mozambican immigration patterns was this: that poorer Mozambicans would not have the resources necessary to travel from the southeast of Africa to Europe, and would find opportunities to improve their lives closer to home, either moving from rural to urban spaces or else by following the traditional migrant labor patterns and working in South Africa. South Africans had been increasingly ambivalent to immigrant labor in the aughts, but labor flows where opportunity exists, and South Africa certainly continued to offer better opportunities than Mozambique for many, without the expense of travel to Europe. Further, a Mozambican immigrant in South Africa could visit his or her family on occasion. A poor Mozambican who made the voyage to Portugal would not have that option.

If there was reason to believe that Mozambicans in Portugal were relatively affluent, other inferences could be drawn, and other generalizations could be anticipated. Somewhat like the French, the Portuguese created a legal definition for assimilation in their African colonies, giving status and privileges to Africans who learned Portuguese, converted to Catholicism, and acknowledged the primacy of Portuguese culture (Newitt 1981:138–141). A small group of indigenous elites, the *assimilados*, was created by these laws, and because of their comparative social status, a degree of alienation from other Africans, and their familiarity with metropolitan language and culture, it might be assumed that *assimilados* and their offspring were overrepresented in immigrant populations in Portugal compared to their home countries. If so, then it would follow that Africans in Porto, and Mozambicans in particular, would be mostly Catholic, or perhaps atheists in the wake of the anti-religious—mostly anti-Catholic—socialist government which has held power since independence. Furthermore, if my thesis was true, there would be few Protestants and even fewer Muslims represented in the immigrant community. This turned out to be a difficult thesis to prove for Mozambicans in Porto, as I met relatively few compared to Cabo Verdeans, Angolans, and Bissau-Guineans. To the extent that I did mingle with Mozambicans, they were as likely—maybe more likely—to be Protestant as Catholic. I don’t recall ever meeting a Mozambican Muslim in Porto, though—Carolina, who worked at Espaço Moçambique, had a Muslim father, but Carolina herself identified mostly as Christian, and didn’t seem particularly engaged in any particular spiritual pursuits in Porto. The absence of a noticeable Mozambican Muslim presence in Porto leads me to believe that the history of *assimilados* in the country exacerbated an unequal distribution of power that left the south of the country, the part least influenced by Swahili Coast Islam, in control politically and economically after colonialism, and even more so after the end of the civil war in the 1990s.

As we’ve already seen, my research soon expanded beyond the scope of Mozambican immigration, and became a study of sub-Saharan African immigration to Portugal in general. With this expansion, Islam became more relevant to my inquiry; among the immigrants I met were Bissau-Guineans from the former Portuguese colony of Guinea Bissau, as well as Senegalese and other Muslims from non-PALOP countries. In my early weeks in Portugal I had gradually been getting used to introducing myself to strangers of African descent on the street and in other public spaces. One morning, M. and Oscar and I took the train to the Monday fair and market in Espinho, just south of Porto and Vila Nova de Gaia. I introduced myself to a Bissau-Guinean man there, and he told me of a mosque close to the Heroismo metro station,
suggesting that I would meet more African immigrants in one place there, and informing me that the Imam himself was from Guinea-Bissau.

Midmorning one sunny day in mid-January, I took the metro to the stop called Heroismo, climbed the stairs and crossed the road. The mosque—Mesquita Central do Porto Hazrat Bilal—is on a major thoroughfare, the most direct path for buses and cars between the city center and the Oriente train station, which serves all of Porto’s connections, local, national and international. But few Portuenses are aware that the city has any mosques (either Hazrat Bilal, which takes credit for being the first modern mosque in Porto, or the predominantly South Asian Hazrat Hamza mosque in the Sé). I myself had Googled the exact address of the place, but I saw no signs, nor symbols, to indicate a Muslim house of worship. I finally identified two storefronts—one with a street number lower than the mosque’s, another almost adjacent to the first with a street number higher than the mosque. Between them was an opaque door of smoked glass. There was a gap between the door and its frame, and through this crack I could see a sign in Arabic and English (but not Portuguese), directing visitors to remove their footwear.

I wondered if my nosy intrusions would be welcome, given that the mosque was not going out of its way to proclaim its presence. Maybe they didn’t want to be disturbed; perhaps they were happy to escape notice of everyone but the devout. And yet—if I had anything to say about African immigrants and religion in Porto, it would be an embarrassment to disregard Islam. I rang the doorbell adjacent to the door, waited a bit for a response, almost decided to leave, then was startled slightly when a young man came and opened the door.

After asking if the young man knew English (he didn’t), I introduced myself in Portuguese, and asked if there was anyone with whom I could speak. He told me to return after lunch, when the Imam would be back. So I left, ran some errands, and returned in the P.M.

When I returned, the same young man came to the door, and this time I was instructed to remove my shoes and socks; after I’d done so, I was led down half a flight of stairs to the basement. This is when I met Imam Amadu. The Imam was a Bissau-Guinean in his 50s, with a teddy bear physique and an easy and warm smile. He spoke almost no English, but he speaks Portuguese with the careful cadences of the professional communicator, making him one of the easier Portuguese speakers for me to understand. As soon as I met the Imam, my trepidation subsided; he could probably be intimidating if he so desired, but to me, Amadu was entirely welcoming and encouraging. We talked for quite a while (Amadu did most of the talking). He wanted me, as an American, to know that Islam was a religion of peace and economic justice; and, presumably because the war in Iraq was the major locus of friction between America and

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14 I am using the term “mosque”—Portuguese “mesquita”—throughout this section because the worship space is described as such in their own materials, and in sympathetic journalism that has focused on this community and their space. I don’t think this community/prayer center qualifies as a mosque in the strictest sense, but it seems to be a shorthand that is acceptable to community leadership.
the Islamic world at that time, he spoke at length about oil as the root of war and poverty in Africa. “When the price of oil goes up, poverty gets worse,” he told me\textsuperscript{15}.

When the conversation turned to more local matters, Imã Amadu described to me some of the problems that immigrants in his congregation faced. Some, he said, run into problems with police; some fall into substance abuse problems; some get involved in criminal activities. One of the major goals of the mosque was to offer the young men who made up the congregation support—to stay on the right path, if possible; to get through these adversities and others, if necessary. The congregation, I would discover, was mostly men and mostly young—wives and children, if there were any, were mostly left back in the home countries while the men came to make a living in construction or other immigrant-friendly trades. The ladies’ section of the mosque was so small that I didn’t notice it at all until it was pointed out to me—it was basically a plywood box, about 5 by 5 meters, in the back of the prayer hall.

Imã Amadu invited me to join his congregation for prayer, and he provided me educational materials in English, printed and distributed by the Saudi Arabian government. Furthermore, he let me know that a group of primary school students would be visiting for a field trip later that day, and I was more than welcome to stick around and listen to his talk to the kids.

I was invited to pass the time in the prayer hall until the student group’s arrival. There were a few other men there—some of these were praying, while others leaned against the side walls and read from the Koran. There were small bookshelves at the back of the room with multiple copies of the Koran on them, including many which were translated into Portuguese or English. I began reading one of the booklets the Imã had given me: The Prophet’s Manner of Performing Prayers (May Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him) (Ibn Bāz 1995). This booklet transliterated the prayers of \textit{rakat} into the Roman alphabet and translated each part into English. I decided that I would spend some time learning some of the prayers, along with the \textit{shahada} (the declaration of faith).

There are Christians and there are Muslims that identify the Christian God with the Muslim Allah and see the religious traditions of each as different paths to the same goal—they may still disagree on some matters of faith or doctrine, but they do not see their religions as irreconcilable. There are others—Christians and Muslims, both—who see the traditions as fundamentally different, the points of disagreement located at the fundamental level of their beliefs (Oppenheimer 2016). I put myself mostly in the former camp—I aspire to a radical ecumenicism that can only occur when there is a willingness to value poetry over certitude. If I was going to spend time in this space, and pray with people here, and ask them personal questions about their faith, it would be extremely important that I was honest with them about my own faith—that I identified as a Christian; that I was not thinking about becoming a Muslim. It would be important to me, that prayers I said and declarations I made in that room were compatible with my own admittedly broad idea of who God is and what God’s role is, in my life and in the world.

In retrospect, I think that I was more concerned about being transparent about my beliefs in the setting of the mosque than in any Christian space I entered in Porto. Ironically—not

\textsuperscript{15} Imã Amadu quotes are from notes taken in conversation, January 2008
intentionally, but as an unintended consequence of being in more familiar environments—I may have inadvertently misrepresented myself more the closer I got to my own core beliefs. I never would have claimed myself to be Catholic in conversations with Catholics, but there may have been some who thought that I was, and I neither worried about such assumptions nor went very far to disabuse anyone of the idea. I am fairly certain that there were those at Nova Criação and IMAP who believed that I was an evangelical, and I did not feel an imperative to deny this, because, after all, there are many ways to evangelize…

In any case, I read and memorized, and came to participate in, prayers at the mosque with an eye on their relevance to the God I knew. Maybe this was a failing on my part—not giving my all to experience prayers as a Muslim would. But it feels more honest to me, acknowledging that I may be saying the same words and going through the same motions as the rest of the congregation, but isolated from others nonetheless. I was pushing centripedally towards a core of understanding while being dragged by a component of those same forces away from the knowledge I wanted.

So, anyway—it was still my first day visiting the mosque, and I was loitering, with permission, and this group of students was entering. After removing their shoes they came up to the prayer hall and were encouraged to sit on the floor in a semi-circle. The students were not as young as Ada, but they were pretty young—fourth or fifth graders, perhaps? Their teacher was a Portuguese man in his early thirties; he and Imã Amadu greeted one another with warmth—I would guess that they knew each other fairly well already. It took the teacher some time to get his class settled down, which was to be expected. The group was large, and young, and both excited by the unfamiliar surroundings and simultaneously bored by the mandate to sit quietly. In time, though, the teacher was successful enough that he could introduce Imã Amadu. The Imã spoke for about half an hour, describing the basics of Islam, and doing his best to dispel myths that were especially prevalent at that time, when 9/11 was still only a few years past. In this presentation, as well as in my own talks with Imã Amadu, he always seemed to be defending his faith against the images in the media and the focus on extremism and violence. This defensiveness made it more difficult to learn about the little things that made Muslim life in Porto unique; the emphasis in the Imã’s rhetoric was always on the beliefs and teachings of “global Islam,” which I put in quotes not because he used this phrase, but because his descriptions of “what Muslims believe” was so focused on the biggest picture that all nuance disappeared. And I have to assume I’d do the same if my own beliefs were constantly presented in a distorted and negative way by the media and by manipulative politicians. Image management for Islam wasn’t Imã Amadu’s primary job—not as it was for others in his community—but when called upon to speak about his religion, the Imã did a good job of representation.

After the students left, and their teacher and Imã Amadu had said their farewells, it was already nearly time for the Asr (afternoon) prayer. I didn’t know anything, really, about how to pray in a mosque. Imã Amadu found a young man to help me and guide me. He took me to the basement, where there were concrete benches facing multiple water spigots, with a shallow trough in the floor beneath the spigots for catching the water and channeling it away. This was the room for men to perform ablutions before prayer; I assume there was another, probably much smaller room for the few women who come to the mosque. My guide showed me how to wash my head and face, arms, hands, and feet.
Next, I was led back upstairs to the prayer hall, and showed where to stand, shoulder to
shoulder in a row with several other supplicants, my guide beside me. Later, when I’d been to the
mosque a few times, I would recognize that the crowd on this day was small—probably not more
than 20 people—but this first time, I had no way to compare. As prayers began, I was
encouraged to follow along with the men on each side of me, working our way together through
the postures of standing, kneeling and prostrating.

For a moment, I understood the consternation of other Protestants on visiting an
Episcopal church and enduring various instructions to sit, stand or kneel. It must have been odd,
and possibly irritating, to those beside me, to have a grown man trying to figure out the
prayers—worse, the basic movements—that a child would normally know well. Nevertheless, I
enjoyed learning a new way to pray. I liked the movement, and the physicality. After prayers, I
wasn’t able to say goodbye to the Imã, but I thanked my guide, whose name I should have
written down, but unfortunately did not. I went to the atrium and carefully put my socks and
shoes back on, balancing precariously in an attempt to keep the soles of my feet pointed
downwards and avoid causing any offense. I left, reboarded the Metro at the stop across the road,
and went home to my family.

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Over the next few months, I would visit the mosque every week or two. Sub-Saharan
African attendance at the mosque dwarfed that of any Christian congregation in Porto—at least
for Friday afternoon prayers. Perhaps as many as fifty immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa
joined together with another seventy-five or so North Africans, Middle-Eastern Arabs and a few
more Muslims from South Asia. They were all called to prayer most weeks by a Bissau-Guinean
muezzin, and led by a Bissau-Guinean imam. The women’s section at Hazrat Bilal was screened
off and separated from the main space of the prayer hall, and M. had never expressed any interest
in coming to prayers anyway, so my mosque visits became an activity done without the family.
This was not uncommon for congregants, in any case, as the expectation for many seemed to be
that wives and young children, if they were even present in Portugal, would pray in the private
spaces of home. The practical side effect of this was that I did not attend prayers with any
frequency until after M. and the kids had left Portugal and my time and attention was not divided
by my responsibilities to the family.

I tried to make up for lost time after the family left, attending prayers daily, sometimes
two or three times in a day. I carried around the schedule of prayers, printed monthly by the
mosque, and tried to attend at all the different times of day, from early morning through end of
day, and I found that the rhythm of activities and devotions at the mosque could be very different
in practice than what was described in the prayer schedule—sometimes I would show up and the
door would be locked; sometimes I would be on time as indicated by the schedule, but when I
arrived there would already be several men in the prayer hall, listening to a sermon or even
praying with the Imã’s guidance. I kept trying to figure out where I was misunderstanding, but
the fact was, having not anticipated working with a Muslim community at the onset of my
planning, I didn’t have the preparation that was crucial to comprehending what was going on in
that space. I’d put myself in an impossible situation—one where I felt remiss if I ignored Muslim
Africans in Porto, but foolish in trying to understand a faith I was undereducated about in media
res. To make things even more complicated, there were only a few attendees at the mosque who
spoke Portuguese fluently, and even fewer who knew English. I was fortunate that Imã Amadu was at least a lifelong speaker of Portuguese, so I could understand some of what he had to say. Many in his congregation spoke Portuguese as badly as I, but with unfamiliar accents that made it that much harder to communicate.

I never showed up often enough, for a long enough stretch, to overcome the depths of my naiveté and my linguistic inadequacies; I never became a familiar and comfortable figure to other mosque goers. And so:

“I’m getting frustrated with the mosque. Actually, as I feel time ticking away, I’m getting frustrated with almost everything. But right now, the mosque is front and center. I can’t break through the barriers there; no one trusts me enough to say two words to me. And it’s insanely (illegible word) to talk to anyone there. I finally got up the guts to talk to two African men after services today, and they told me they only spoke Arabic. Sounds unlikely to me, but I guess it’s possible. It seems more likely they just didn’t want to talk to me. F**k!” (from my notes—probably April or May)

Had I done this research a year later, during Barack Obama’s global honeymoon period, things might have been different. But on top of every other barrier to entry, I was a White American trying to collect information—however benign—on a group of Muslims in the waning days of the George W. Bush administration, which was widely perceived to be anti-Muslim, mostly on the basis of the war in Iraq. I’d have been suspicious of me, too, if I was in their place, feeling vulnerable and sometimes scapegoated, in some cases perhaps not legally in the host country, often coming from countries where surveillance was normal and expected. I tried to meet people, to introduce myself and to exhibit my most nerdy, harmless, scholarly side, which usually inspires trust in these situations, but my Americaness was one more impediment that could not be fully overcome in this case. Beyond my conversations with Imã Amadu, I came away with only the most tenuous observations.

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And yet—however facile my understanding of life around the mosque might be, I found that insularity to be revealing in its own ironic way. From the anonymity of the space itself, to the reserved tendencies of the worshippers therein, there was a sense that Porto’s Muslims want to worship in privacy, and escape the suspicious gaze of the overwhelmingly non-Muslim majority. If they were not actively seeking the advantages of “invisibility,” they at least seemed to be very comfortable keeping a low profile.

If most Mosque-goers were not visible, there was one remarkable exception. Beyond the mosque, I started seeing a lot of a man named Abdul Rehman Mangá, the president and primary spokesperson for the Centro Cultural Islâmico do Porto. Rehman Mangá was usually on hand for any ecumenical gathering not exclusively Christian; he spoke in many cases not just for the community gathered at Heroísmo, but more-or-less by default for Muslims throughout Porto. He spoke at celebrations of African cultures (Rehman Mangá, whose parents were from Portuguese India, grew up in Mozambique but moved to Portugal in the 1980s); he represented Islam in Porto at events sponsored by the Catholic diocese. A web search shows that he is if anything even more active as a public face of Islam in Porto nowadays—he has developed a reputation, I
think, as THE go to person when Islam is in the news, when a representative of the community is needed for any event, or when it is time for the latest human interest story to be written.

One of the most striking examples of Abdul Rehman Mangá’s hyper-visibility as the face of Islam in Porto happened in May 2008. A Catholic chorus, the Coro de São Tarcísio, presented The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace, a chorale mass by British composer Karl Jenkins. The performance was in the Igreja de Trindade, a 19th century church so centrally located that it was surrounded on one side by Porto’s Camera Municipal (city hall) and on the other by the largest of the city’s metro stations (itself named “Trindade” after the church). The Armed Man is described as being built on “the framework (of) the traditional Catholic Mass” (Brown 2013), though this framework is so skeletal that one could as easily say that the underlying mass is that of an Anglican or other tradition. There is definitely more Christian content in The Armed Man than content from other traditions, content which includes (but is not limited to) the Kyrie eleison, the Agnus Dei, and the Sanctus; that having been said, the work includes readings from the Mahabharata and the Old Testament, and—most significantly here—it also includes the adhan—the Islamic call to prayer. When The Armed Man was performed at Trindade, Rehman Mangá was available to act as muezzin during the performance. A search on the internet reveals that Rehman Mangá has since reprised this performance several times (see for example Orquestra do Norte 2016).

When I saw The Armed Man performed at Trindade, I didn’t know much about the background of the work, beyond what promotional materials and a program leaflet could tell me—these materials did not add much to my understanding, I will admit, beyond explaining the goal of elaborating on the horrors of war and the righteous pursuit of peace. I don’t think most of the audience had any more context than I. As a consequence, what we saw was moving, but also disturbing, sometimes in ways I do not think the creators or the performers intended. I say that we, the audience, “saw” the performance, rather than heard, because there was a film, with the simple title “The Armed Man Film,” created from archival footage to accompany the singing. The film intercut images from wars and conflicts throughout the 20th century and into the first years of the 21st.

“The Armed Man Film” shows images of wars that are disturbing to everyone, no matter what country they are from or what their cultural background might be. At the same time, though, many of the images are specific to British or American conflicts in which the Portuguese played little or no part. The omnipresence of American media may or may not have spread images of (for example) the war in Vietnam and made them almost ubiquitous. But one might need to be an American to feel fully complicit in such horrors. Of course, there are many Americans who would not feel shame even when confronted with images of Phan Thi Kim Phuc, or Hiroshima, or other wartime nightmares, but even these have to make a moral choice: to see themselves as part of their government’s darkest moments, or to distance themselves, or rationalize any guilt away. The Portuguese are distanced from most of these images by default. One could argue that all humanity bears some responsibility for the atrocity of war—any number of theologians and philosophers would make just such an argument—but such absolutism is hard to inspire in most people without, ironically, bringing them first to acknowledging the horrors that happen closer to home.
My feeling, watching the film and listening to the music, was that the message was diluted by the imagery; if they’d had the resources, and the initiative, they’d have been well advised to make their own film, using images of the Portuguese colonial wars. These conflicts had touched Portuguese lives as viscerally as the Vietnam conflict affected Americans, causing sweeping and enduring demographic changes in the country which echoed 35 years later; indeed, just a few months before the performance of “The Armed Man” at Trindade, the Portuguese public TV station RTP (think: Portuguese BBC) began showing an acclaimed and widely publicized documentary, “A Guerra,” by esteemed journalist and documentarian Joaquim Furtado. “A Guerra” used interviews with participants from all sides of the colonial wars, intercut with contemporary documentary footage, to tell the story of the conflicts in such detail that the series ran for four seasons and 42 episodes. I didn’t really expect the Coro de São Tarcisio to cut their own movie to accompany their presentation, but I knew the footage was out there, and I knew that the images we were shown were missing their mark by just enough to be ineffective or even counter-productive.

The nadir of the movie—the reason I have digressed here—was the imagery that accompanied the call to prayer, as performed by Abdul Rehman Mangá. There was not necessarily anything inflammatory in the moment itself, except that western media rarely shows Muslims praying, or brings the call to prayer to non-Muslim ears, without setting up scenes that are at the very least Orientalist and othering, and at the worst are clichéd reiterations of terrorism. What was the composer intending when he worked the call to prayer into his mass? Other than the Christian mass elements that made up much of the piece, there were no sections that incorporated the rituals of other traditions—so, for example, there was a section from the Mahabharata, but it was descriptive, a poetic description of panic—not something that would be recited during a Hindu puja. The effect of juxtaposing Islamic ritual and Catholic or Anglo-Catholic prayer, it seemed to me, was to reinforce a clash of civilizations narrative, even if the composer and/or filmmaker might be aghast to realize it. Because the imagery of “The Armed Man Film” was supposed to be an appeal to affect—because it was not structured as a narrative, but as a sequence of powerful images to accompany a chorale performance with a definite structure but also lacking a conventional “plot”—this viewer, and I suspect many others, created our own narratives based on what we heard and saw, and drawn from our own experiences of war, violence, conflict, terror, etc. Certainly, this happens even when the storyline is clear and strong, but how much more when we are only provided ideas and images to assemble ourselves?

Setting aside the violence and lingering traumas of the colonial wars, the Portuguese role in the Reconquista, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the fanaticism of King Sebastian—all of these, though long in the past, were worthy of scrutiny in a reflection on war and brutality. At the same time, if one was going to present images of Islam to a non-Muslim audience, with the intent of celebrating peace over war, one could include families worshipping together, or other images that don’t feed a monolithic view of Muslims as a largely unknowable and threatening Other. The Armed Man is supposed to be a call for peace, but it doesn’t succeed if the audience walks away thinking “Why can’t THEY all get along?” instead of “Why can’t WE all get along,” with emphasis on OUR role in prosecuting peace.

Seeing as how Abdul Rehman Mangá has performed in several subsequent iterations of The Armed Man, one would hope that some of the disparities between intended and received messages would have been reconciled. But I don’t think Rehman Mangá is positioned to see the
problem here. I mean that socially—he hears the *adhan* and sees prayer through ears and eyes of a believer, an insider—but I also mean that physically. Rehman Mangá is literally positioned below the screen that shows the film, and faces away from it, so he has a completely different and somewhat limited perspective on the performance, his role within it, and the imagery that accompanies his call.

*The Armed Man* was a rare example of Abdul Rehman Mangá losing control of his messaging. In general, it seemed that Rehman Mangá was willing to accept just about any invitation; in 2016, for example, he joined a debate at Fernando Pessoa University with the proposition “Islão: Religião de Paz ou de Terror”—he is clearly not afraid to speak in situations where he may be asked to defend his faith in front of audiences that may be less sympathetic to Islam. But his message was remarkably consistent, whether speaking to audiences that were very open to his words or audiences that leaned towards a suspicion of Muslims; every time I saw him, he reiterated that Islam was not a threat, but a religion of peace, and that the Muslims of Porto were not just like Portuenses with whom they live—they *were* Portuenses. Rehman Mangá called on his and other Muslim’s shared history as *retornados* to build solidarity with Christian or secular Portuguese.

However deliberate the strategy might be of keeping most of Porto’s Muslims out of the spotlight and letting Rehman Mangá do all the talking, it seemed to be working back when I was in Porto. The anti-immigrant right-wing extremist National Renovator Party (PNR) was barely visible—we saw their posters up on two or three isolated occasions, and took a flier from two of their people in Porto’s central plaza during Carnaval, but otherwise, I don’t remember seeing them on news broadcasts or in public settings. They are, in other words, less visible than Abdul Rehman Mangá. Unlike many other European countries, Portugal has not seen a massive upswing in anti-immigrant sentiment or support for the far right in recent years. While the PNR has received a larger share of the vote in national elections from 2009 to 2014, only one half of one percent of voters voted for them in the more recent election (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2016:6).

Even though Abdul Rehman Mangá seemed to be very accessible to so many in Porto—or maybe because he was overextended in this mission—I was unable to schedule an interview with him, to ask my own questions about the community. Like most of the men associated with the mosque at Heroismo, he was polite but not enthusiastic about talking with me. Whether it was at the mosque, at businesses owned by Muslim Africans, or at various events around town, my attempts to schedule interviews never seemed to work out, with one notable exception.

At CulturÁfrica, in May—the same event where I made my first connection to the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto—my friend Paulo introduced me to Sylvie, a woman from the Central African Republic who owned and operated a small shop that sold African haircare products. Sylvie is tremendously outgoing and charming. We had a pleasant, if brief, conversation at CulturÁfrica (Sylvie does not speak English, I know no French, and the acoustics at the CulturÁfrica venue did not facilitate my comprehension of Portuguese). I saw her again, out with Paulo at the Cabo Verdean-run café, Novo Ambiante, and Sylvie agreed to let me come by her shop for a chat. Why was Sylvie less guarded than other Muslims I had met? Perhaps because my association with Paulo made me less threatening; or perhaps that night at Novo Ambiante was one of the nights I was encouraged to sing a song with the band. I don’t think I am
particularly intimidating in any situation—that is one of my strengths as a fieldworker—but the added vulnerability that comes with singing in front of a crowd may have been the extra bit that I needed to set up an interview this time.

Like a lot of African-owned businesses, Sylvie’s shop was in an older mini-mall in the central part of the city. On my first visit, we were just starting to have a conversation when a customer came in who required Sylvie’s full attention; therefore, I left and returned a couple days later to talk more.

Sylvie came to Porto in 2002 with her Portuguese husband, whom she had met in the C.A.R., and their two children. Her marriage lasted three years after relocating, but she and her husband eventually separated. When she first came to Porto, she worked as a hairdresser herself, but in doing this she saw an opportunity to be a supplier instead of a consumer of Black hair care products, and in 2007 she opened her store.

Sylvie was excited to talk about her faith, and she wanted to emphasize to me the strong connectedness of Islam and Christianity, the role of Jesus and Mary in her religion, and the peacefulness of Islam. Her husband had been a Catholic, though I got the impression that he was not particularly devout; still, it seems like this was one place where her ecumenical angle on Islam might have been nurtured. As far as Sylvie is concerned, “we are all sinners, and we will all pay for our bad deeds after death, no matter what race we are, or what name we use for God.” Sylvie was one of the most easygoing people I met in Porto, with no critiques of the host culture—no expressions of difficulties or anxieties in getting through her days as an independent Muslim woman in a country where Islam is seen as a little strange and a little dangerous, and in a faith community that has not yet confronted a future when women will be a larger part of the community. She had African friends coming into the store almost all the time, whenever I was there, and as such it seemed that she might have just enough community in her little shop to make everything good.

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Everyone’s experience of their religious life is unique; even monastic life, as communal and collectivist as it may strive to be, must impact each monk or nun a bit differently than their brothers or sisters in faith. Some experiences are less typical than others, however. Sylvie’s experience of being Muslim in Porto, fascinating as it is, sheds very little light on the religious community she is a part of—too many details of her past and her present set her apart from her co-worshippers at Hazrat Bilal, her history dividing her from the men of the mosque experientially as much as the screens in the prayer room do optically. With no other interviews to draw on, all I have to discuss are my observations from repeated visits to pray at the mosque.

On particularly busy days—Friday afternoons, of course, but also Saturday and especially Sunday afternoons—I could at least make some demographic observations. I saw no visual evidence of any division of sub-Saharan Africans from North Africans and Middle Eastern Arabs at the mosque; nothing evidenced in worship, when all were mixed throughout the room, or in conversational groupings after prayers, where no color lines were apparent, and might in any

16 Sylvie and I talked on two separate occasions at her store, on 6/25 and 6/27/2008.
case as easily be attributed to differences in language as to race. These observations may have been superficial, but Imã Amadu’s role as a leader also implies that the Muslim community at Hazrat Bilal was not overly burdened by racial division or rigid ethnic hierarchy.

Outside of the mosque, on the average street of Porto, it seems unlikely that a sub-Saharan African will be assumed by a White Portuguese to be Muslim, unless they are wearing a kufî or hijab, or, perhaps, speaking with a French accent. I suspect that, while African and Arab immigrants share prayer and fellowship within the mosque, they face distinctly differentiated oppositional discourses in their interactions with their Portuguese hosts.

The Portuguese have a complicated historical relationship with Islam. This is worthy of more discussion; this deeper dive into Portuguese history is still to come. I look back on my visits to the mosque in Porto as personally rewarding, academically frustrating, spiritually enriching, and ultimately, desperately unfinished. Maybe if I’d started visiting the mosque upon arrival in Porto, or attended more frequently, or brought the family with me when I could…. Maybe if I’d stayed another couple months, and fasted during Ramadan, sharing iftar at sundown, maybe then I would have made more connections.

Sometime, not long after I left Portugal, Imã Amadu left Hazrat Bilal and a new imam took his place. I do not know if there were imams between Amadu’s departure and the current imam, but the Porto newspapers report problems with the current occupant of the position—he was convicted of falsifying his immigration documents, but was allowed to hold onto his position of leadership at the mosque, and did not serve any jail time (Jornal Expresso 2017; Monteiro 2017). In modern Europe, even mildly bad publicity can be troubling for immigrant communities; misdemeanors look felonious through the distorting lenses of unsympathetic media and opportunistic politicians. I hope that there are no lasting repercussions for this small community of worshippers. Listening to Abdul Rehman Mangá, one would think that they were thriving, and perhaps they are, but to me they feel somewhat precarious—not in the way the Protestant storefronts are, with a feeling that they might disappear with no trace with little warning—but more in the sense that the relationship they have with greater Portuense society, based as it is on nuanced image control, could be damaged by too much time in the spotlight. With the possible exception of Sylvie, I have no real friends still at the mosque, but I want them to thrive. I hope that they do.
Africanto and the Espiritanos:

African Catholicism in the Country of Fatima

Those who believe that the Catholic Church in Europe is a stodgy and moribund institution with diminishing relevance from year-to-year would perhaps be surprised to meet António Bacelar. The Portuguese cleric, who in 2007-8 was head priest of the Parish of Antas in eastern Porto, and simultaneously was director of the Diocese’s University Pastoral Outreach program, may have been in his fifties or early sixties when I met him in 2007. Nevertheless, his warmth, exuberance, good humor and gregariousness make him appear younger and more vital—he could pass as 40-something with ease.

It is odd, and perhaps also dangerously close to repeating the missteps of past scholarship, to begin a discussion of African Catholics in Porto by describing this White man who grew up in a small town in the more conservative northern part of the country, where many have never seen an African person, and many of those that have were at the time engaged in a colonial war. I bring up Padre Bacelar first, though, because more than anyone else I met personally—not just in Catholic circles but everywhere in Porto—the Padre has been a facilitator of integration, incorporation, and celebration of Africans into an ancient and oftentimes rigid religious institution.

From the moment I met the Padre, he invited my family and me into the different corners of his professional life. More than this, though, he was also incredibly open in his personal life. Soon after we met, he took us to visit his elderly mother in the village of his childhood. At the end of my stay in Porto I had the pleasure of seeing him dance with several friends and strangers at the Cabo Verdean café near my apartment on St. John the Baptist’s Eve. I appreciated the Padre for his insights, and his connections, but above all for his bonhomie. In a country where the staggering legacy of Catholicism can be wonderful or terrible, Padre Bacelar was a beautiful, human gateway to understanding the role of the church in African immigrants’ lives.

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As with many things imported by the European colonizers, Africans have a complicated relationship with Catholicism. Any progress the indigenous Christian traditions of Ethiopia and Egypt might have made into sub-Saharan Africa was undone by the Muslim expansion into North Africa in the 7th century. Portuguese and other European explorers made their first and subsequent voyages around the African coastline in the 15th century, well before Martin Luther published his Ninety-five Theses in 1517. Not only were the early explorers all Catholic, but

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17 This language may seem a bit harsh, and I will admit to finding it more in the tone of commentary on modern Catholicism rather than in the actual words of that commentary. Such phrasing, when it does appear, is usually found in articles and essays defending the Church, written by partisans (e.g. Weigel 2014; Christofferson 2016). In fact, on a more limited scale, I am doing the same—citing this tone in order to highlight the vivid contrast between it and the exceptional dynamism of Padre Antonio Bacelar. Perhaps the modern defenders of the faith and I are setting up a straw man argument, but the timbre of a great many secular articles, along with more than a few Catholic ones, is that of observing the passing of the Church’s dominance in its Southern European strongholds and of its role as a shaper of high culture throughout Western Europe (e.g. The Void Within 2010; Gregg 2017).
often their missions were financed by royals with positions of power in the church—the most profound example being that of the Infante Dom Henrique, the Grand Master of the Order of Christ, who organized and funded the initial Portuguese expeditions. To a greater or lesser extent, most European colonial enterprises were justified as mandates to improve the lives of the colonized. Such “improvements” would have included the introduction of new technologies, new political structures and various trappings of European cultures; with few or no exceptions, however, the work of missionaries and the goals of conversion and salvation of colonized peoples were held up most often as the God-ordained reasons for expansion and domination.

From the beginning, the Roman Catholic Church both permitted and urged on Portuguese expansion in the Papal bulls Dum Diversas (1452) and Romanus Pontifex (1455), which gave the Portuguese authority to enslave Muslims and pagans, and confiscate their land, in the name of bringing them to Christianity. (Hart 2008:18) The Portuguese therefore combined the worldly search for new trade routes and new markets with a divine mandate to locate and “rescue” new souls. The Portuguese would continue to conquer, evangelize and enslave in Africa for centuries under the aegis of the Catholic Church, but with efforts mostly concentrated on the coasts, and on trade rather than on investment—“In 1877,” for example, “on the eve of partition (the ‘Scramble for Africa’), the governor-general of Angola, Almeida e Albuquerque, had acknowledged that ‘it is sadly necessary to confess that our empire in the interior is imaginary.’” (MacQueen 1997:2) The Berlin conference of 1884-5 marked a turning point, however, by outlining the doctrine of “effective occupation” (Chamberlain 1999:50–51; 110): the colonial powers decided that occupation and settlement were crucial elements of “legitimate” colonization, spurring the Portuguese to make new incursions into the interior of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. Simultaneously, the Berlin Conference gave signatories a mandate to “protect and favor all religious, scientific or charitable institutions, and undertakings created and organized for the above ends, or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization.”(Winseck and Pike 2007:104) Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo (2015:15–16) argues that within the context of the Berlin Conference and beyond, this civilizing “obligation” was seen as identical with the colonial objective of labor extraction, and the forces of missionary fervor were incorporated into a scheme to make colonial work regimes a marker of civilization, and religion a tool to bend bodies and minds towards these colonial objectives.

The Portuguese relationship with the Catholic Church during the late 19th and early 20th centuries mirrored the ambivalence or hostility seen in other European countries and in Latin America—the embattled institution of the monarchy held on to power until 1910, but was eventually supplanted by the Portuguese First Republic, which reacted strongly against the power of the Church and its ties to monarchy and aristocracy with “curtailment of religious privilege, the banning of clerical dress outside of churches, the second dissolution of the monasteries, (and) the separation of church and state” (Birmingham 2003:153). The pendulum swung yet again towards the Church a mere 16 years later, however, when predominantly Catholic military officers toppled the First Republic and installed a military dictatorship which would soon become the Estado Novo. Under Oliveira Salazar’s control, the Estado Novo sought to reestablish Catholicism as the state religion, but subordinate to the government—more of a tool for the control of the populus than a partner in leadership (Santos 2014).
In the last chapter, we saw the use of the “assimilado” designation in the Portuguese colonies—the designation was given to indigenous people who chose to adapt to Portuguese colonial ideas. An assimilado was expected to speak Portuguese fluently, to dress as a Portuguese, and to become a devotee of Catholicism. In return for becoming culturally Portuguese, the assimilado gained elevated status above his indigeneo brothers, frequently holding a low to mid level position in the colonial administration or serving as a go-between, a translator of the demands of the colonizers (Newitt 1981:138–141).

Trying to anticipate the demographics of Porto’s African communities before my arrival, I expected that the historical status of the assimilado in the Portuguese colonies would have made these persons and their offspring more likely than other Africans to immigrate to the Metropole. They were more familiar with Portuguese mores—they knew the language, and they had contacts among retornados and other Portuguese, as well as among fellow assimilados who had fled Africa at decolonization to avoid the judgment of their countrymen. The assimilados’ favored status in colonial times would be expected to have left these families in the middle class or above—a demographic likely to send children to study in Europe, and to have the means and the drive to head to Europe themselves in times of political or social crisis at home.

My assumptions concerning the assimilados would probably have been more accurate in the immediate aftermath of decolonization, during the 1970s and early 1980s. In most of the newly independent PALOP countries, however, Marxist-influenced leaders sought to distance their populations from religion, which in various forms might be a signifier of lingering colonial identification, or else an indicator of “primitiveness,” or, at worst, a source of greater fragmentation within countries already cursed with counterintuitive borderlines and lingering colonial-era ethnic divisions (e.g. Serapião 2004:375–376; Blanes and Paxe 2015:71). The loss of power experienced by the Catholic Church in these regions resulted in a corresponding rise in Protestant missionary activity; some PALOP leaders encouraged this activity as a check on Catholic influence (Serapião 2004). By the time the most recent waves of immigrants came to Portugal in the nineties and aughts, the connection between education, affluence, and Catholicism had become tenuous. The immigrants I met in Porto were Protestant, Muslim, Catholic, or agnostic; as best I can tell, Catholicism is no longer contiguous with status in most of Lusophone Africa.

There were not as many Catholic Africans in Portugal as I’d anticipated, but there were still quite a few—just not a substantial majority. And for all of Portugal’s secular posturing, the country itself retains a Catholic identity that resists any major realignment. The Catholic Africans I met in Porto could be grouped into two categories: the first group, the laity, was composed of college students from PALOP countries, many of whom were involved in a student chorale group known as “Africanto-Coro de Universitários Africanos” (Africanto for short). The second group, the clergy, was composed of seminarians, mostly from non-Portuguese speaking countries, who were associated with the Spiritan movement and training at the Catholic University of Porto. The groups crossed paths only occasionally, with one exception—Ana, a Mozambican nun, could be considered clergy for having taken vows, but was part of Africanto, and furthermore, as a nursing student at a secular university, Ana’s daily routine was somewhat closer to the engineering and law students of the chorale than to the immersive philosophical and theological program of the male seminarians.
I didn’t actually meet Ana, the one nun with whom I had most contact, until halfway through my studies in Portugal. This is particularly noteworthy for two reasons: my initial expectation, as I mentioned, was to find a nexus of African community within the Catholic Church—the time it took to meet and converse with Ana, who is outgoing and friendly, was characteristic of an unexpected difficulty in identifying such a nexus. Furthermore, in my family’s first few months, we observed signs of African immigrant involvement in the Church, most obviously as we walked past the Igreja de Cedofeita—many of the nuns who moved to and from masses every day were Africans. This was problematic, though, as I was at a loss for how to approach these women without offending or crossing unacceptable lines. I knew very little of nun life, and I had to assume that they were bound by their rule to be suspicious towards and distant from men. It was improbable that I would ever be able to walk up to a Cedofeita nun on the street and introduce myself.

Due in part to my own unease in approaching the sisters, and more generally to the gradual nature of meeting people and establishing myself as a respectable and sympathetic academic, some time passed before I finally found a focal point of African Catholic activity that was accessible to me. The breakthrough came in a conversation with Teófilo at Espaço Moçambique; I was told, almost offhand, of a monthly “African” church service in town, and given the name of the priest who was responsible for organizing the service. I researched the African service on the web, and found this:

“dom. 30 Dez./12h15 – org. SDPU - Igreja Paroquial das Antas – Missa com e por África (no último Domingo de cada mes)” (“Sunday, 29 December, 12:15 P.M. – org. SDPU – Parochial Church of Antas – Mass with and for Africa – last Sunday of each month.”)—The “org. SDPU” would eventually become known to me as the organization “Secretariado Diocesano da Pastoral Universitária”—roughly, the Secretariat for University Pastoral Outreach for the Diocese of Porto)

On the 30th of December, M. and I suited up for church, got the kids ready, Oscar loaded in the stroller, everyone on the road; we took the Metro to the end of the line: the Dragão Stadium and the Dolce Vita mall. On a hill overlooking these landmarks was the church of Santo António of Antas, the center of the parish of Antas. We arrived a few minutes into the service and took seats in a pew towards the back.

We were intrigued to see that the sizable church was well-attended, and 90-95% of the attendees were white Portuguese. The mass was “African” almost entirely in the sense of the music, which was provided at this service, and at the 12:15 service on the last Sunday of each month, by Africanto. On this particular Sunday, which was notably during the Christmas break, the group was represented by about 8-10 young men and women from Angola, Cabo Verde and São Tome. They sang at each part of the service that called for song—processions, communion, dismissal, etc.—and they accompanied themselves with guitar and hand drums. Unlike other Catholic churches we had attended, which had not gone out of their way to give congregants lyrics to hymns, Antas provided a 1 page leaflet, which showed the names, place of origin, and words of the African folk-hymns that were sung. The leaflet allowed the congregation to get a better sense of the lyrical content, including Kriolu lyrics from São Tome/Principe or Cabo Verde that might be more intelligible to the eye of a Portuguese speaker than to his or her ear. Another intent of the handout seemed to be to get the congregation singing along, but few seemed to respond to this prompt—so few that I felt awkward trying to sing, and abandoned the
attempt fairly quickly. And yet, it was also awkward to sit with the mostly White audience and feel as if the music was performed for us, not with us.

Towards the second half of the service, an African family came in and stood behind our pew (we were in the back row). Ada and a little girl flirted, Ada doing a very good job of sharing her book about fairies—one of her favorites at the time. When church was over, I introduced myself to the family’s father, who was an Angolan studying law at Universidade Católica do Porto. But we had only a brief conversation—I didn’t even get his name or contact information—before he and his family left. Maybe he didn’t feel like talking to the nosy anthropology student, or perhaps he just needed to get the family home in time for the kids’ naps.

My own family and I stepped out onto the steps at the entrance to the church. It was sunnier, and warmer than usual for Porto in December, and quite a few congregants were conversing in small groups, as one would expect after church in America. I introduced myself to Pedro, a strikingly tall and thin law student from Guinea Bissau. Pedro was chatting with a history professor from FLUP (the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, who were my academic hosts in the country). The professor in turn introduced me to Padre António Bacelar, whose benevolence and expansive generosity of spirit I have already described. The padre agreed to e-mail me about a good time to meet that Wednesday or Friday afternoon.

I have mentioned already, in passing, the Seminário de Vilar; this is the enormous space not far from downtown where the diocese maintains offices, meeting spaces, some lodging for guests, a small café, and, of course, a chapel or two. Padre Bacelar’s office in his capacity as diretor dos secretariados da Pastoral Universitária was in the Seminário, and we met there to discuss the foundation of Africanto. The group was the outgrowth of get-togethers the Padre’s office had thrown for African college students in the early part of the decade; in 2003, a group of these students approached Padre Bacelar for support and guidance in forming a prayer group, specifically to pray for an end to the long and terrible civil war in Angola. In addition to being the priest in charge of university outreach, this appeal was well suited to Padre Bacelar’s calling on another level—the padre is a priest of the Focolare Movement, a group of passionately anti-war clergy and laypeople, originally and still strongly associated with the Catholic Church, but increasingly ecumenical ever since its 1943 founding (Uelmen 2005:53–56). In the years since I left Porto, the padre has become the head of international outreach to the clergy for the entire movement, taking up offices in a suburb of Rome. Focolare emphasizes unity in all things, particularly in worship; I asked Padre Bacelar how the service at Antas could bring students from Africa and the Portuguese congregation closer to one another, and he told me that, “when we talk about unity during the communion, I think we must also speak about the existence of this group (Africanto)…in Antas, perhaps only now, I start to feel the existence of the community, people knowing one of the others…” He indicated that there was a need to build more unity within the discrete groups, as a prerequisite to their collective unity: “…we have to see unity in the main group itself before unity between the two groups…."

At the end of our meeting the Padre extended several invitations. The African Mass at Antas was often followed by a lunch, which offered a good opportunity to meet members of Africanto and other African Catholics. The Padre participated in an ecumenical group, with

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Methodists, Lusitanian Anglicans, Orthodox, and Baptists and other Evangelicals, which I would be welcome to attend as well. And most telling of Padre Bacelar’s open and generous nature, he invited my family and me to ride along with him to the village where he grew up, to visit his elderly mother.

A few days after our interview, the next Sunday, the family and I returned to Antas for Sunday Mass, and afterwards, we piled into Padre Bacelar’s tiny European compact car for a drive up to the northern interior of Portugal, up winding roads and into the hills. The drive was pleasant enough—the scenery was lovely, and each village through which we passed seemed equally charming and worthy of exploration. Perhaps it is a curse of anthropology to continuously realize that every story told is a decision which leaves another thousand stories untold; we value the prosaic and the everyday, and it can be frustrating to draw the boundary around our topic and leave so much that is fascinating outside of that circumscription. The journey was not perfect, though—I began to feel nauseous as we rode up increasingly twisted roads, and the noise of the car was so loud that I could hear little of the padre’s conversation.

The village of Padre Bacelar’s mother, Paredes de Coura, was full of love for the old woman, and her son, and by extension for us, his guests. He showed us the sites, and we took his mother for a “walk”, taking turns pushing her wheelchair and Oscar’s stroller, while the Padre’s mother held my daughter’s hand and was greeted by almost everyone on the street. The padre told us that his mother was catechist to many of the village residents when they were young. Although it was January, and a bit chilly, it was sunny and beautiful. I didn’t take any great insights from the visit, but I did get additional insight into the Padre’s personality; the man was not only a charming servant of God, dedicated to his congregation and to the college students of his second flock, but he was even still a family man and devoted son.

Driving home from the village, we saw processions and pageantry in a town or two along the way. Padre Bacelar pointed out that it was St. Sebastian’s Day, and the saint was no doubt the patron of several communities—Sebastian has long been a popular saint in Portugal, and his name is linked to the Arthurian figure of the hidden king, Dom Sebastião, whose place in the Portuguese national mythology is a topic for discussion in a later chapter. On this particular drive, much as I’d have liked to stop and enjoy the festivities, the family and the Padre were all feeling worn out by the long day, and we pushed on through to Porto. Dropping us off at our flat, Padre Bacelar invited us to the next big event for Africanto—the next week, in addition to the monthly “Mass by and for Africa”, there would be a luncheon for African students and their friends at the Parrish’s *centro social*, about a block up the road. Padre Bacelar suggested that this would be an excellent opportunity to meet more of the students.

The next week, we alternately enjoyed and endured another mass at Antas (the music was always a pleasure, but keeping the 5 year old and the 1 year old content was always a challenge). After mass, we walked with Padre Bacelar and a group of students to the *centro social*. Inside, in a small dining hall, a group of about 30 or so people sat at tables or stood around chatting. Most were African, and young—college age—but there were a few White Portuguese in the midst. In the adjacent kitchen, a group of five or six African students worked together to cook and serve cachupa—a Cabo Verdean stew made from hominy, beans and meat (sausage, chicken, or other meats as available and desired).
The conversations at lunch were loud and polyglot and overlapping, and could therefore be hard to follow. Meanwhile, my kids squirmed, and rejected the “exotic” food along with further entreaties to be calm. Still, I was introduced to a new friend: Simon, a seminarian from Nigeria, who would give me new insights into the training of new priests in Porto. At the same luncheon, Padre Bacelar proposed that I might try to coach some of the Lusofone students in English, which seemed like an odd idea to me—I was a mediocre student of languages myself, so perhaps not the best instructor. But I did not dismiss the idea; instead, I pursued it. I put up some signs at the Seminário: “Você precisa ajuda no aprendendo o inglês?” they asked. I gave a time of the week to meet at the Seminário de Vilar, and they came.

Several of the language learners in my group were members of Africanto. Those who were not, had been at the lunch after the Mass by and for Africa. They all seemed to know each other, to have been running in the same circles for quite some time—if everyone was not the closest of friends with one another, they all at least seemed to be friendly acquaintances. These students studied Architecture, Engineering, or Law, mostly or entirely at the University of Porto. If I was to compare Africanto to my own experiences, it was less like groups I was a part of as a college undergraduate, and more like my church youth group in high school—young people from different schools, who might not always choose to interact outside of church-organized activities, who nonetheless found common ground when brought together. In my own youth, it was the church itself—the Episcopal Church—that connected us and set us apart from the Evangelical Southern Baptist and Church of Christ kids that were a majority in our community. For these young college students, the localized Catholic Church encouraged identification along racial lines, though Africanto was originally proposed by the students themselves.

I don’t think I was a very good English teacher. Of course, I never claimed to be an English teacher in the first place, and I was upfront about my limitations with everyone who promoted the idea. When I publicized my lessons, I invited students who already had a basic knowledge of English, expecting to have a sort of conversation group to help students improve on an existing foundation. Instead, the majority of students who showed up were more-or-less beginning learners. I did the best I could to teach some basics of English, but I was in over my head. The students were gracious, though, and some of them got something out of the group, because they kept coming. While I always felt a bit of imposter syndrome, I also welcomed the opportunity to give something back, however limited, to people who were giving me information for my own studies. I certainly came out ahead in the exchange, but at least I was bringing something, however small, to the table.

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If one is going to learn about the lives of practicing Catholics, it is imperative that one spend the season of Lent at church. I went to the Igreja de Antas for the evening service on Ash Wednesday, which was characteristically somber. After services I introduced myself to Ana, a young Mozambican nun who I’d noticed in the congregation and who I have mentioned earlier. Ana does not wear a habit or anything that overtly marks her as a sister—she may not have progressed that far at the time, or she may be following the modern path of blending with the laity. Either way, her commitment to her calling has been powerful, yet has not made her uncomfortable in conversations with me. Ana took part in many other gatherings that I
attended—for one example, she joined Africanto during my months in Porto. Ana’s English was particularly limited, but she had unlimited patience with my broken Portuguese, thank heavens.

As Lent progressed, I spent more time with the Africanto group in language class, and I was invited to more activities with Simon the seminarian. When Holy Week kicked off, on Palm Sunday, M. was out of town and the kids and I were recovering from a stomach bug. Despite our weakened condition, we went to Antas for Palm Sunday. It was not a shining moment—both kids were extra-fidgety, and this demanded my attention throughout the entire service. We arrived late, and then ended up leaving early—if there were bells and whistles, passion plays of the sort that I was used to in America, or something else exciting—then we missed them.

M. came back, though, and Simon invited me to attend services on Holy Thursday at Porto’s cathedral. This was a grand affair, different then Palm Sunday passion reenactments but pageantry of its own sort, with the highest levels of Porto’s clergy present for foot washing—in many ways, I got the impression that the congregation was only there as a formality, and that the “action” of this service was concentrated more than any other service I’ve attended on the interactions of the men at the front of the room.

After the ceremony was over, Simon and I texted back and forth and agreed to meet in front of the cathedral. To my immense pleasure and gratitude, Simon invited me to a Holy Thursday dinner at the house of some nuns west of downtown. We took a bus to the neighborhood, and Simon rang the bell at a doorway on a busy shopping street. We were invited in by one of the sisters, and were led to the dining room, which was dominated by a long rectangular table with room for 12, maybe more, to sit comfortably. A few of the sisters were African, and all were friendly. My preconceptions of old world nuns had already been rattled by Ana’s geniality. While I knew that I would probably not be in this place if I hadn’t been Simon’s +1, I was also feeling more and more foolish for maintaining some antiquated image of nuns for which I had not a shred of evidence nor any background knowledge. The only real source for my assumptions was a belief that Portuguese Catholicism was more conservative than American Catholicism, with a tendency to hold onto Old World traditions that had barely even had time to take root in America. But Portuguese Catholicism is no more monolithic then American Catholicism—it has room for hardliners and ecumenicists, ivory tower philosophers and community activists. In a country where one faith has been dominant for centuries, individuals have found many ways of believing, of practicing, and of living their faith while still being “Catholics”. And this is just the Portuguese—the nuns, of course, were not all Portuguese, maybe not even a majority of them, and so all the assumptions I brought with me based on my expectations of Portuguese Catholicism were foolish two times over.

At this point, I was just as happy to have been proven foolish. I felt privileged to sit at the same table as these women and Simon, on a day that was a celebration/commemoration of Christ’s last supper. I felt even more honored, and also scared out of my wits, when I was asked to say a prayer in Portuguese before eating. I have always harbored a secret desire to be clergy, though, and I did the best I could given my limited Portuguese skills. I could see by the smiles on Simon and the sisters that I made some little mistakes, but I must not have accidentally blasphemed, because there were no gasps or frowns. I think I rose to the occasion pretty well, in fact. It was a pleasure and a delight to be in such company.
On the night of Good Friday, I anticipated a late night and so I again left M. and the kids and went to Antas to walk the Stations of the Cross. There was not any specific interaction with my seminarian or nun friends, but the night was so beautiful, so characteristic of Padre Bacelar’s style, that I cannot avoid saying a few words about the experience. The Stations were positioned throughout the neighborhood of Antas; our procession was to take place outside, and considering that Good Friday came around almost as early as possible that year, the weather was lovely—cool, but not cold. Our path was lit not just by the street lights and the candles we carried, but also by the full moon above.

At the front of our group, which numbered perhaps fifty, maybe more, altar boys carried a crucifix and larger candles, and then Padre Bacelar followed just behind and led the rest of us. At each Station, a color picture of the Biblical occurrence was affixed to a light pole, a wall or some other place where it could be seen above the heads of the crowd. Arriving at each stop, the Padre began with the same invocation, and the crowd replied with the same response:

“V. Nós vos adoramos e bendizemos, ó Cristo.
R. Que pela vossa Santa Cruz remistes o mundo.
(Celebrant: We worship and bless you, O Christ.
Congregation: That by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.)” (Paróquia de Santo António das Antas 2008, translation mine)

After this, there was a reading—usually from the passion as told in one of the Gospels, but sometimes from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, or in one case from Lamentations. Then, a congregant read a “meditation.” These included selections from the writings of priests and cardinals and saints and popes, of course, but also two Protestant clergymen: Dietrich Bonhoefer and Martin Luther King. After the meditation, we said an “Our Father” and then Padre Bacelar sang a one or two line canticle, and then we moved on in near silence to the next station.

It is hard to even hint at the simple beauty of that night. The profundity of the moment was like an inside joke shared with an old friend; “you had to be there.” A ritual like the Stations of the Cross bonds us with those who participate beside us, as well as with those who participate in places far away, or those who have participated long ago, or will in the far future. If it is working well, such a ritual overcomes barriers of time and space. I was not a Catholic, not a very good speaker of Portuguese, not even known to the people present that night. But I felt a powerful sense of belonging, of connection, of shared grief and hope as we moved through the streets of Antas and spoke of sacrifice and mourning.

I don’t recall talking to Padre Bacelar at all that night; I think, perhaps, that he was at his most priest-ful, his closest approach to God. I think back now to a ritual I was allowed to be a part of in Zimbabwe, where ancestral spirits possessed a jovial spiritual healer of my acquaintance and gave him a ferocity of affect I’d never seen in him. These holy men, when they engage fully with their roles as conduits of a higher power, are best left to their vocations unless one has a crucial need to communicate with them. So I did not speak to the Padre that night, nor did I see any of my acquaintances. But I did come away from the night feeling more connected to this church that is so like mine in so many ways, and yet so different in others. The Catholic Church is remarkably exclusive for an institution with over one billion adherents. Every opportunity I had to feel closer, less an outsider, made it easier for me to understand the lives of those for whom the Church was a defining part of their lives.
For a student of religion, studying the experiences of Christians and Muslims, there are seasons and holy days that really ought to be the foci of particularly intense study. For Islam, Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr fell in the months after I had left Portugal, while Eid al-Adha happened shortly after I made my first introductions with the Imã—I guess I was too much the stranger to be invited to Eid activities. My experiences trying to learn more at the mosque were shallow and frustrating, as we will discuss in another chapter. My time spent with Catholics in Porto was much more rewarding, but I still feel like a substandard fieldworker for having missed church on Easter Sunday, of all days. There was conflict at home that day—a familial inertia that I could neither overcome nor defy by striking out on my own, after having already spent Thursday and Friday out of the house for many hours. Earlier that week, M. had returned from a visit with old friends in Paris, and she had decided to take the children back to America and let me finish my research without the distraction of the family’s presence. We worked out the logistics of this change on Holy Saturday, and now we were facing a month of family bonding before two further months of separation. Though my professional self felt awful for skipping Easter services, my husband/father-self prevailed. This conflict between family responsibilities and professional goals has been my greatest challenge for as long as I’ve had children; some juggle these tasks well, and achieve their objectives, but I have never been able to maintain progress towards both goals simultaneously.

With the embarrassing omission of Easter itself, I went through the holiest part of the Christian calendar—Lent and Holy Week—in a unique, maybe a confusing, position. I was an observer; I was a non-Catholic, but I was spending much of my time with people on the inside, people who’d taken vows and were on track to take more. In a strange and contrary reversal, I missed the most populist bits of holy week—Palm Sunday and Easter—but took a deep dive into Holy Thursday and Good Friday. It was not good participant observation in the classical sense. Still, in the bits of Palm Sunday I did witness, I found it to be less of a special event than it would have been in America. I do not have much to go on, but my gut tells me that the congregant’s experience of Easter in Porto is less exciting than the American equivalent as well.

I wonder if the Church sometimes saves its best spectacle for the true believers, as both a reward and a lure, to keep them engaged at a higher level year after year? Or perhaps when there is less laity around, there is more of an outlet for improvisation and creativity in worship—a moment when ritual structures dating back centuries could be revitalized with fresh ideas and new energies?

In April, just a week before M. and the kids were to fly back to the U.S., Padre Bacelar’s office for outreach to university students and the office of immigrant services worked together to charter a bus and take the international students on a tour to Fatima. Fatima, of course, is the site of one of the most significant Marian apparitions of the 20th century. As I type, it is the 100th anniversary of the first such apparition—according to the story of the shepherd children who reported on this apparition, Mary appeared each month on the 13th of the month, from May 13 to October 13, 1917 (the local government locked the children away for the August 13th visitation, but the apparition reportedly waited until the 19th, when they had been freed).

Our bus ride to Fatima reminded me of bus rides to football games when I was in High School—the young people on the bus were a few years older, and certainly better behaved, but the atmosphere was not particularly contemplative as one might expect from a bus full of
pilgrims. Instead, the students laughed, joked, sang a little, and enjoyed spending time with one another. Things became only slightly more serious upon arrival in Fatima—there is much in the story of Fatima that is dark and sad, but the basilica does not dwell on the horrors of the age as much as it does the blessings and optimism of devotion and prayer. Despite a drizzling rain that made for a gray day out, the students seemed to enjoy the trip and never seemed to get too bogged down in the solemnity of the occasion. They were actually quite adept at balancing faith and fun, something that brought back to my mind youth group trips when I was a teenager. It was a pleasure to ride along.

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The next weekend would have been an Africanto mass, but instead of spending time with my friends at Antas, I was in Lisbon, putting the family on the plane home. I made my way back to Porto, feeling a bit disoriented, separated from my family for the first time since my exploratory trip two years earlier, before Oscar was born, when family life was more stable, even across the great distance. I knew what was next—intensive research, non-stop “participation” to make up for the divided attention that I’d given to my research up until then. I looked forward to it, but I also wondered what would become of the self-identity I’d formed through years of being a husband and father above all else. I spent much of the next week moving the last bits of our family life out of our flat, selling some items to a “consignment” store, giving many things away, and stripping my life down to a temporary dorm-living bachelorhood.

The dorm, though—it was fantastic! (Much more so for me than for my roommate, I would strongly suspect…) I was overwhelmed to move into a University of Porto dormitory in a renovated 18th century building in the part of Porto that is a World Heritage site. My room was on the third floor; it was the southernmost of about four rooms that together shared a balcony, and this gave me—looking between the buildings towards the south—a view of the Douro River and the Port wine caves on the other side. It was late enough in spring that the days were getting pleasantly warm, even in the shade, and I bought a small table for about 10 Euros and put it out on the balcony so I could drink coffee or beer and write and enjoy everything about Porto in these last two months.

By the end of that first week of May, I was settled into the dorm, and the next phase of my research, the most intensive phase, was beginning. One of my growing number of Catholic contacts—very possibly Simon—let me know that Porto’s university students were about to celebrate Queima das Fitas, a rite of passage for Porto’s university students. This week-long tradition started in Coimbra, probably developing out of earlier academic parades and graduation rituals, and spread quickly to Porto. During the Salazar dictatorship, Queima became an opportunity for nationalist parading and spectacle, and by the end of the 60s students protested the regime by refusing to take part in such rituals. Right leaning student groups brought Queima back in the 1980s, but in the intervening years it has lost much of its conservative identity, though there are still many with long memories that continue to condemn the tradition for its lingering dictatorial associations.

The Diocese of Porto has no hesitations about Queima, it seems—one of the first events of the week is the Benção das Pastas—the “pastas” in question being black folders that hold the fitas (colorful ribbons) that are burned in a bonfire at the end of the week. The Bishop of Porto,
Manuel Clemente, presided over this mass in the middle of the huge plaza at the heart of Porto, the Avenida dos Aliados, and it served to give a moment of sanctity to what is otherwise a rather rowdy week of drinking and partying, seasoned with other “traditional” touchstones. I attended, another face in a dense crowd; I saw Padre Bacelar up front, but I was far away from him, and I did not speak to the padre, or Simon, or any of my friends from Africanto or elsewhere—there were simply too many people in the plaza to find any of the folks I knew.

Two days later, however, I was invited by Simon to join him for another major event of Qeima—the Cortejo Académico, a parade made up of students from the departments of all of Porto’s universities. Each department created a float to represent them, and the students showed their rank with various symbols of attainment—graduating seniors (“finalistas”) carried canes, and occasionally top hats—some students went further and wore the black suits and cloaks associated with the formal dress of the University of Coimbra, to which almost all of the academic traditions of Portugal trace their origins. I met Simon and his classmates from the Faculdade de Teologia at a location on the western part of town. I was not sure what this building was—a residence, an office, or something else? I called Simon on my mobile and he met me, and took me around back, where there was a lovely green lawn, a barbecue grill, and about thirty to forty students.

Simon’s classmates are a global lot. I met classmates from Timor-Leste, India, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ghana. There were Portuguese students, too. And one woman, a White Zimbabwean, was also in the theology program, mainly for self-enrichment. “It’s just for personal knowledge,” she told me over cake, “I’ll help out the Parrish....” I asked if there were other women in the Faculty of Theology. “I’m a loner in the crowd of men!” she replied, “But they keep me like their mother, so I’m happy! …they’re always very careful, you know. But that’s what they actually call me—they call me ‘Mommy’! (Laughing) Some of these are younger than my daughter!”

Simon also introduced me to Joseph, who ended up being one of my favorite people to pass time with during my last month in Porto. Joseph is originally from Kenya. He spent a year in Uganda before studying in Tanzania for his first degree. He followed that up with an extra year of missionary work in Tanzania before coming to Portugal for this theology program—preparation for the priesthood. Joseph was now at the end of his fourth and last year of study at Católica, and so he had his cane, and a top hat. These implements were red—the color of the Faculdade de Teologia—as were Joseph’s jacket and the t-shirt underneath, which proclaimed him as a “FINALISTA 2008”. The other finalistas were similarly attired.

While Simon was introducing me to the students of Teologia, we were snacking on soup and cake. Not everyone was mingling, though; several of the students were busy putting finishing touches on Teologia’s float for the cortejo. The float was built on the top and back of an open bed commercial delivery truck. The sides and back gate of the truck were covered in red crepe paper, with “TEOLOGIA” incorporated in letters about three feet high along the left side; the right side also had “Theologia” spelled out, but in Greek letters. Above the truck’s cab was a cartoonish stack of “books” in bright colors, with a red book on top—representing Teologia as the discipline above all others in importance? In front of the stack of books, the first bit of decoration which anyone would see if the float was coming towards them, was a face. The face, like the books behind it, was cartoonish—it looked like a fat-cheeked baby, with just three
strands of hair sticking straight up from an otherwise bald baby head. What was alarming and very strange to me was that the face was black, with the details rendered in white—an o-shaped mouth expressing surprise or the need to suckle, vertically aligned oval eyes underscored with patches of freckles. To an American viewer, this was a racist caricature straight out of a Jim Crow-era advertisement or comic strip.

I asked Joseph about the float, not that day but weeks later, when he and I were passing the afternoon together. He agreed that the float would have racist connotations in other countries besides America—Great Britain, for example. But he defended his colleagues and their intentions, pointing out that Teologia students are from many countries that don’t have the same relationship to such images, and that they were definitely not trying to offend or provoke in the way that the Black baby would in America. It is worth noting, though, that the students who were working hardest on the float were not the African or Asian students—they all appeared to be European. And, too—when students climbed up on the float to go and join the actual parade, Joseph was one of just two or three African colleagues to come along. The representatives of Teologia in the Cortejo were overwhelmingly White. While Joseph was inclined to defend the Cortejo float to me, he did not have much to say about the meanings or symbols that were represented there, as they would be interpreted by the Portuguese or even as he himself interpreted them. In general, infants symbolize *caloiros*—freshmen—in Portuguese university tradition. Whether this baby face is part of that tradition in interaction with a commentary on race in the Faculdade de Teologia, I could not ascertain, nor could Joseph—or if he could, he wasn’t interested in elaborating on the topic to me.

Even aside from the racialized imagery of Teologia’s cortejo float, participation in queima rituals like the cortejo seems problematic on many levels. Queima das Fitas is part of a web of rituals, traditions, hierarchies, behaviors, and attitudes that make up *praxe*. This word, literally the Portuguese cognate of *praxis*, describes the roles and duties of the ideal Portuguese college student. It is reminiscent of fraternity traditions or the Skull and Bones society at Yale, but theoretically encompasses every student, without regard to membership in any particular organization. *Praxe* might better resemble “the other education” at Texas A&M: “… intangibles—tradition, loyalty, school spirit, service to the school” (Burka 1997). “A&M’s society sanctions threats to its solidarity by derogatorily designating those who are either in opposition to anything associated with A&M and its ideals, or who are neutral to them as ‘two-percenters’” (Stanford 2003:152)—the actual number of dissidents at A&M is probably higher than 2%, but the exaggeratedly small number serves to further reinforce the marginality of those who are not participants in the system.

The parallel to A&M’s two-percenters in Portugal are those who are “anti-*praxe*” (a phrase used both by those who participate in the academic culture of *praxe* and those who make a point of abstaining); some have also formed organizations to fight against *praxe*, such as MATA (Movimento Anti "Tradição Académica"). Opposition to *praxe* can be based on a number of contentions, which are not mutually exclusive. Some still associate these traditions with the dictatorship of the mid-20th century, and opposition to *praxe* with the student movement against authoritarianism and colonialism. Some object to the reproduction of class, gender, and other hierarchies with the academy by way of *praxe*, and the corresponding institutionalization of privilege that is then transferred from the university to society at large. And some see injuries
and deaths resulting from aspects of praxe that are hazing rituals, and want to see unnecessary grief averted.

There may have been some among the students of Teologia who were anti-praxe—as I said, few of the African seminarians I’d met, or would meet later, marched in the Cortejo. In general, though, I think the Teologia students were more interested in enjoying the parade than in taking a major stand on behalf of tradition. None of the Teologia students wore the traje of the finalista—the aforementioned dark suit with cloak—which is such a symbol of praxe that anti-praxe students are sometimes denied the right to wear traje by academic code (Lopes and Sebastião 2017:99). This was also a particularly significant year to affirm praxe for those who found it important—2007/8 was the academic year in which Portugal implemented the Bologna Process, which standardized higher education structures throughout the EU. This was seen as anti-praxe by many students, and their hostility to Bologna was evident in some cortejo floats. Some examples: one float that I saw said “Bolonha matou a praxe” (pretty straightforward) while another had the “Corvus Aliadus” (the “crow ally”) preparing to dine on the “Juristas a la Balonha” (presumably, those who had made the agreement). The crow had the motto of praxe written on a kind of breastplate it wore: “Dura praxis, sed praxis”—“Praxe is hard, but it is praxe,” i.e. a thing worth enduring. Teologia was not among the faculdades making grand statements about praxe, but instead going along for the fun of the trip. I myself knew almost nothing about praxe at the time, having been exposed to the undergraduate levels of Portuguese higher ed only through contact with African students. Those students were either disinterested in praxe or didn’t think it was relevant in any of our conversations—either way, it slipped mostly below my radar.

When the time had come to actually begin the cortejo, Simon told me to enjoy the event. He had an assignment to finish, and I got the feeling that cortejo itself wasn’t Simon’s type of activity. But my new friend Joseph was taking part, and I was curious about the event—I could tell that this would be both educational and entertaining. We rode to a location closer to the older parts of the city—a mile or so west of downtown—and we started the procession. It was slow-going. I was not supposed to ride on the truck—that was reserved for finalistas—but Joseph came down to chat more frequently than he stayed up with his classmates. Meanwhile, I moved forward and backward through the growing crowds of onlookers, taking pictures, getting a sense of what other faculdades had put together and how they were expressing themselves, and generally trying to take in as much as I could. Because things moved so slowly, it was actually fairly easy to see much of the parade while still marching with the Teologia group for most of the event. I was even able to go by my dorm and leave my backpack at one point. It “helped” that the parade was slowed even further by stops here and there for group photos, or for smaller sub-rituals. At one point, the trombonist of our group serenaded a young woman from another faculty. I wondered if this young man was destined to take vows of chastity, as the scene was as romantic as any scene involving a trombone could possibly be. At other points, different faculdades acted out rivalries by chanting at one another.

Meanwhile, the Teologia students had several chants and songs that they yelled out as we walked. The most popular/most frequent of these was the singing of “Ave, Teologia” repeatedly, to the tune of the Village People’s 1979 hit “Go West.” It seemed odd to have a group of
Catholic theology students singing along to a tune that is identified in the United States with the gay liberation movement and the emergence of San Francisco as a nexus of gay culture in the 1970s. I didn’t understand at the time some extenuating circumstances that help to explain this curiosity. “Go West” has the same chord sequence as Pachelbel’s Canon, which might have made the tune more familiar to the Teologia students; the rhythm of Teologia’s version was definitely inspired by “Go West”, however. The students may have been exposed to the song more as a football (soccer) chant than as a gay anthem, however. An article on the sports-website Deadspin explains that the “Go West” tune and rhythm is used frequently by football fans, who customize the lyrics to suit their team or to reflect on action on the field (Khawaja 2016). In a football-obsessed country like Portugal, and in a setting—cortejo—where rivalries of a sort are being aired, the “Ave, Teologia” song probably relates more closely to the football chant than the Village People song that inspired it.

Eventually, after hours of slow movement, airhorns, drumming, accordion, trombone, cheering, singing, chanting…we reached the Avenida dos Aliados in the center of town. I was gently informed that I should move to the area of spectators as Teologia approached a reviewing stand adjacent to the Camera Municipal, where they would exchange greetings and songs with the mayor of Porto. I may have been allowed to walk with the students for a mile and more, and lend my voice to their songs, but when we came to the end of the road I was just another onlooker.

I had Joseph’s phone number and e-mail, though. Even though I’d known Simon for months, and had been invited to several great events by him—and even though Simon was excited to spend time with me, and was open to sharing the outward trappings of his life for my consideration—there was something about Simon that was harder for me to relate to, and made it harder for me to get to know him as well as I felt I got to know Joseph. Part of it may have been that Joseph and I had senses of humor that were more closely matched. Listening back to recordings of Simon and me together, there is less laughter than there is in recordings with Joseph. I find it so much easier to talk about complicated subjects if I know that we can laugh through miscommunications or odd expressions.

In the weeks after Cortejo, my attention splintered in so many directions—I was trying to learn about so many different congregations, and so many other sites of community formation. I was trying to do all the things I could not imagine not having done while living on the edge of Europe. With two months to go, and a year’s worth of research to complete, I started to reach the point of exhaustion.

One evening, after the end of a Jehovah’s Witness English service, I overheard a group of young adults making plans to go see the latest Indiana Jones sequel later in the week. I wondered—if the end of the world (as we know it) is imminent, if a faithful follower of Christ is tasked with saving as many souls as he or she can in the waning days of a dying world—how does one decide to spend three hours at a Hollywood blockbuster? The next time I sat down to talk with Sergio, my main contact among the Witnesses, I asked him about this. Jehovah’s Witnesses strive for balance in life, he told me; one cannot spend 100% of one's time engaged in mission. I realized, on reflection, that this question was about myself as much as it was about the Witnesses. Faced with my own End Time—the time soon to come when I would have to say goodbye to all of my friends in Portugal and a life I’d come to love—I was trying to follow my
calling every moment of every day, and I was burning out. This was a lesson I’d learned years before and forgotten, I suppose—I am at my best when I leave myself room to improvise, room to breathe, when I schedule out my days and weeks but then break from the schedule with joy instead of shame or self-flagellation.

I chose to end the English lessons I’d been teaching for four months. It was exam time, and there were fewer and fewer attendees each week. I acknowledged that my research “focus” was already ludicrously wide, and—while I did not narrow it, exactly—I stopped obsessing over attending mosque as often as possible, and I did not worry about getting in one or two last visits to Reino de Deus or (ironically) to the Jehovah’s Witnesses. My attention was narrowed to the groups that brought me joy and/or epiphanies, and I spent a few intermittent days just doing things that I wanted to do, like looking for a Roman road in a northern suburb (never found it), or…

…on May 13th, the 89th anniversary of the first appearance of Our Lady of Fatima, one of the smaller churches in the central shopping district decided to have a procissão through the streets in honor of Our Lady. We met on the steps of the church at twilight. From the middle of things, it was hard to tell how many of us there were—I’d have guessed at least 40, but there could have been substantially more. Those who walked in the procession were a little younger than the typical Porto congregation, no doubt because we’d be walking for a long way through narrow and uneven streets; nevertheless, a few of the more rugged elder parishioners did come along. There could have been congregants or clergy there from Africa (or Asia, or the Americas…), but again, I was a dot in the crowd, only truly aware of the marchers closest to me, who all appeared to be Portuguese, or at least European. None of my seminarian friends nor my Africanto friends had mentioned an interest in the procissão—even those students who’d made the bus pilgrimage to Fatima did not seem excited by this event. Most likely, part of their ambivalence arose from the fact that final exams were taking up more of their free time.

I’d not have missed the procissão for anything. Before we left the church steps and began marching, candles were passed through the assembled crowd. A few initial prayers were said up front, where a statue of Our Lady of Fatima stood tall on a flower-bedecked platform that would be carried before us by several strong men from the parish. When the march began, we alternated saying the Our Father and the Hail Mary, in Portuguese, of course, with the very occasional hymn added into the mix. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of it all—I don’t know what was going through everyone else’s heads or hearts, but as I prayed in unison with this crowd of believers I felt a little closer to God, for at least a little while. As we wound through the streets of the Freguesia Santo Ildefonso, the neighborhood named for the church, the residents leaned out of windows or came out on balconies and dropped rose petals on us. My memory sets a full moon in the sky above, to be glimpsed between the buildings when the angles allowed—the truth is, the moon was a week from being full, and I don’t really know if it was clear or cloudy that night. I rely on memory and emotion, certainly not the stuff of science and rigorous research processes, but maybe in these moments good enough.

The Fatima procissão doesn’t have much to do with the rest of my research, but it and its twin, the Stations of the Cross walk on Good Friday, did contribute something of value to this
project: I needed to have some little epiphanies and moments of transcendence along the way to be able to understand why the people I am writing about are devoted to this ancient institution. Their own epiphanies may feel like my own; they may be inspired by moments similar to those that shake my soul awake—or, much more likely, their epiphanies emerge from their own lives, histories, experiences, and are unique ways of connecting with things that are vast beyond the bounds of true knowing. Even if we are moved by the spirit while standing together, side by side—indeed, even if part of the feeling of transcendence comes from feeling connected to those around us—we are each wrapped up in our own individual moment.

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Just a couple days after the Fatima procissão, barely a week after I first met him, Joseph and I met up for an interview. As I mentioned before, Joseph was the seminarian with whom I “clicked” the most—he has an easy laugh and a generally sunny affect; were I to choose one of these priests-in-training to confess my transgressions to, I would pick Joseph.

Born and raised in Kenya, the child of “staunch Christians,” Joseph began his studies for the priesthood in Uganda and Tanzania in his early 20s, before being encouraged by the Espiritanos—the congregation to which Joseph, Simon, and their African brothers in Porto belong—to continue his studies in Portugal. The Espiritanos, or brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, are a Catholic community that has established itself from its 19th century beginnings in Africa, and has invested resources and training in expanding the role of indigenous peoples in the priesthood, not only in Africa but in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean as well.

Joseph was willing to go to Portugal, obviously, and he has ambitions to work in the future elsewhere in Europe, but there were aspects of Portuguese culture that he found off-putting.

“Because one thing that you realize is, the Portuguese people—they’re proud people. And before English people, they feel inferior. And when they meet people who come from English colonies, or English…it is like we’re fighting; there is a conflict, which is in many places—you see it. We fight ontologically…. Only, we fight—actually, our fight is more in ideas. How I analyze, and look at things, and do things—a Portuguese thinks that this is not the way things should go. Because they are more theoretical. I don’t look at Portuguese as people who are pragmatic, in the sense that, they talk things, and they put them to practice; but they are people who like to talk, talk, talk talk talk… And they don’t do things anywhere. For me, that one I find a lot of difficulty. And even, I have it—this struggle with my superior.”

Joseph says that the Portuguese in his community are upset when the English speakers revert to English. It is easy to sympathize with Joseph, who had spent four years in a foreign environment and was anxious to get back to Africa after his imminent graduation. It is also a little disconcerting to hear one who is almost fully ordained to the priesthood, who ostensibly was to take from his studies abroad an expanded multiculturalism, instead critiquing the host culture for its provincialism and failings of hospitality. I heard similar things from John, a seminarian from Zimbabwe:

19 Quotes are from interviews and conversations on 5/15, 5/23, and 6/27/2008.
“For me, anyway…OK, for me, it’s…what I’ve discovered…for people here to have trust in you, if you’re coming from these countries you speak Portuguese, they don’t look at me as an African, when I’m here. They look at me from the language I speak: English. You know, that’s the…even if you ask any guy who speak English here—who speaks English—they don’t look you, eh, from your home background. You know? They look at you from an English perspective; because, for them, they feel—I see this is how (?) that inferiority, or…anything English is negative, for almost all the guys, That’s what I discovered here. I don’t know whether my judgment is sound, but…I discovered this. If somebody’s English, they’re suspicious; they don’t like to come close. Maybe it’s…national pride? You know? Or…”

Both seminarians seemed to find their English language background to be more alienating to the Portuguese than their African origins. While Joseph imagined perhaps working elsewhere in Europe in the future, he anticipated a more immediate role in East Africa, either Kenya or Tanzania. John wanted to return to a task he’d been engaged in before being called to Portugal: helping to translate the Bible into some of the languages of western Mozambique. I do wonder if my questions inadvertently led the two to ruminate on the more negative aspects of their time in Portugal, because when not interviewing, both seemed to enjoy the aspects of seminarian life that put them in closest contact with the Portuguese—for John, this was helping at a retirement home, while Joseph preferred working with catechists and taking part in the mass at an older but neglected church in Porto’s northwestern suburbs.

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My work started wrapping up in June, just as the festivals of summer were getting underway. Porto doesn’t really celebrate Santo António’s feast day—certainly not the way Lisbon does, with parades and pyrotechnics and all night parties. But I had a personal connection now with the church of Santo António at Antas and its head priest António Bacelar. It’s not really surprising that the church celebrates its anniversary on Saint Anthony’s day—in this case, in fact, it was the 70th anniversary of the parish. Not as big a deal as the 75th anniversary, but not a small thing either. I went with Simon and Joseph to the celebration, a nice dinner for the parishioners and their guests held al fresco at the Parrish’s centro social, in the garden at the back. The crowd was in a good mood. I saw a few of the Africanto students in the crowd, and I got to say hi, very briefly, to Padre Bacelar, who was of course very busy in his role as host, but who was, even in passing, gracious and charming. The padre even introduced me (even more briefly) to Manuel Clemente, who was at the time Bishop of Porto and is now the Patriarch of Lisbon and a Cardinal.

After the Antas anniversary party, throughout the following week, my time was occupied with prayers at the mosque and services with Nova Criação, the Angolan Methodists, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. I e-mailed and texted with Joseph and Simon, but I didn’t see either again until June 23rd, a very special day in Porto.

Porto’s patron saint is St. John the Baptist, whose feast day is June 24th. The massive party in honor of São João is the night before, and the city spends a week getting ready for the festivities. As at Christmas time, the streets are decorated with arches of colored lights. Windowsills and doorsteps are ornamented with pots of manjerico, a small-leafed relative of basil. All through the neighborhoods, portuenses set up little grills and roast sardines, filling the

air with delicious smells. Food trucks contribute to the aroma with the scent of churros and powdered sugar. And then, on all the major street corners, there are vendors specializing in just two seasonal items. The first of these are long stalks of garlic, with bulb at the base and a spray of tiny white blossoms at the top. The second are plastic hammers. These hammers are built with an accordion-folding head, and within that is a tiny whistle. Every bang or bop of these hammers lets out a squeak, loudness correlating with the force of impact. It would be difficult to hurt anyone with one of these squeaky hammers, even if one tried—they absorb the impact of every hit, by design.

One assumes that the garlic has been around much longer on Saint John’s eve in Porto than have the plastic hammers, which are manufactured in China and would not seem out of place at a loja chines (the Portuguese equivalent of a dollar store—they stock almost entirely Chinese imports, and are most often run by Chinese immigrants). The hammers are more popular, and I got the sense that this was because they are not fraught with symbolism, as the garlic is. I was told that the garlic is a symbol of fertility, and the long stalk with bulb at the bottom was certainly phallic enough. You could see that there was something more significant about the garlic if you carried it into the throngs of people who began to assemble at dusk—young people laughed and ran from the garlic, avoiding even the slightest touch of it, as if they might be impregnated by a glancing blow. Young men in particular mimed an exaggerated fear of the phallic stalk, as if they might themselves be at risk of touching a symbolic penis and becoming emasculated thereby.

In contrast, a squeaky hammer seemed to carry no deeper significance in and of itself. It was in the use of the hammer, the bopping of heads, that the hammer became an expression of liminality—St. John’s is also Midsummer, after all, a celebration of the solstice and a holiday that sits on the thin edge between calendar pages. That liminality was expressed in the ability of any one person to bop any other on the heat with their plastic mallet: strangers bopping strangers, yes, but also young people bopping old, and vice versa; children bopping parents; adults bopping (gently) infants, and even civilians bopping police officers. All of this bopping, with smiles and songs and joy.

When it was time for São João to get underway, Joseph joined me at my dorm and we walked down to the Ribeira—the riverside—together, both of us wielding our hammers with glee as we passed other revelers on our path. The seminarians don’t wear anything special to distinguish themselves when they are not at church, and here in the touristy parts of Porto it was not unusual to see Africans—either visitors, or part of the tourist economy, or just on their way to Espaço Moçambique, which was not far from the Ribeira. I did wonder if Joseph might have some extra frustrations with the Portuguese beyond what I had, that might have made his hammering of Portuguese noggins particularly rewarding.

The crowds were thick down by the river, and we wandered about listening to music and hammering for a while, until we started to tire of the mass of people. We walked along the riverside, still hammering, enjoying the atmosphere of merriment. I put aside my anxieties for the night—the stress of knowing that I would leave in less than a week and I still had so much to do. São João is not a time for such concerns.
Eventually, Joseph and I reached the bottom of the steep stone steps that lead up from the river back to the neighborhood of my dorm. We decided that we would climb up and watch the next phase of São João from the dorm. There were two parts of the festival that we hoped to view from the higher ground afforded by the dormitory balconies—first, there is a tradition during São João of sending up little hot air balloons, carried aloft by little fires at their bottoms. When they flew, the fires would light up the paper sides like dozens of yellow-orange full moons floating low in the sky. Eventually, the wind would blow the flame sideways, just enough to ignite the balloon itself, and so almost always the balloon-moons would end their flights by abrupt metamorphosis into shooting stars, streaking fire behind them as they fell back to earth. It is a wonder that the city still stands—a blessing, I suppose, from Saint John.

The second event for which we sought the higher vantage point was the São João fireworks show. Just around midnight, the celebration climaxes with amazing pyrotechnics, just over the Douro River that divides Porto from Vila Nova de Gaia and the Port Wine Caves to the south. The fireworks would be (and were) spectacular even viewed from a distance, but for those back in the Ribeira they are—or appear to be—just meters away. It feels dangerous, but the danger makes it more exciting. I saw it all from the Ribeira my first time in Porto, just two or three days into that first visit, in fact. This time, Joseph and I would enjoy things from the greater distance of my dorm, but the show was still impressive.

When the fireworks had faded, the crowds below started to disperse. Some would stay at bars around the Ribeira, others would find one of the stages around central Porto where bands played rock or pop music, or pimba, or DJs played techno or hip hop. Some, of course, would go home after the fireworks. May have been at “home,” but I was not at all ready to call it a night. Surprisingly, Joseph was not tired enough to give up on São João either; I might have expected the seminarian to call it an early night, and maybe on a regular night he might have done so, but he seemed caught up in the spirit of liminality. I think we were prompted by a text from my friend Paulo, but for whatever reason, Joseph and I went to the café called Nova Ambiante, which was run by Cabo Verdeans and was a frequent gathering place for Africans in Porto from many different countries of origin. There was dancing and drinking going on at Nova Ambiante, and the little café was too small to contain all of the celebration, so some of the dancing spilled out onto the sidewalk and the little sidestreet that ran in front of the café. To my heart’s most profound delight, Padre António Bacelar was there, and he was quite literally dancing in the street!

In time, Joseph finally ran out of steam and left to return to the house where he and several of his seminarian brothers were housed by their order. Padre Bacelar slipped away as well, and I found some recently acquired friends from Germany and danced even longer at a square near the Torre dos Clérigos until the first hint of dawn signaled that it was time to go home and sleep. It is strange to celebrate the birthday of the New Testament’s most ascetic saints with such an outrageous party. But if the priests and seminarians are OK with it, who am I to judge?

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It was now my last week in Porto, and I was trying very hard to get some final interviews in. I was lucky enough to be invited by Joseph to visit the house where most of the Spiritan
seminarians lived while attending Católica just a few days before my departure. I also managed to schedule an interview with John, the seminarian from Zimbabwe, for the same afternoon, which conserved a little of my rapidly disappearing time. The Spiritan house was fairly large, with lots of sunlight and, as one might expect from a religious brotherhood, much emphasis on communal space over individual space. Basically a repurposed mansion on the west side of town, the house had a large central foyer with seminarians’ rooms all around; an expansive lawn, and a dining room/meeting space with a heavy wooden table that lent a sense of gravitas to the house meetings and prayers I imagined in that space. Many of the seminarians left their doors open while they were in their rooms, contributing further to a sense of shared community and brotherhood. John and Joseph and I spent some time in Joseph’s room, talking about prayer and about language. I don’t know if it was specifically my presence that made the topic come up repeatedly, or if language was something that was on many Spiritans’ minds with unusual frequency, but it was not only in Joseph’s room but in many interviews that the subject came up. In this case, we spoke of what language each person likes to pray in, each having near fluency in at least one African language, in English, and in Portuguese (the order also calls on seminarians to learn French, the mother tongue of the founders of the Spiritans).

Ultimately, I got the impression that Joseph was a Spiritan mostly because the Spiritans got to him first—most probably because they have such an expansive presence on the African continent. John, however, speaks of weighing his options and choosing the Spiritans over the Carmelites. The two seminarians’ sense of future vocation reflects this as well. John sees his mission back in Mozambique, translating the Bible into indigenous languages—in other words, engaging in the sort of activities, in the sort of environment, that express the charism of the Spiritan order. Joseph would like to end up in Europe eventually—not the main operational area of the Spiritans, though of course they do have a presence throughout Europe, and their roots lie in France. But simply by virtue of being an African priest working in Europe, Joseph will be fulfilling another goal of his order—the promotion of an indigenous clergy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, whose eventual presence in countries outside their continents of birth has the power to transform the Catholic Church and make it more responsive to the needs of underserved regions of the world (where, we might add, the majority of the world’s Catholics currently reside). To mix spiritual metaphors, if the mountain won’t come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain—if European and American Catholics aren’t headed to the Global South to engage in the Spiritan calling of helping the poor, the sick and those who have suffered from the lingering effects of colonial underdevelopment, Spiritan priests can at least spread the message of their calling throughout the developed world and thereby plant seeds of grace and transformation.

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Just two days after my visit to the Spiritan House, it was my final day in Porto, a Sunday, and in fact the last Sunday of June. As with all last Sundays of every month, it was time for the Missa com e por África. Though my first lead in my fieldwork had taken me to Reino de Deus, I really felt that our family’s first attendance at the “Mass with and for Africa” marked the first true breakthrough in my research. After months of church and mosque attendance, it would be a fitting end to my time in Porto to attend this service once more.
Simon met me on route to Antas that morning. We rode the Metro together, then walked from the station to the church, arriving early enough that the previous service was still in progress. Célia, who was part of Africanto that morning, was already there with her guitar case, waiting outside for the break between services. Simon and Célia and I chatted a while, and took a few pictures with the statues in front of the church. Soon it was time to move inside, out of the increasingly warm sun.

I sat in a pew with Simon, and we were also joined by Liz, a British anthropologist who lives in Portugal and was doing her own research project within the Cabo Verdean immigrant community in Porto. Liz and I had been introduced a month or so earlier, and I had been trying to introduce her to some of my contacts. She had brought her husband and kids along, so we were a sizable group unto ourselves. The mass was lovely, as it always had been before. Everything was familiar—the service, the singing, the soothing tones of Padre Bacelar’s sermon—except for the end of the mass. After Communion was over, Padre Bacelar said some words to the congregation about me, and my research, and about how today was my last day to be with the parishioners of Antas. I was surprised, honored, but also terrified, because Simon clarified that I was to say a few words to the congregation. I muddled through a thank you in Portuguese, and expressed saudade in advance.

A few minutes later, church was over. We made our way to the exit, and there on the stairs I said my goodbyes and final thank yous to Liz, to Padre Bacelar, and to Célia and the other students of Africanto. It was not time to say goodbye to Simon, yet—he would keep me company until my last moments in Porto.

There is a gap in my memory and my notes: I don’t have any idea why, but Simon and I went to the part of town where the Igreja Metodista Africana was located, on the other side of town from Antas. We weren’t going to the church, though, nor do I think we were going to Casa Agricola, the bar and restaurant nearby where I frequently went to write—unless I’d forgotten some item there, I don’t know why we’d go there on a Sunday afternoon. Perhaps I had a last minute purchase to acquire at the Bom Sucesso shopping center just behind Casa Agricola. For whatever reason, Simon and I were a distance from my dorm room, and we spent the trip from that neighborhood to the dorm, and then to the internet café at Aliados, conducting something of a last minute, informal interview.

Waiting for the bus, Simon asked me if I liked Porto, and if I’d be coming back in the foreseeable future. Back then, I truly believed that I would return for follow up research, and I told Simon as much: “I think, even if I didn’t love the place, I would still consider coming back, to make sure that I was thorough. I think it’s good to get that kind of…one year later, what’s changed what’s stayed the same.” I said that I thought it was more responsible scholarship to follow up, and not assume that this socio-cultural landscape I was describing was static and unchanging. I still wish that things had worked out in such a way that I had returned for a month or two of follow-up. It was not to be.

Simon agreed with my underlying premise: “I don’t think that culture—it’s not in the past, it’s not dead…. We are cultural beings, and since we are dynamic human beings, culture has a dynamic. So, go with this… Culture is for me, culture should be a testimony, it should be a lived experience. It should not be….our father’s culture.” Simon pointed out that in his native
Nigeria, people were often hurt or even killed in the name of their fathers’ “culture” within the last century—a woman accused of being a prostitute, for example, might be considered less than human and killed. “That means,” Simon said,

“you have to live IN your time…. Culture is those things that are worthy of remembering…. You cannot go back to that time and live. What you can only do is borrow from the things it leaves, because our culture is not what happened then, our culture is the lived experiences of (our fathers), for us, how we apply the things that (they) have made, learning from the mistakes…”

I’d spent quite some time with Simon over the last three or four months in Porto, but I’d not found a chance to sit still with him for a real interview. Simon was always a bit nervous whenever we spoke; I wasn’t sure if there was something about me in particular, or if he was that way around everyone—perhaps even nervous in moments of solitude. If I had to guess, based on extremely limited observations at Antas and at the pre-Cortejo festa, I’d say that it was a bit of both—there was something about me that made Simon a little extra nervous, but even around his fellow seminarians he was a bit on edge. Having suffered myself from occasional bouts of social anxiety, I thought I might recognize some of this in Simon. I could tell that Simon was not adverse to spending time with me—as noted earlier, he frequently invited me to join him for events like the Holy Thursday service and the pre-Cortejo party; I was also invited to lectures at the Universidade Católica, and even after I left Porto and returned to America, Simon called me every few weeks for about a year. I felt a little sad about these calls—a combination of my personal hearing impairment, Simon’s heavy accent, and the fact that his calls always seemed to come at times when I was out in noisy surroundings, made our conversations particularly awkward and unsatisfying to me, and I strongly suspect to Simon. For some reason, though, Simon was adverse to corresponding by e-mail, and the frequency of our communications tapered off, ending completely by 2010.

As I said, I never found a moment to have a conventional interview—a fairly subjective idea in and of itself, but to me this would be sitting still and focusing on conversation, personal history, and perceptions and attitudes about life in Porto. Still, here, on our wanderings through Porto, I managed to ask Simon some of the big questions and find out a little more about his life before Portugal.

Simon traces his family’s involvement with the Catholic Church to his paternal grandparents’ enthusiasm—his grandfather, in particular, was a catechist, he told me. “My life dream was always that. You know, I wanted to go to seminary.” Instead, he was steered towards the study of law after secondary school,

“But really the first year, I wasn’t…I was just feeling like a fish out of water…all my life I had said the mass, I wanted to go to seminary…. I wasn’t really getting it…. so I spoke to my…director and I told him my feelings, my fears, about this…. So I told him I’m…for the priesthood…. I don’t like you, so I’m leaving, I’m leaving all of you.”

After all of that, though, Simon would have to begin his higher ed from the beginning if he was to switch from law to theology. He would be 34 or 35 by the time he finished his program of study. I laughed and pointed out that I would be 40 by the time I received my PhD (the joke is not so amusing now).
As Simon and I talked, we boarded a bus and rode to the stop closest to my dorm, we walked to the dorm and went to my room, and I finished packing and organizing. There were many things that I had to pass along to Simon or to the other students on my floor—books, pillows, souvenirs of Fatima. Our ultimate goal was for me to have all of my things together, and then for us to go to Aliados, to the internet café, and scan pages of Portuguese textbooks so I wouldn’t need to take the books all the way back to the U.S. While I packed, Simon and I made light chit chat, about my immediate travel plans and my reunion with my family, and about life in the dorm—the pluses and minuses.

Every 10 or 15 minutes there was a loud boom, like a cannon being fired in the distance, maybe across the river. Eventually we decided that some church or neighborhood might have been celebrating the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, which was technically the day before, but could be observed on the Sunday thereafter. Indeed, it turns out that not far from the dorm is the Igreja de São Pedro de Miragaia. It’s still odd to see that there was a 250 year old church relatively close to me, and I never even knew it—in a city that forgets about the millegenarian chapel at Cedofeita, it is relatively easy to overlook even a larger church with only a few centuries of history behind it.

Paula called, and offered me a ride to the train station; I graciously accepted, and asked her to pick me up at Aliados. Much as I loved the dorm, I was not interested in coming back to it. I wanted to say my goodbyes and keep moving forward. This was also good because Simon wanted to come all the way to the train station to see me off, but I felt like I needed to say farewell before that—I would have time to sleep on the train, and on the plane the next day, but that kind of sleep is not so regenerative. There was a kind of emotional chaos building in me, that I needed solitude to explore and to try and understand—a tangle of feelings that included apprehension at my imminent reunion with the family, and a sort of pre-saudade, a homesickness for Porto that was already hitting me as I said successive “see you laters” to people and places that I might not actually see, ever again. Indeed, even now, several of the fellows from my floor of the dorm stopped in to say “adeus.”

Almost done packing, I listed to Fela Kuti with Simon. “You don’t understand the language. How do you enjoy it?” he asked me.

“Well, he sings most of it in English.”

“English—in Nigerian English… there’s some peculiar expressions…”

“What is important, “Simon says, “is you start to be accepted into the culture and the language. Because you are living there at that particular time. You need to learn to flow with it….”

The conversation turned to politics—possibly inspired by Fela Kuti’s musical polemics against corrupt rulers in 1970s Nigeria—and Simon and I agreed on the contemptibility of Robert Mugabe’s regime in Zimbabwe, and the optimistic possibility of a Barack Obama presidency. I offered Simon a snack, but he was fasting—he would have mass again at 7:00 at the Spiritan house—so he asked if he could just have a glass of water. As I put the last few items into my luggage, I showed Simon a collage I’d made for M., of the Virgin Mary. My collage was
a mixture of familiar iconography with a few different “versions” combined into one image—she floated above the sea, supported by cherubim and standing on a crescent moon, wearing blue and white, with a crown on her head. It gave me a chance to ask Simon about Mary, and the perceived divide between popular Catholicism and the adoration of Mary and the saints, and the more philosophical/academic, and seemingly more legalistic, Catholicism of the seminarians and clergy and of the Vatican at its most bureaucratic.

I suggested that maybe the seminarians don’t have much room for hagiography—they are so busy with the philosophical side of theology. Simon spoke in defense of BOTH sides: theology is about ALL these things, he told me—the philosophy, the hagiography, the history, the pastoral, everything. In the old days, it was just about being able to say the mass in Latin, but now it is more about being an ambassador to the faith, communicating the Church’s values to everyone. Some people—other seminarians, or those on the outside? Simon didn’t say—see university or particular courses as just a hurdle to pass. But Simon sees it as formation, taking intellectual shape. And being able to speak with the voice of one who has learned.

I offered a critique of evangelical Christianity in America for not having a strong intellectual tradition, and I expressed my respect for the Catholic tradition of apologetics and reason. Simon agreed that it was a proper and noble use of reason to explain that you believe and why you believe.

James: “Take rationalism as far as you can, and then take the leap of faith of faith at the end. You don’t try to leap over the widest part of the gap when you could get to the narrow place and leap.”

Simon: “…just like someone has a flashlight, and they are in darkness, why not use the torch…?”

I asked Simon if he had a favorite saint, to which he responded, “Favorite saint? Naturally I do.”

James: “Is that a personal question, or…?”
Simon: “It’s not a personal question.”
James: “Will you share…?”
Simon: Maybe I don’t have… I was given one—since I was given Simon, I—my love became for Simon. I didn’t want to… But apart from that, I have this personal devotion is for St. Anthony of Padua…”
James: “Or Lisboa…”
Simon: OK, thank you for being (???) (a little sarcasm in Simon’s voice). I know it’s Lisboa, but…we know him as St. Anthony of Padua…”

On his phone, Simon showed me and read aloud a text message from someone for whom he prayed and lit a candle at Anthony’s birthplace in Lisbon. Simon indeed seems very devoted to, and passionate about, Anthony. “So, that’s my…it’s not my patron saint. My patron saint is St. Simon, the zealot, which is the 8th of October. But I also have some devotion to St. Anthony of Padua, because my mother was a member of the group, and…she had blessed me, and she blesses me a lot, so… I joined it (the church) because of her.” Simon described St. Anthony’s role as one who helps in difficult situations. Anthony helped him decide to enter the priesthood, and guided him to Portugal. Turning the table on the “interviewer,” Simon asked me if Anglicans
have as much of a commitment to the Saints. I explained that Anglicans show more attention to the New Testament saints, less to the medieval (or modern) saints. But there are devotions to those latter, too—I went to St. David’s, named after the Welsh saint. I suggest that the roles of saints ossified after the split with Catholicism—“There’s not really a process of canonization in the Anglican church” I told him, which may be oversimplifying things but is essentially true.

Simon and I continued our conversation as I gathered my bags and went out the door, rode a bus to Aliados and scanned books furiously for half an hour. That conversation got increasingly quotidian, however, and so we drift away, perhaps taking a moment to give final hugs before I leave in Paula’s car, leaving Simon at the curb by the internet café in Aliados. Two days later I’d be back in the U.S.A., in time for Texas’s worst heat wave in years. But still, it was good to reunite with my children, and reconcile with my wife—even if I sometimes felt I’d left a piece of myself behind in Porto—maybe even an essential piece.

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From my perspective, there were two major manifestations of African Catholicism(s) in Porto, with little in common beyond their continent of origin and relative youth, but somehow intersecting in the midst of the very White parish and congregation of Antas. Surely, though, this intersection, along with Padre Bacelar’s high profile and association with higher ed, was bound to attract my attention eventually. I have to wonder how many other groups of African Catholics might have been around, worshipping together, but never coming to my attention. For that matter, how many African Catholics may have worshipped in congregations that were otherwise completely European? Some may have done so because they weren’t aware of other options; but others were ambivalent to the idea of worshipping with other Africans. In one case, a Nigerian shopkeeper was openly hostile to the African patrons of the centro comercial in which his shop was located, and that contempt seemed to extend into his religious life as a Catholic—he was no more interested in fellowship with other Africans at church than he was in comradery in and around the workplace.

My point is this: I went looking for African Catholics, and I found two groups of them. But I would not be the slightest bit surprised to find out that I missed other groups, maybe even larger groups, because I found my way to Antas first. In any case, the contrast between these two groups was striking: Africanto, comprised of devout young students, but nonetheless mostly laypeople, and all from PALOP countries; and the Espiritans, also in the country for higher education, but all on their way to the priesthood, and almost all from non-Portuguese speaking regions of Africa.

With some definite, individual exceptions, I don’t think Africanto made much of a connection with the Portuguese congregation they were ostensibly a part of. But the opportunity to spend time together, to practice and sing together, and to cook familiar foods together and eat together—these things seemed to offer great rewards to young people who might otherwise have been lonely, isolated, even alienated in their day-to-day undergraduate lives.

Meanwhile, the Espiritan brothers were living and studying together at the volition of their order, more than through any choices they made. Certainly, I suppose, they made their individual decisions to become Spiritans in the first place, and strengthened their spiritual ties to
their home continent by way of this choice. Still, I never got the impression that any of the Spiritans originally expected to be sent to Portugal, where they are much more isolate than they would have been in France, or the U.K. In every Spiritan interview that I was able to conduct, the call to go to Portugal was an odd surprise, and while they rose to the challenge, one wonders if there are brothers who say “no” to the same call. It also seemed like the Spiritans were not particularly pleased by Portuguese attitudes, though perhaps they were just venting because they weren’t able to complain to the Portuguese themselves, nor would it have been appropriate to speak ill of their hosts to one another. I’m not sure which sin that would be—relatively mild wrath, perhaps—but it does seem like it might be unbecoming of a future man of the cloth. Even then, I imagine that a fourth year seminarian might confide such dissatisfactions to his colleagues more readily than a caloiro. And any of them might share their stresses with me, an outsider in so many ways not just to their culture but to the host culture as well.

The most glaring lacuna in my research is that I did not see any of the poorer immigrants, or the older immigrants, in any of the circles I was invited into. Going back to the assimilado system, I wonder to what extent participation in the church is still a marker of upward mobility in PALOP countries? And going back to the idea of invisibility, I wonder if it is easier for a student like myself to encounter, and relate to, other students, whereas a Cabo-Verdean construction worker or Bissau-guinean warehouse employee might never cross my path long enough to say hello. There’s still so much to learn about in this area…

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A few years after I left Porto, Padre Antonio Bacelar left as well. In 2014, he was elected leader of the global community of priests in the Focolare movement, and from what I see on the internet he seems to have relocated to a Focolare community on the outskirts of Rome soon thereafter to begin his new responsibilities. I consider adding the Padre to my Facebook friends, and I know he would be forgiving about my failings as a husband and my disagreements with his Church’s doctrines. Still, I haven’t reestablished contact. I am not Catholic, when all is said and done, and I am least Catholic of all, I admit, on social media.

Still, I am in touch with Joseph on Facebook. The Spiritans sent Joseph home to Kenya to begin his ministry after he had graduated. I see some of my friends from Africanto on Facebook as well—Pedro from Guinea Bissau, for example, is working for the Bissau-Guinean government and still painting; he seems to be thriving in his home country, with his Portuguese partner and a new baby. Africanto itself may have folded, or at least may not have a regular gig anywhere—the last evidence of an Africanto performance that I can find goes back to 2012. Hopefully, other structures have arisen to make African students in Porto feel like they have a community. Many may not need such a community, but some undoubtedly do.

Despite the cultural specificities introduced by Vatican II, the Catholic Church remains liturgically and doctrinally interconnected across continents. Part succor and part charism, the Church stayed a major element of the lives and identities of Africanto students, and they found support in their shared faith during what could be a stressful and isolating time. For the Spiritan brothers from Africa, the Church was the prime mover, without whose influence they would not have found themselves in Portugal at all, and once they arrived, they may have found parts of
Portuguese culture alienating, but they also learned to love parts of it as well, and in the end their future ministries will be shaped by a certain Portuguese flavor.
Secular Institutions, Charismatic Individuals, and the Serendipity of the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Thus far most of this writing has sought to analyze the formation of immigrant communities around churches and mosques. But not everyone is religious—some immigrants may want to spend some time with people who share some of the same background, the same tastes, the same languages—but not want to deal with altar calls, baptisms, hymns, and the rest. From my first visit to Porto, I already had an idea of where some such community building might take place: Espaço Moçambique was theoretically supposed to be a place for Mozambicans, and other Africans as well, to gather for cultural events. It was an ambitious goal, and a goal that ultimately fell short in ways that were in large part tied to enduring colonial power dynamics, even 30 years after Mozambican independence.

Espaço Moçambique

I came to Porto in summer, 2006, with Berkeley’s summer study abroad group. This program was designed exquisitely by Berkeley’s Deolinda Adao, with as much time—maybe more time—spent on experiential learning as on classroom learning. We wandered the neighborhoods of Porto—both ancient and modern—with academics and specialists sharing their areas of expertise. One afternoon’s educational excursion took us through the heart of the oldest neighborhood of Porto, the Sé. In the neighborhood, buildings have come and gone over the centuries, but it has maintained the narrow streets and stairways that are characteristic of architecture from a pre-automotive age. If one needs to drive a car or truck into the Sé, one has limited options, but if one is on foot and can handle some ups and some downs, almost every potential path becomes open. The Sé has a reputation for being a high crime area; I don’t have statistics to confirm or dispute this, but subjectively I never felt particularly at risk within its bounds.

That summer, my research was still fully centered on Mozambicans in Porto, and additionally, one of my Berkeley colleagues and friends was a Mozambican undergraduate who was in Porto to prepare for his own future graduate studies. His wife, too, was part of our group—though American, she’d spent two years in the Peace Corp in Mozambique and met her husband there. The three of us were therefore excited to stumble across the Espaço in a courtyard towards the western end of the Sé. What caught our attention first was a plaque on its outside wall commemorating the Espaço’s opening (attended by Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano), and featuring the country’s distinctive outline. We went in—we couldn’t imagine not doing so—and though it was quiet that day and we had little time to stay, we met Teófilo Silva, the Chairman of the Board (o Presidente da Direcção) of the Associação Portugal-Moçambique, which runs the Espaço. Teófilo invited us to come back for a dinner at the Espaço a couple days later. Eduardo, Rebecca and I did in fact return for dinner, and we were surprised to find that a member of the American Diplomatic Corps, on his way to a posting in Mozambique, was joining us for dinner. The food was excellent; the conversation, when it was in English, was wonderful as well (at this point, I was still barely a year into learning Portuguese, so I was particularly lost
when the conversation switched to that language). It was a perfect night, and I looked forward to visiting the Espaço with some frequency when I returned to Porto with the family.

Over a year later, when I did return, we tried to stop by Espaço Moçambique on one of the family’s first visits to the central part of Porto. It was a weekend day, in the mid-afternoon, but late enough for those shops that closed for an afternoon break to have reopened. It felt like a good day for the Espaço to be open—in addition to being a place for events and dinners, the space also had a bar and served coffees, so it was a fine destination for those who just wanted an afternoon beverage. But not on this day; it was closed, and while it didn’t look “CLOSED” for good, there was also no indication of when we could come back and find things open. Admittedly, my Portuguese was not strong enough at that point to speak on the phone, so I would have to speak face to face with people at the Espaço if I hoped to make an appointment to speak Teófilo, or with anyone who had a leadership role—or, for that matter, with anyone who might be willing to have a conversation with me. The frustration of always finding the Espaço inaccessible actually contributed to the expansion of my research to communities wider and more diverse than just Mozambicans. If it was going to be so difficult to find Mozambicans in Porto, even with a possible axis of community here, then it was better for me to widen my perspective.

Finally, I wandered by the Espaço one day in November, some two months after we’d come to Porto. Teófilo was there that day, but didn’t have any time to chat. He urged me to come back for a Saturday night dinner at the end of the month, and recalling the wonderful dinner and conversation from the previous year, I eagerly anticipated the event. When the day came around, though, it was—not exactly a letdown, but very different; certainly not what I’d expected. Instead of a room full of Mozambican guests, I was confronted with a crowd of White Portuguese—possibly retornados, but definitely a whiter group than I could have anticipated. The dinner was good, and the conversation, what I could understand of it, was pleasant, but even to the extent that there were two or three African attendees (outnumbered by the Whites at least two to one), I was seated far from the people I was most interested in meeting and getting to know, the people that Espaço Moçambique was ostensibly here to serve.

Months later, in an interview with Carolina, one of the Espaço employees, we talked about these dinners. They happened practically every Saturday, and by the time of this conversation I had attended a couple more and determined that they were probably all similar in attendance and in atmosphere. Carolina, a Mozambican in her early twenties, was a dentistry student, and her family in Mozambique was solidly middle class—she was glad to have the extra money from her job at the Espaço, but she was growing dissatisfied with her work environment, and it tied in in certain ways to the dinners that had me feeling disenchanted. While Teófilo Silva was the President of the Espaço, he answered to the board of the Associação Portugal-Moçambique, which as best I could tell did only a few things beyond the Espaço—e.g. occasional fund-raising for Mozambican charities, and the occasional maintenance of the association’s website, which is mostly about the Espaço but also includes a newsfeed with Mozambican current events and a good number of ads. The association’s board was composed, as best I could tell, primarily of White Portuguese—some retornados, but in at least one case a pivotal member of the board was involved because he had business interests in Mozambique—not personal history.
These, then, along with their friends and spouses, were the attendees that dominated the dinners at the Espaço, and at least one of these board members was micromanaging Carolina to the point of leaving. “The way he talks. The things that he does. Like if you want to call me attention of something (reprimand me) you can pull me aside and not shout at me in front of many people. It’s even worse when it’s not something that I did wrong.”21 Her examples were situations where various pieces of equipment had broken down, and the board member berated her for not fixing them, when this was a job for a repairperson and not the bartender/barrista. “I said, ‘Besides that, I don’t live for this. I am here to study. I live from my parent’s money, my scholarship, and my life is studying. It is not this. If I, if I lived for this, it would be different. I don’t live for this, though. If you want me to respect you, you better respect me.’”

James: “There are a lot of those old retornado guys that are perfectly nice but there is definitely a little feeling of…”

Carolina: “Discrimination?”

James: “…colonial-”

Carolina: “…yeah…”

James: “–ismo.”

Carolina: “They think they are better.”

James: “It is weird because the whole point of this place is supposed to be about the camaraderie and connection between two countries and they still haven’t quite gotten the message.”

Carolina: “He hasn’t quite got the message…”

Carolina justified her indignation by calling attention to her education, her middle-class background, and her family’s ability to support her if she were to quit—at this point, that was practically a fait accompli. I was uncomfortable to hear this—it felt like she was willing to abandon poorer, less privileged immigrants to the type of discrimination and low-level abuse that she was unwilling to accept for herself. But I wasn’t exactly in a position to call Carolina out on her lack of solidarity. I did my best to steer the conversation in a direction that felt better to my lefty American sensibilities:

James: “I mean…he probably thinks that you’re Isabel (another, less privileged employee of the Espaço), and that’s not fair too. Isabel doesn’t have the…didn’t have the education you have, you know, or…a lot of other things…”

Carolina: “That is the point…”

James: “…but, I don’t care, he still owes her respect and he owes you respect. And it’s not appropriate.”

Carolina: “That’s the point. That is what I said to Teófilo’s wife. And I told Teófilo too, I said, I am not those other girls you are used to have working here. It is different. You have to respect me so that I can respect you. And by the end of the month I am going away. But you have to pay me; I will come back and take my money.”

21 Quotes are from interview with Carolina on 5/14/2008.
It is frustrating to hear Carolina—who was charming and funny; one of the most pleasant people I interviewed during my fieldwork—stick with her position of exceptionalism. But what else did she have in this work relationship? Her family may have been well-off by Mozambican standards, but she was still a struggling college student in the eyes of the affluent board member with whom she was at odds, and this on top of her youth, her gender, and her race, left Carolina at a seemingly insurmountable disadvantage in any conflict with her employer. She was already resigned to leaving Espaço Moçambique, which must have been a difficult and a sad decision to have to make—it must have seemed like the perfect job when she first arrived in Porto. At least she would leave clutching her dignity, which would necessitate identifying her privilege and flaunting it in her final interactions with the hostile board member. We grasp for dignity where we can find it.

My conversation with Carolina went on, returning to the oddity of the Saturday night dinners:

James: “It’s just a bummer because…you know, this idea here, is such an excellent idea and yet somehow it’s just been taken over by the retornados. You know, like, the last time I came when they cancelled the immigration forum the first time\(^{22}\), there were all these, you know, Black Mozambicans and Angolans and people from all over. And all the people who came for the Immigration Colloquium were, you know, ready to have an amazing conversation and when it came down to dinnertime, then it was the same old, you know, good ol’ boys.”

Carolina: “Yeah. But you know why that, why that is like that?”

James: “Well, ‘cause of the money for one thing.”

Carolina: “Yeah, because most of….”

James: “The cost of eating dinner is….”

Carolina: “Yeah, most of the African people that are here…are students…”

James: “I can hardly afford to…sit down and eat dinner and, you know, after—a couple of them with the guys there, then, I think I have had enough dinners, anyway…. (we laugh) I mean, sometimes there are some really nice people that come to the dinners. You know, usually, some of the women are very nice and, and…have a, a different kind of empathy for—”

Carolina: “…yeah…”

James: “—for what is going on, but…. And then, you know, that said, some of the guys are really nice too, but… It’s just very strange to be at this place which is supposed to be, kind of set aside for Mozambicans, and…you know. And I know that a lot of the retornados think of themselves as Mozambican…”

Carolina: “…umm-hmm…”

\(^{22}\) An immigration forum had been booked at the Espaço on more than one occasion, and then cancelled. On the afternoon to which I refer, cancellation came at literally the last moment—ironically, leaving a crowd assembled with nothing to do but network…
James: “…you know, or Angolan or wherever they were from before they…came back in ’75, but…they need to get over it…. Thirty years later.”

Carolina: “…It’s like, ah, ‘We have dinners and things like that; you should talk to your friends.’ I do talk to my friends; I do tell my friends…. But if they can’t afford to come, then they won’t come…. My friends can’t pay, they don’t come and I can’t do nothing about it. It’s their choice. They are the ones that know.”

The retornados seemed to want the authenticity of having more “real” Africans at their dinners. I use quotes because so many retornados like to identify themselves as African, and yet this group was conscious enough of a distinction to ask Carolina to invite friends to attend. As far as my own attendance went, I don’t think I went to another dinner at the Espaço after this discussion. Carolina did in fact quit soon after we spoke, and I didn’t come around much thereafter—once or twice for special events, and once to interview Marisa. On the weekend before June 25, the Associação Portugal-Moçambique celebrated Mozambique’s Independence Day. The Associação booked the event at a restaurant in east Porto, an area that I’d not spent much time in outside of visits to Antas and to the giant mall and grocery store next to the soccer stadium. I think the choice of a different venue for this event was in anticipation of a large crowd, and the crowd was in fact overflowing the 2nd floor dining room where we gathered. It would be my last time to see Teófilo Silva, Rosália, Lourenço, and many of the retorno crowd. It was odd, saying goodbye to the Espaço so far from the actual espaço, but it was also good to see the number of younger Mozambicans who came out to celebrate their country’s independence. At the very end of my studies, I finally found a critical mass of Mozambicans, all in one place. Too late to ask questions, but nice anyway to hear them raise their voices and sing their country’s anthem together.

While Espaço Moçambique was not the gateway to a unified, organized Mozambican expat community I had imagined before my family arrived, it certainly was my first and probably my most fruitful source for leads, with the exception perhaps of my curious eyes and roving feet. Teófilo at the Espaço first told me about the African mass at Antas; Marissa was my initial source of information on Reino de Deus. But it was a combination of the Espaço and my curiosity that helped me to find Paulo.

Paulo

Not far from the center of town in Porto is a massive park, the Jardins do Palácio Cristal. On many occasions, when the weather was nice, M., Ada, Oscar and I went to the park to pass a half a day or more. The grounds are sprawling—there is a large dome-shaped arena, the Pavilhão Rosa Mota, in the center of the park, with a small café/concessions stand behind it, and peacocks roaming beside a charming pond. There are walking trails, a large playground, and then from some points there is a beautiful view of the Douro and the wine caves of Vila Nova de Gaia on the far side. At the edges of the park are the Port wine tasting center, and the library.

One afternoon on an unseasonably warm day in January or February, we were wrapping up a visit to the park, headed towards the exit, when we noticed a few people wandering in groups of twos, threes, or fours towards the library. Several of these people were African, some
dressed in “African” clothing—dashikis, African print dresses, et al. This kind of dress was extremely unusual in the streets of Porto; there would be no question, I think, of invisibility if Africans in Porto regularly dressed in these bright colors and overtly African designs. M. and I immediately got the sense that there was a kind of performativity going on here—that something was going on which made it particularly appropriate to show one’s African-ness, beyond the markers of race that are inescapable in Porto and moving into voluntary markers of pride and perhaps solidarity that arise from a shared geographic and historical background. Wherever people were going, it was highly relevant to my research, and since I’d still not really come to know most of the congregations that would eventually keep me busy, the possibility of a new lead was that much more exciting. I am a bit embarrassed to say that we turned Oscar’s stroller and started following one African couple, a man and woman in their late 30s or 40s. We kept to a discrete distance, and we didn’t have to stalk the couple long before they led us to Porto’s library. We went in, and saw that the couple and the others were passing through the library into its auditorium, where an event had already begun. A table just outside the auditorium had postcards, bookmarks, and a poster or two that made it clear that we were on the verge of crashing a book release for *A Nudez Cristalina de Susana*, by an author named Paulo Seco. A book release—with, one would assume, a reading—was a complicated event for us to barge in on. The kids had been playing on the playground, and in Ada’s case walking around, for hours. They were tired, hungry, and liable to get cranky at any moment. I considered—if my community had only a very rare opportunity to come together, if this was important enough to bring out the best clothes and celebrate, then maybe we shouldn’t intrude. On top of everything else, our family was dressed for outdoor playground frolicking, not for networking. I took a couple of postcards and bookmarks, and regretfully the family and I left the library to go catch the bus home.

A week or two later, though, I caught word of an immigration forum to be held at Espaço Moçambique—this was the first of several unsuccessful attempts to have this forum, as mentioned above. By the time I arrived at the Espaço, the event was already cancelled, but a few disappointed attendees stood around, some drinking beer or coffee, talking among themselves. I probably got a beer for myself—I don’t remember, but it seems likely—and I stepped into the crowd, looking for familiar faces. I was very pleased to see Teófilo Silva there, and when I stepped up to say hi, Teófilo introduced me to Paulo Seco.

Paulo Seco is Angolan by birth, but has lived in Portugal for almost all of his adult life. When I met Paulo, he was in his early thirties, with three books of poetry published already as well as *A Nudez Cristalina de Susana*, which is described in Portuguese as a “romance.” While Seco’s publisher gave the book a sexy cover to match the sexy title—*The Crystalline Nakedness of Susana* in English—the genre of “romance” in Portuguese corresponds less to Harlequin bodice-rippers and more to the standard genre of the novel. Seco’s themes of reconnection with nature in *Susana* are not categorically romantic in the American sense, though they certainly could be if the author wished.

Meeting Paulo for the first time, I explained that we’d come very close to attending his book release (leaving out the stalking of his audience), and I told him a bit about my research. I noticed almost immediately that Paulo Seco is dripping with charisma—he is quite handsome, and he is a wonderful conversationalist, ready to discuss just about anything. For someone who has been so productive in his creativity, who has so many ideas and thoughts ready to come forth
into the world, Paulo is always as eager to hear what others have on their mind as he is to talk about himself and his life.

For all of these reasons, Paulo Seco has a lot of friends. Portuguese friends, African friends, friends from many other countries and continents—I met a lot of Paulo’s friends in the next few months, and I found that not only did he have such a substantial group of people who held him in such high regard, but also that they were all pleasant, charming, gracious people themselves. I am sure that Paulo Seco knows some people who are not so great—Doesn’t everybody? Isn’t that part of being a fully social human being?—but none of the folks I recall meeting were anything but delightful.

Paulo’s circle of friends and acquaintances stretches into almost every corner that my own research touched upon in Porto. He was friends with folks at the mosque, with people in Africanto, and with worshippers at Nova Criação and IMAP. One gets the impression at times that a map of relationships between Africans in Porto would resemble a spider web with Paulo in the center, where the webs converge.

I interviewed Paulo at a noisy café in Porto’s historic Bolhão market, on March 31, 2008. He was ready to answer just about any question, but I kept circling back around to religion. Paulo has a lot to say on the subject, but in retrospect I wish I’d asked more about his life as an artist and less about his churchgoing habits.

Paulo grew up Catholic, though he decided in his adulthood that he wasn’t going to be a “practicant” anymore. His father worked for a mission in Angola, and he was educated there, and even considered a seminary education at one point. Some of his family has also left the church, some switching to “Japanese philosophy, Buddhism” or other unnamed beliefs or practices. While Paulo’s parents were devoted during his childhood, he got the impression that his grandparents converted to Catholicism only “part of the way,” with the intention of moving up socially in then colonial Angola.

Paulo claims to have many friends who are observant, including some who are priests or even monks. Knowing Paulo, I don’t doubt this; he has a great capacity to discuss ideas—including religious ideas—with passion but not antagonism. He centers his own criticism of the Catholic Church on his belief that there is widespread sexual incontinence among the clergy. This is not a complaint about sexual abuse by the priesthood, but rather, that “…you can find more than 50% of the priests and the sitting bishops have a child.” Despite his critique of Catholic hypocrisy, Paulo maintains a generally positive outlook about religion: “I think it’s important, the religion—even the Catholicism—that, they give the way to be in the world; to live. The secret to me is to follow the values; that’s good.”

Paulo lays the blame for religion’s flaws on bad interpretations of essentially good teachings, whether in the Bible, the Koran, or elsewhere; according to Paulo, “…interpretation, the rules of interpretation…everytime, is dangerous…” I countered this statement, speaking of religious leaders who were active in liberation movements, like MLK, Malcolm X, Desmond Tutu, and while Paulo acknowledged the strength these leaders drew from their own interpretations of their scriptures, he comes across as impatient with the worst of religion and disinterested in trying to find the good in it. He is more focused on the good in humans. And yet
still, at the invites of friends, Paulo may well have attended more churches in Porto than anyone who was not themselves a student of religion. He has been to Catholic services, Jehovah’s Witness meetings, Mormon services, various Pentecostal gatherings, mediation groups…. It seems that Paulo’s *modus operandi* involves staying open to new experiences; this is why I found him so fascinating and charming.

**Novo Ambiante**

I have mentioned the Café Novo Ambiante before. This little café and bar, just a block or two from the Reitoria of the University of Porto, was owned and operated by Cabo Verdians, and was a good place to get a bowl of Cabo Verdean *cachupa* or Angolan *muamba*. As tasty as the food was, Paulo liked Novo Ambiante as a place to meet friends on a Saturday night, sometimes as a terminal destination but other times as the place to get a bellyful of food and a couple of drinks before going out for a club night. More on this later. For now, I choose to linger on the café.

Nova Ambiante was not much more of an “African” restaurant during the week, from what I saw. On occasion, I’d walk past and take a look at the clientele, but unlike other cafés which we will also discuss later, Nova Ambiante’s weekday “crowd” was an average-looking group of Portuguese diners and coffee drinkers. On Saturday nights, though, not only did many of Paulo Seco’s African friends come out—along with his friends from Portugal and elsewhere—but there seemed to be a tourist element that found their way to the little café, despite its out-of-the-way location on a side street. In addition to the delicious food, Saturday nights saw performances by a “band”—two men from Cabo Verde, one in his 20s, the other in his 40s, played guitar, sang, and encouraged the crowd to sing as well. Some of what they played was, best I could tell, Cabo Verdean music—standards, perhaps? Something that seemed to appeal to older Cabo Verdians as much as younger? The band also played other songs, though, and tried, usually quite successfully, to get the audience to join in, to dance, and even to sing a number. In order to get the audience on board they included Bob Marley songs, and “La Bamba,” and “Guantanamera,” When it was my turn to sing one night, I sang a mash-up of “La Bamba” (the band took this part) with “Twist and Shout” (I know this one—it’s pretty easy, of course) that went over quite well.

For Paulo, his friends, and other Africans in Porto who want to enjoy some time together, Saturday night at Novo Ambiante is perhaps as much a moment and place for community to gather as any church on Sunday morning. At the little café, a Cabo Verdean can hear Kriolu lyrics sung to familiar melodies; and a Cabo Verdean or Angolan can savor at least one dish from home. I’ve been a Texan far from home, and I can attest to the restorative power of hearing country music in Zimbabwe or India; I can speak to the cravings for enchiladas or even refried beans wrapped in a fresh flour tortilla. Music and food are powerful conduits of memory, and as such, they connect us to home.

**Club Night**
Most of the Saturday nights that I went to Novo Ambiante with Paulo, it was our ultimate destination. But one Saturday Paulo called and suggested that we should go clubbing that night. At 37, with two kids, I sometimes felt that my all night party days were numbered, if not already passed. Sometimes you have to *carpe the noctem*, though, if you want to put yourself in position to be steamrolled by epiphanies. Of course I said yes.

I met Paulo at the Casa de Musica metro stop about 8:30 that night. It was still early May, and so the sun had already set by this time, but Porto had become a very comfortable place for me, even alone at night; in the company of friends, it felt like the town belonged to us. Paulo and I walked towards a bus stop, intending to take a bus towards the city center, but as we were walking Paulo’s friend Aurelio called. He was close to where we were—at this moment, we were on the edge of the great roundabout called the Rotunda de Boavista, which was among other things something of a transit hub. Aurelio drove straightaway to the rotunda and picked us up, and brought us to Novo Ambiante.

It was a classic Saturday night at the café; quite a few patrons were crowded into the relatively narrow dining room. I scanned the crowd, listening for accents and tells that might tell me more about this diverse group. There were several college-age women and men, most likely Portuguese, one with White-boy dreadlocks, a couple others with a labored look of coolness that would be identified more and more frequently, in the years immediately following, with “hipsters.” A table over from the college kids sat a Swiss couple—my notes describe them as Swiss repeatedly, so I must have confirmed this somehow. The couple was comprised of an older man of perhaps 55 or 60 years, well dressed, with his dining companion, a sturdy woman of about 40. When the band was playing, the Swiss man waved his head side to side with the music in a decidedly non-soulful but charming way. Another man near the Swiss couple looked very Swiss as well—he had a hat, an ascot, and a moustache—this man was about 50 years old and looked to me like he could have been the head of the Porto Jung society.

One facet of Novo Ambiante’s—ambiance—was that it could be hard on a Saturday night to distinguish between customers and the people that worked there and/or the owners. When the band was playing, some folks were on their feet and dancing almost the entire night, while others went from table to table chatting with other regulars. On this particular night there was a large, powerful-looking man in attendance, who might easily have been Cabo Verdean and who was practically a third member of the band—sitting in on several songs and hitting high notes after the fashion of a Frankie Valli or Aaron Neville. Another couple present, a woman and man—looked like they might also be from Cabo Verde; the woman was dancing almost all evening, even “making” me dance on my way back from the restroom. I am not a very good dancer AT ALL, but I am always flattered to be asked, and I tried my best to muster my meager reserves of coordination. This woman’s main dance partner for the evening had slicked back hair, but at one point he was showing pictures to our table of himself in an earlier era—the 70s, perhaps?—with a large Afro haircut, practicing karate.

After a while, we were joined at the café by another friend of Paulo and Aurelio, another Angolan named Marco, a student of International Relations at Fernando Pessoa University. Paulo, Aurelio and Marco danced a bit, and occasionally sang. The band would ask audience members where they were from (if they didn’t already know), and when they could they’d try to
play a song from that country or region. For Aurelio, from Cuba, they played “Guantanamera” and attempted to get Aurelio to sing, but he was resistant so they did the song without him.

Sometime after midnight, Paulo suggested that we go to another club which played African music. After about 20 minutes of hemming and hawing, Paulo, Aurelio, Marco and I gathered ourselves and said our farewells, and we went in Aurelio’s car to Porto’s “Industrial Zone”, an area in the northeast part of town, towards the seaside “suburb” of Matosinhos, where old factories have been converted into a street or two of chique nightclubs. The area is still primarily industrial—when I was first in Porto with the Berkekley summer program, we visited the Porto HQ of the fashion line Onara. Our destination this night was a club called Sublime. Sublime had a doorman who was already friends with Paulo—I got the impression that I might not have made it through the exclusive doors of the club if I’d not been with everyone’s favorite poet. I’d already gotten a sense of Paulo’s expansive network of friends and acquaintances, but this night drove the point home: Paulo Seco sometimes seems to know EVERYBODY in Porto. He knows everyone at Novo Ambiente, and now it became clear that Paulo knows everyone at Sublime. Everyone that “counts,” anyway; doorpeople, owners, DJs—the people whose benevolence can make a pleasant evening into an unforgettable one. At Sublime, he got us in for the regular price, which is a VIP price given that a popular Cabo Verdean singer was scheduled to perform later that night, and most folks were paying extra to see her. On entering, we were given a quick scan with a handheld metal detector; many years later, searching for more info on the club online, I read news reports of young Angolan men who were shot in an altercation in front of the club a year after my visit.

Sublime has an upscale interior, lit by colored lights, with a few sparse furnishings—couches and tables, but mostly just open space for dancing and a large stage for live performances. Smoking had been effectively banned indoors as of the 1st of January by country-wide legislation, but by combination of loophole and ambiguity, Sublime seemed comfortable having a demarcated smoking section in a raised second room, which was not particularly separated except by being 120 or so millimeters higher than the rest of the club. The stage area was technically part of the smokers’ zone. There was also a pool table at the back of the smoking area. The club had two bars, and a large DJ stand where two DJs—one White, one Black—were playing unremarkable hip hop and R&B as we entered. There were two bartenders on duty; as with the DJs, one was Black and one White.

Upon arrival Paulo took us to join two women at a couch on one side of the room. At first, I thought that one was significantly older than the other, maybe even mother and daughter. I eventually decided that the “mother” was not so old, but the difference between the two was almost a comic exaggeration. Maria, the “mom”, was portly, with a darker complexion and a certain gravitas that was not as noticeable—at least, not as a first impression—in the other woman. Like Paulo, Maria was Angolan.

The other woman, Inês, was a skinny Cabo VerDean, with teeth that could do with some orthodonture, but otherwise she was very attractive, and Aurelio and Marco spent some time trying to find Inês’s good graces. Aurelio in particular spent the evening in pursuit of female attention, but at least he seemed good-natured—to the extent that I was able to observe, he focused his own attentions only on women who were mutually interested. Paulo seemed less interested in Inês, but he did some dancing and some flirting with Maria.

When we first entered Sublime, it was mostly empty; this was around 1:30 or 2:00 A.M. already. Paulo blamed queima, and perhaps I should not be so quick to dismiss this opinion from
someone who has much more experience in this scene, but it somehow seemed to me reflective of the late night aspect of Euro-partying. The DJs switched not long after we arrived to playing pop music from Africa and perhaps Brazil. The club eventually started to fill up—the mix was about 45% White to 55% African; I would say that there were more White women than White men—a lot more, in fact. There was not much interaction between Whites and Blacks that I perceived. There was also very little dancing, and what there was stayed on the margins of the room; nobody dared move to the center. I suspect that as the club got more full and the crowd got more drunk, eventually the dancing would have moved to the center. But instead of witnessing this, we left Sublime around 3 or 3:30. I thought we were going home, but instead Aurelio drove us around the block, to another club. It was late, and I was drawing upon my last reservoirs of energy, so it is not surprising that I did not write the name of the second club down. In fact—just speculating—this may have been an aspect of the “chique-ness”: if you belong with the beautiful people, you know the name of the place. Truly cool clubs don’t need to advertise. The club did, at least, proclaim itself an “Afrolatin” club. Inside, they were playing salsa music and the dancers, who were in no way reticent about claiming the dance floor, were reminding me of what an inadequate dancer I am. They were incredible! I wasn’t going to set foot on such a dance floor; instead, I watched Aurelio and Paulo dance. Paulo is an acceptable dancer—much better than I, but unremarkable in this club—but Aurelio is spectacular! While the club billed itself as “Afrolatino,” the clientele was less African here than it had been at Sublime—possibly an 80/20% split between Europeans and Africans. Also of note—as best I could see, all Black people in the club were men. At Sublime, there’d been a more equal distribution of men and women.

At some point Aurelio left the club—I think he told Paulo, but I did not find out until he was already gone. When I decided I was partied out, around 4:30 or 5:00 A.M., I left the club and went to the nearest bus stop to take the morning bus towards home. But Paulo called me while I was still in the neighborhood, waiting for a bus, and he convinced me to come back and share a taxi. And so I did.

Club night with Paulo Seco and his entourage showed me a different facet of African immigrant life in Porto, one which I will admit to already being a bit too old at the time to fully appreciate. Certainly, it would have been unseemly, not to mention impecunious, for this father of two, with my family on the other side of the ocean, to go clubbing with any regular frequency. An anthropological analysis of Porto’s club scene might be a fascinating undertaking for a younger or more glamorous anthropologist, but I am glad that I experienced it for at least a night. Are the clubs a site for community formation? The clubs are not necessarily a link to life back in Africa in the same way a church or mosque might be—though I am sure for some more affluent Africans in Porto the nightclub scene back home is replicated at least in some aspects by the scene in their new home. It does seem like there is a class divide at work here; the clubs are better suited for younger Africans with some resources available—students, or those who’ve found an entrepreneurial niche, perhaps. The age gap also affects community formation through clubbing in one practical way—an older fellow like myself cannot hear much of anything that is said in a noisy space like these. Even at Novo Ambiante, I was usually limited to conversation with those sitting just to one side or other of me. My observations at the nightclubs were all visual, with a very few exceptions where I asked people to shout the most important details, like names of new friends we met through our night. Still, church is no place to have a conversation, either—not until the service is over and everyone stands on the steps to catch up with one
another at the end of the week. Certainly, dancing together can be as good a way to create a relationship as praying together—for some types of relationships, dancing is a much faster and more efficient way of sparking a connection. Dancing also integrates sense memories of the body with those of the ears; like Muslim *salat*, dancing connects the dancer to others through shared movement and response to sound, and if there are layers of memory built into the music, or even just the beat or the language or the lyrics, the potential for bonding through shared memory and shared experience grows. Even the smells of cologne and cigarettes and the chemical dampness of a smoke machine, or the taste of liquor or a favorite beer, or the flashing lights of a dance floor—red and white laser-points refracted over a wooden dance floor—can be reminders of a disco back home, where one danced many nights through, and in provoking memories of home (especially in an environment with alcohol and other drugs), nostalgia can reinforce even more tenuous connections.

In a country with a very small African population, to see even a 1 to 4 ratio of Africans to Europeans (as at the Afrolatin club) seems indicative of some kind of bond being created or reinforced. Clubs like Sublime don’t market themselves as exclusively African clubs, but they find ways to signal a certain degree of “Africanness,” by hosting Africa nights, or dedicating evenings to *kuduro* (Angolan electronic dance music that was widely popular in Portugal in the late aughts). It would be good to talk to club owners and promoters about these strategies; my suspicion is that they are aimed at bringing in more Portuguese, rather than attracting more immigrants, who are certainly a smaller share of the market. Like reggae, or even American rock and roll, African music and dance are exotic for young White Portuguese, and maybe even a bit dangerous-feeling. Ironically, though, this appeal to the neo-colonial urges of the Portuguese creates an environment that is fertile ground for Africans to gather, to meet, to share, to connect, and to bond.

**CulturÁfrica**

My first sit-down with Paulo, at the end of March, was also my first time hearing about an event to eventually be known as CulturÁfrica. At the time of our interview, in March, he talked about some difficulties and clashes of personalities the organizing committee was having. Some—Paulo was in this group—wanted CultureÁfrica to be a kind of rallying point for political awareness and collective action in his community. More conservative committee members pressed to have the event be more of an apolitical exposition. The latter group ended up getting their way, and while there was probably a missed opportunity here, things turned out quite well. The CulturÁfrica organizers were a consortium of groups and individuals from many different African countries—PALOP and non-PALOP—which eventually came to call itself “África no Coração do Porto.” CulturÁfrica would be a celebration of Africa Day (May 25 is the day that the foundation of the Organisation of African Unity is celebrated in many countries and by many in the African diaspora). With the stresses of saying goodbye to my family in April, and the acceleration of my research with the churches and the mosque that happened immediately thereafter, the imminence of Africa Day slipped my mind until, just a few days before, Paulo reminded me of the upcoming event.
May 25, the actual date of Africa Day, was a Sunday. CulturÁfrica was to run from Thursday through Saturday, with any number of speeches, lectures, performances, and other events scheduled on the main stage in the great open hall of Mercado Ferreira Borges, a historic and iconic building not far from the riverfront, in the center of Porto’s most tourist-oriented area. On Saturday, there was a fashion show. Meanwhile, tables and booths were set up exhibit-hall-style throughout. Some, such as Sylvie, sold products of particular interest to African immigrants. Others, like Pedro from Africanto, showed their artwork. There was food to be had as well, though I was feeling particularly poor at this point and did not indulge.

CulturÁfrica was in theory a way to present immigrant culture to the Portuguese while also presenting an opportunity for immigrants to network:

“With this initiative we intend to make known the African continent at its best and to set new goals and, above all, to stimulate our creative and entrepreneurial capacities…. We…wish to celebrate the ties established between Africa and Europe, ties which Portugal has shown so well in promoting and hosting the Europa-Africa summit. In this way, we also want to reenvision our decision to continue traversing this common courtyard into which we have been placed by history and destiny. The historical moments that united us in the past are now a resource to help us understand our trajectory, register and understand its definitive consequences, and from there, to face the challenges that confront us today, especially in the fields of social and cultural inclusion that are absolutely necessary in an increasingly global world in which we live.” (África no Coração do Porto 2008:3)

While CulturÁfrica might have thought itself as outward-facing as inward, it certainly appeared to be dominated by Africans—both in the crowd and in the booths—with very little involvement from the Portuguese community at large. This was not a negative thing by any means; it put Africans from many different parts of the continent, speakers of many different languages, believers of many different faiths (and non-believers, too) into a space where they could exchange ideas and information with remarkable facility. I came away from the weekend with a dozen new contacts myself. Even in the run-up to the event, leadership of immigrant groups, individual community leaders like Paulo, and civic organizations like Porto’s Camera Municipal worked together to make things happen, and while they may have butted heads, as Paulo did with the board, ultimately the experience created closer ties between all that might conceivably lead to cooperation in more mundane matters.

I met so many new people at CulturÁfrica—I’ve already described meeting the choir and leadership of the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto, and Sylvie as well. I met leaders from the Cabo Verdone community, too, including Leonor, who was a force in organizing the event. As best I could observe, Leonor was involved throughout most of the weekend in keeping the schedule running on time, getting performers and speakers situated, happy and ready to take the podium, and general logistics that made the event quite successful for everyone with whom I spoke. She was also the public face of África no Coração do Porto, serving at the maestrada dos ceremonios/presentadora throughout. As she describes it, she was all but pressed into service by Martin, the head of the Cabo Verdon Association in Porto: “(He) said ‘Where’s your pride? Woman, we need you!’”23 Leonor is a hospitality professional—she holds an undergraduate degree and a masters in tourism management, and she was at the time managing a very nice Porto hotel; she’s since moved back to Cabo Verde after two decades or more in Portugal, and

23 Quotes are from interview with Leonor on 6/9/2008.
she is making what I would guess is a comfortable living in the tourism sector there. CulturÁfrica’s success was in large part a reflection of Leonor’s professionalism and grace.

Leonor was connected to several groups of Africans in Porto: She knew Paulo enough to poke gentle fun at what I was starting to gather was his reputation as a ladies’ man. When I mentioned to Leonor that Paulo and I had gone clubbing at Sublime, she asked, smiling, if he’d taken me there “to see the sportswear models, no?” As mentioned above, she was also on good terms with the guys at the Associação Cabo-Verdiana do Norte de Portugal, and then Leonor’s mother, who also lives in Porto, was a regular attendee at the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto.

I wondered about the Cabo Verdean experience in Portugal—if the relative historical depth of the Cabo Verdean immigrant presence in the country put them on a much different path than immigrants from elsewhere in Africa. And are there divisions and fissures in the Cabo Verdean diaspora? I asked Leonor some of these questions. Do Cabo Verdeans in Portugal tend to identify more closely with others from their own island, or is the Cabo Verdean identity stronger than factionalisms that might have been important at home? “There is less distinction,” Leonor told me; maybe some feeling of division based on language differences—“the language always creates some…island culture…”, but people see themselves as Cape Verdean, “they have to stick together, to be strong.” Beyond Cabo Verde, I wondered if there were significant divisions between Cabo Verdeans and other Africans from former Portuguese colonies, especially those on the mainland, that developed from divergent colonial histories and experiences. Leonor acknowledges these divergences of experience, explaining to me that the Portuguese saw Caboverdeans as “not all Black…you are half Black, you are half white.” She says that the Portuguese used Caboverdeans as intermediaries in the other colonies, which created “hostilities.” (“Divide to rule.”) For a long time, even after the end of colonial rule, there was an antagonism between (for example) Angolans and Cabo Verdeans, but these hostilities have mostly receded into the past now. Her life in Porto was one of connections to other Africans rather than divisions. Though Leonor had lived in Porto for a very long time—half of her life, if not more?—she still found that her closest friends were from Africa; she thought of her Portuguese acquaintances as colleagues, not particularly as friends. “…your friends from Africa, are most of them from Cabo Verde, or are there people from…all over…?” I asked. “All over the (continent), and, I have friends from Mozambique, from Angola…from São Tomé…” Leonor would have kept going, but I pointed out that because her husband, Tomás, was from Mozambique, it was not surprising that she had friends from all over.

Both Leonor and Paulo ran in such wide circles that they could not help but be among each other’s acquaintances, though I don’t think they were particularly close. Paulo, as an artist, lived a somewhat more precarious existence than Leonor—to make ends meet, Paulo waited tables at one of the most popular cafés in the most touristy part of the Ribeira, while Leonor’s hotel job combined with her husband’s salary left their family in what appeared to be a comfortable middle-class position. Though neither was a devotee of a particular form of organized religion, through a certain level of charisma and extroverted good nature, Leonor and Paulo each crossed paths and made friends with the attendees of the churches and the mosque which we have already discussed. If these religious groups were truly sites of community formation, and clubs and events and immigrant social organizations each provided spaces around which communities could coalesce, than perhaps it was up to people like Leonor and Paulo to

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link this scattered sites and moments together, and make them something with even greater potential.

**Centros Comerciais**

From the time I touched down in Portugal for the first time, right up until my family left, religious communities had been the almost exclusive focus of my academic attentions. But not long after the departure of M. and the children, as my attention grew wider and my time more flexible, I began to take notice of some other places, beyond the churches and the mosque, where African immigrants come together in Porto. Downtown Porto, along with its immediate environs—the older, grittier part of town—is home to a number of indoor shopping centers—what Americans would call malls, or at least mini-malls. There was a boom in building these mini-malls in the mid-1980s, followed by a period when the market for this construction had possibly reached saturation and far fewer mini-malls were built. In the 1990s, possibly corresponding with an influx of capital and public investment from the E.U. (Royo 2007:691), larger malls began to be constructed, with more floors, more shops, and larger, more chicque or modish anchor stores (Pereira and Teixeira 2008:7).

It should be noted that all of this, in 2008, was at the very beginning of a leap in technology. Smartphones were just beginning to be widely available at a price point that made them accessible to teenagers, and still, as we exited the Metro by our flat—a stop which was adjacent to a high school—the teenage Portuguese we saw were plugged in to their phones, texting, listening to music on tinny little speakers, making the transition to communicating by emoticon. In the intervening decade, online shopping and the mass migration of teen social life from the capitalist dream of the “mallrat” to the virtual spaces of social media and Skype have left even the big and shiny malls in America—and, one guesses, in Europe—searching for new paradigms to maintain their market share. Time was not kind to the mini-malls, except in some cases we are about to see. Time will probably claim the mega-malls eventually, as well.

I don’t know what drew me into the centros comerciais originally. I imagine it had something to do with curiosity to start with. Some centros had interesting businesses out front—music stores, or other shops that caught my attention. M. attempted to bolster our finances with freelance editorial work, which made it essential that Oscar and Ada and I get out of the house and give her time to work. We filled many hours by wandering around looking for adventures, poking our noses into places that looked interesting. As the months passed, the Roueché-Beard family got to know the neighborhoods closest to us very well. Beyond our home base, we knew where to go for the luxuries that kept us sane—peanut butter, American-style bacon, marshmallows, jalapeño peppers. We even knew where the second hand shops were, so we could find the most interesting souvenirs for the family back home, and cheap necessities for the baby and the five year old. We knew Porto so well that we had no idea how much we were still missing.

A centro comercial near our flat had an African hair salon in the back, and though I made a note to stop in and introduce myself at some point, I didn’t have any point of comparison to register a pattern. But…one day, soon after M. and the children left Porto, I was
walking up Rua de Santa Catarina, a street near the city center that is easily accessed by tourists and has at least one large, glittery, modern centro comercial. I’d walked a little further north than the tourists usually go, to a point at which even the smaller shops had dwindled away and the buildings were mostly flats and small ground floor office spaces. Except—in a window on my left, I saw posters with African faces, and African products—small bags of grain, cans and jars and bins of things which looked more at home in Harare than in Porto. The window belonged to a shop, a small grocery which could only be accessed by entering the main entrance to a small centro comercial—this one was so small that I might have overlooked it entirely had I not been attuned to their particular line of products.

The Centro Commercial Rio was a little bit intimidating the first time I entered. One entered through a short hallway, where the lightbulbs were at least half burnt out and a broken window added to my unease. A few steps in, past the disrepair of the entryway, the impression was completely different. I went in and looked around the grocery for a moment, but soon I came back out into Rio to look around farther. Immediately drawing my attention was a men’s hair salon immediately adjacent to the grocery, with photos in the window of African men modeling their hairstyles, and an African stylist inside, working on a mostly African clientele. Clearly, something was going on here.

The interior of Centro Comercial Rio is a ring of shops, more than half of which are empty, forming a perimeter around a court of tables and chairs—something like a food court in a larger mall, but there was only one café that opened out onto the court, so the choices of cuisine were limited. The court was better lit than the entryway, but it was still a bit gloomy inside Rio. The little café turns out to be run by Cabo Verdeans; in fact, I eventually found out that Victor, the café owner, is proprietor of both the salon and the café. In the back was a restaurant—a little more upscale, and operated by Bissau Guineans. The only other shop of note that was open in Rio was an internet shop which was owned and operated by a man from Nigeria.

I had a beer at the café and talked a little with the young man behind the bar, who was either a teenager or just barely in his twenties. The young man was polite, but not interested in having a conversation, preferring to send text messages back and forth with friends. Still, this was an interesting find for me—all of these African owned businesses in one small place. I don’t think I immediately thought back to Nana’s salon, in the back of the larger but equally old mini-mall closer to home. I do know, though, that from that point, I made a habit of investigating older centros comerciais whenever I found them.

A centro some eight to ten blocks north of Rio turned out to be another focal point of African economic activity. Centro Comercial Marquês was deep and narrow. It had a very small African grocery up front on the left, an African salon for ladies towards the back, also on the left, and a very popular Bissau Guinean café taking up most of the centro’s space on the right side. I only noted one White-run business in Marquês, a small boutique in the front of the centro on the right. Just across the street from the centro Marquês was another centro comercial, the Galerias Atlantis. The Atlantis had a lot more space, but most shops were empty. However, it did have a larger African grocery than the one in centro Marquês, and it also had a shop selling esoterica. (more on esoterica in a bit).
Besides the centros Rio, Marquês, and Atlantis, there was the Centro Comercial Cedofeita, where Ama’s salon was. As I have mentioned, Ama’s salon was in the back of the centro, and this shopping center did not have any other businesses that advertised to an African clientele or were obviously owned or operated by Africans. Instead, three floors of shopping included the usual empty shops—probably about half of the available real estate—and then a mix of alternative/punk record stores, hemp clothing shops, head shops, tattoo parlors, and, in an out-of-the-way corner of the basement, an AA meeting space.

The list goes on. Sylvie’s store for African hair products was on the second floor of a centro comercial, and a grocery run by Moroccans on the same floor stocked many products from sub-Saharan Africa in addition to North African products. Downstairs, until fairly recently, was the Angolan consulate. And then there was the Centro Comercial Stop. Stop had a couple of cafés (one run by a Turkish family), an antique store, a closed nightclub or two, plus one open club that catered to a heavy metal and goth clientele. On the ground floor, an organization called “Essalam - Associação dos Imigrantes Marroquinos e de Amizade Luso-árabe” had an office—Spot was just two or three blocks away from the Heroismo mosque, on the same thoroughfare. And then, filling out the majority of the spaces in a shopping center that had close to 150 available shops, there were practice spaces for bands. Some of these bands were rock and roll of various sub-genres, some electronic, some hip hop, some reggae. The bands decorated the window fronts of their spaces with colored paper, or art, or acoustic egg crate insulation, if they were extra-serious about keeping the sound of 99 other bands out while they practiced. Young bohemians had literally taken over almost the entirety of this huge space, that otherwise would have probably sunk under the economic weight of upkeep, and they had made it into a space for unfettered creativity.

There was obviously something going on here, in all of these centros. My theory, still in need of further investigation, is this: centros comerciais are cheap real estate. In part, this is because they are locations with terrible foot traffic—all of the “anchor” stores left for newer, fancier, and bigger malls a decade or more before I ever set foot in Portugal, and without those main draws, nobody went into the old centros anymore. The fewer tenants, the more desperate management became, and the lower the rents dropped.

For most African immigrants, the location might not have been optimum—surely they would have benefitted from exposure on the street. But the price was right, and customers could be drawn in by word of mouth, maybe at the mosque or at the same churches that I’d been visiting for several months already; maybe at gatherings like CulturÁfrica; maybe at cultural centers like Espaço Moçambique. Other tenants who were not immigrants were drawn by the cheap rents, but may also have preferred the anonymity of being deep inside a centro comercial. Most of the centro tenants were marginalized in different ways from mainstream Portuguese society. The punk rockers, the stoners, the tattoo artists, the rock bands, and even the folks at AA were sometimes better off out of the public eye; to my knowledge, no one was doing anything illegal, but many of these were by appearance, by age or by occupation, automatically suspect by law enforcement at looked at contemptuously by much of society. Why not stay out of sight, then, when it is a possibility? And while there was little intentionality at the start—interviewees in the centros most often told me that they moved in for the cheap rent—there were times and places where the shops reached a critical mass, and benefitted each other through shared clientele with intersecting interests. At Rio, and at the twin centros of Marquês and
Atlantis, increased foot traffic for the African cafés brought potential customers past the salons and the groceries, and vice versa. In the centro Cedofeita, the African salon was isolated, an outlier...but there was definitely cross traffic between the record store, the head shops, and the tattoo parlor. And at Centro Comercial Stop, there couldn’t help but be cross pollination between the many bands who shared space, if not aesthetics. Essalam - Associação dos Imigrantes Marroquinos e de Amizade Luso-árabe was the outlier at Stop, but perhaps just holding on to a space there put the members of Essalam in a position to meet and ally themselves with young, liberal-minded Portuenses.

Much of this is speculation. I e-mailed one of Porto’s industry organizations that brought together owners and managers of the centros comerciais, hoping that they might give me another perspective on how the centros became so culturally rich, but they never responded. I did ask some of the people who owned businesses in centros about centro life, and I found a lot of evidence that the economics drove decisions to rent, more so than plans to create and then benefit from centro-based culture. Having first identified the Centro Comercial Rio as a site of particular interest, I tried to introduce myself to the various owners and employees therein. One of the most important individuals there is Víctor, the owner of the café, and the owner and main barber in the salon\textsuperscript{24}. Víctor says he opened the salon to begin with, and unlike other entrepreneurs in Porto’s centros, he identified the value of cross traffic early, which led him to open the café not long after the salon. He seems to be comfortable with the space he has chosen for his businesses, but he says that the Portuguese neighbors are too “fechado” (closed off—as he tells me this, he crosses his arms around his body in a self-embrace that connotes the personal insularity of the Portuguese). Víctor tells me that sometimes these uptight (my word) Portuguese call the police because the café is playing music too loud at night. Víctor’s son Luís was the teenager I first met manning the counter at the café. Luís describes a life taken up mostly by attendance at “futebol school” and then work, though his work at Rio is also Luís’s social life. Luís’s friends—also in their late teens or early twenties, and almost all from Cabo Verde themselves—spent a large part of their leisure time hanging out in the courtyard at Rio. I never got a chance to visit at night, but reports from Luís himself and from other less enthusiastic sources were that the café stayed open until 2 or 3 every morning, and the party got rowdier as the night progressed. This intensive schedule of school and work-party also kept Luís from attending church with any frequency, though in Cabo Verde he’d attended a Catholic mass weekly.

The young Cabo Verdean crowd did not make up all of the clientele at the café, and while they could be overwhelming when they reached a certain critical mass, when there were just a few of these young people around it was still very quiet in the Rio court. I saw other people I knew there, like Lourenço, the middle-aged Mozambican I’d met several times at Espaço Moçambique, who seemed to be something of a regular. Besides drinking coffee or the occasional beer, Lourenço was also occasionally a customer at the internet shop next to the café. Some would call this an internet café, but there are businesses in Porto and around the world that serve coffee and refreshments while allowing people to access the internet for a modest fee. This shop was strictly about internet access and international phone calls; no coffee, no snacks. The owner of this shop was a Nigerian man of about 40 years of age, named David. David may be

\textsuperscript{24} I took notes on my conversation with Víctor, which happened at his salon in May 2008. My conversation with his son Luís was later the same day, at their café.
my strongest case for the African-dominated centros comerciais having arisen through economic expediency more than entrepreneurial foresight. David was not happy in Rio, and would have very much preferred to have any other neighbors besides the Cabo Verdean café and its party clientele25. David described the young Cabo Verdians in harsh terms: as a “bad element”, “always fighting, drinking, embarrassing themselves...like animals.” David was the most conservative immigrant I met in Porto, expressing pro-George Bush sentiments that I’d not heard from any other Africans or migrants in general, and discussing his decision to attend church at Lapa (David was a Catholic) as a reaction of sorts against the growing number of African clergy and against services like the Mass by and for Africa—he was a vehement assimilationist. I asked David if, regardless of his feelings about the Cabo Verdean youth element, there was a noticeable crossover in business between the grocery, the salon, and his phone/internet shop. He told me that Africans didn’t really use his business, though over several visits to Rio I noticed Lourenço and other Africans going in and out a few times. I got the impression that David was prepared to express dissatisfaction with almost any topic that came up. I asked him about a large poster of rapper Tupac Shakur that hung on the wall above the shop’s front desk, an iconic photo with the words “Thug Life” in gothic font underneath. David said that he put this poster up as a warning to the young people at Rio, that they should straighten out their lives or else end up like Shakur, who was murdered at the age of 25, most likely by the entourage of a competing rapper. I was left basically speechless by David’s idea, knowing that Tupac’s early death was more likely to come across as romantic than as cautionary to the young people who frequented Rio.

At the Centro Comercial Marquês, I spoke with Barbara, a Ghanaian woman of about 30 years, whom I have mentioned before as an attendee of Jehovah’s Witness meetings (she has also visited the Igreja Metodista Africana no Porto on several occasions). Like Ana and other Africans I had talked to—especially non-PALOP Africans—Barbara had originally come to Portugal because she had heard that it was easier to enter than some other E.U. countries, and because she knew some Ghanaians here before she came—she had a network already established. When she first came to Porto, she cleaned houses and offices, as many immigrant women do, until she identified a need for an African grocery and opened this shop. When she first opened, the other African-owned enterprises (the salon, and the café) were already there. If she had ever anticipated higher foot traffic on account of her neighbors, this was not an idea she would have discussed with them; Barbara doesn’t speak Portuguese, nor does she speak French (the hairdressers are from Cameroon), and so there is little conversation or collaboration among the tenants at Marquês; the hairdressers themselves confirmed this linguistic division, in a conversation that we held in mutually unsturdy Portuguese. Not only did the language barrier separate Barbara from her neighbors in the centro, but it had had a major impact on her spiritual life as well: she described herself as having been Catholic in Ghana, but alienated by the language barrier in Porto. I knew how aggressively the Jehovah’s Witnesses were recruiting for their English-language ministry; simultaneously, I would guess that one could find Catholic services in English in Porto—I knew of at least one group of Germans that had a mass once a month in their native language. But the Catholic Church didn’t do any noticeable outreach, nor did the Anglicans at St. James an Anglican woman from Nigeria whom I met on the bus one day had never heard of St. James), and so the Jehovah’s Witnesses won at least one convert by showing up and reaching out. I started to get the feeling that the Witnesses had discovered the African presence in the centros a long time before, and made good use of their knowledge.

25 David and I had a brief conversation at his internet an phone shop, in June 2008.
Though Barbara and the entrepreneurs of the Centro Comercial Marquês were relative strangers to each other, they were perfectly positioned, as at Rio, to share a customer base—the staples that are sold at the Ghanaian-run grocery are some of the same items that a Bissau Guinean might want to purchase on their way to or from the café, and/or a visit to the salon. Barbara also was savvy enough to put bolts of cloth from West Africa on display at the front of her store, giving the space an eye-catching flash of color to attract passerby, and leading with a product that might appeal to Portuguese esthetes as well as African customers.

Out of the three African businesses in Marquês, the café—Café Kora—was least dependent on cross-traffic to bring in enough customers for success. In business since 1998, and still going strong as of at least 2014, Café Kora is also a site for receptions and for live music and parties (Djob 2014). One wonders, though, if the narrow shape of Marquês, and its lack of the central court that Rio offers, impedes its opportunity to be a cultural nexus for more than just the Bissau Guineans who love Café Kora. In Rio, one is not obliged to patronize any particular business to sit in the court and have a conversation with a friend. At Marquês, anyone can shop, but only Café Kora customers get to stop for a coffee, a bite to eat, and a conversation.

I have previously mentioned some of the non-African store owners from the centros comercias, and I was curious about their perspective on life and work in the centros. When I first noticed African goods for sale at the little grocery in the front of the Centro Comercial Rio, I made a note to myself to go back and meet the owners and/or employees. When I finally got a chance to go in and introduce myself properly, I found that the grocery was co-owned and run by two South Asian men—one from Pakistan, the other from Bangladesh. They opened their grocery in this location primarily because of cheap real estate, though it must have been a bit more expensive than the interior, since there was street exposure 26. Victor’s salon and café were already in place when they arrived, but it took them some time to take notice of the African traffic through the area. When they did notice, they decided that it would be to their profit to stock some African specialty goods; they told me that sales of these were “so-so,” and this might have been a generous assessment given that I myself was obviously most interested in African products. In any case, it was interesting to see these men engaging with the other occupants at Rio, even if this was only on a transactional level.

At Marquês, the one business that was not African-owned or operated was the little boutique up front, across the main hallway from Barbara’s grocery. The owner, Alice, was a young White Portuguese woman, perhaps 30 but looking younger, commendably young to have opened a business. The boutique sold cheap jewelry, rock and hip-hop posters and shirts, and various trinkets that might be categorized as “stoner accessories”—little toys and baubles to occupy the hands, decorative knick knacks with Hindu gods or Egyptian pyramids on them, and all manner of item emblazoned with silhouettes, cartoon drawings, or photographs of pot leaves. Among the t-shirts and posters were quite a few with Tupac’s face on them; I wondered if perhaps David had obtained his poster here. I asked Alice if she stocked the hip hop gear and the jewelry to appeal to the passing African clientele (much of the jewelry, I should point out, qualified as “bling,” or ostentatious rings, chains, and other bejeweled or faux-bejeweled ornaments, which were peaking at the time as major signifiers of status and prestige among hip

hop artists and their fans, including many fans from Africa). She replied curtly, “Our customers are White,” but then admitted that a few Africans had bought from her store. As with so many other centro denizens, Alice picked the location based on the price. She was one of the most recent arrivals to Marquês, and while she was not as vocally dissatisfied as David with her neighbors, she gave the impression of being fairly isolated in the centro, not on account of language like Barbara or the Cameroonian hair stylists, but rather due to a less-than-hospitable attitude towards this particular group of immigrants—if not towards immigrants in general.

Alice was probably the most alienated of the non-African centro entrepreneurs I spoke with; her blunt and not entirely accurate insistence that “Our customer are White” had a subtext of hostility to it that was only matched by David’s overt contempt for the new generation of Cabo Verdeans in Porto. Other Portuguese who worked in the centros were less hostile, but perhaps not entirely welcoming, either. Next door to Ama’s salon, for example, was a tattoo studio. The day I stopped in to say hello, the staff was comprised of two young Portuguese men, Zé and Rigo, who both dressed themselves with a vaguely punk rock aesthetic. Zé had skinny dreadlocks that grew just past his shoulders. Both were fluent English-speakers, so much so that when I suggested that a shared marginality tied the people of the centros together, Rigo rejected the descriptor of “marginal” and stated a preference for “alternative people.” Not only were he, Zé and the rest of the workers in Centro Comercial Cedofeita “alternative people,” but their sequestration in the recesses of the centro meant that their clientele was primarily “alternative people” as well, which they greatly preferred over the “yuppie-types” who were gravitating towards ink at that time. Alternative people work with tattoo artists and give them more opportunity to express their creative freedom. They agreed that the stores in Centro Comercial Cedofeita were well suited to bring “alternative people” in, who would patronize many businesses on the same visit. They didn’t seem to be thinking of the African salon or, for that matter, of AA in this moment, but more obviously of the synergy between tattoos, head shops and punk rock records. I brought the conversation back to the salon, asking Zé if they had ever helped him with his dreadlocks. I didn’t expect an affirmative answer—I actually suspected that they might be offended by the suggestion, as dreadlocks sometimes are associated with uncleanness and lower class status in many parts of Africa—a lingering remnant of the colonial equation of natural Black hairstyles with savagery (see for example Wamba 2000:112; Chitando and Chitando 2004). Instead, Zé said that he had gone to the salon once, but he’d been less than happy with the results. African dreadlocks don’t work the same way as White people dreadlocks, apparently. Other than this incident, it seemed to me that Ama and her co-workers worked through the days in their corner of the centro, relatively isolated from the goings on that connected most of the other folks in Centro Comercial Cedofeita.

It’s obvious by now that I am intrigued by the interactions in the centros comerciais between Africans and non-Africans—mostly Portuguese, but not always. One final example may be the oddest in my estimation. I mentioned earlier the Galerias Atlantis, a centro across the street from the Marquês. Atlantis had its own African grocery store—somehow, the economy was able to support two groceries in that small area. It also had a shop which sold what the Portuguese call esotérica. I should digress for a moment to explain that there are quite a few stores in Porto that specialize in esotérica, a word that the Portuguese have come to use as a

27 Alice and I spoke briefly in her store in June 2008. Quotes are from my notes.
28 Short interview with Zé and Rigo at the tattoo parlor, 6/18/2017.
descriptor of “magical” and New Age products. A shop of this sort will sell products familiar to those in the Bay Area: items like Goddess figurines, crystals, stylized representations of gods and (especially) goddesses from various traditions, aromatherapy products, and an endless selection of incense and candles. Every shop of this sort that I explored had at least some items related to Candomblé or Umbanda, Brazilian religions that combine Yoruba gods and goddesses with elements of Catholicism, Spiritism, and (mostly reimagined) native traditions; the elements that reappeared most often were statues or other representations of the orixás—the Yoruban god/spirits that slaves in Brazil kept alive in their hearts, that form the backbone of Candomblé and are a major component of Umbanda (though emphases shift in the latter tradition, based on practitioners’ class, racial distinctions, and other factors—see for example Hale (2009)).

Porto’s esotérica shops had an almost exclusively White clientele. The orixás for sale in these shops also tended towards Whiteness. African goddesses like Yemanjá were whitened so much in “translation” that they looked at home next to statues of the lily-white Catholic saints and Virgins Mary—I saw a pale Yemanjá statuette once in an extra-Catholic knick-knack shop near the basilica at Fátima, a true stronghold of modern Catholicism.

The esotérica shop across the road from Centro Comercial Marquês was more inclined to sell Black orixás, and this was because it was less inclined towards New Age ecumenicism and instead was dedicated to selling of Candomblé items in particular (though the other strains of esotérica were not absent altogether). The man and woman who owned and ran the store, Luís and Claudia, were a White Portuguese couple who learned about Candomblé while living in Brazil and “felt the pull of the orixás”29. They decided that they would become candomblistas, undergoing the rites of initiation that facilitate the connection of an initiate to their patron orixa. They had eventually moved back to Porto and opened the store, but interestingly, they told me that real, authentic ritual was only to be conducted in Brazil, and so they did not have a community themselves of candomblistas with whom to practice their religion in Porto, despite being the only source (they claimed) for the items that would facilitate such practices. Instead, they alternated—two years in Porto, two in Brazil, for a decade or more as of our meeting. They did not explain how the store remained open in their long absences, and maybe it didn’t. Google Street View shows a store like theirs in the same spot, as of 2014, so either they have someone to keep the store going when they leave, or they have given up on the two year transcontinental rotations.

For me, one of the most intriguing and somewhat odd elements of Luís and Claudia’s story and their business model, was that they were not only making a living off of an Afro-Brazilian faith tradition, but that they were also practitioners; and yet, these devotees of African gods were more or less completely disinterested in the African economic community that surrounded them. Maybe this is not so odd; after all, the Africans I met in Porto were Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Muslims, and even Buddhist/agnostics. If any of them believed in ancestral worship, or in spirits that were anything but malevolent, though, they kept these beliefs from me. In short, the Africans I met in Porto were not inclined to be interested in Candomble, so maybe it should not come as a great surprise that the candomblistas were not interested in their African neighbors.

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29 From short in-store interview with Luís and Claudia, June 2008.
Upon my return to the United States—to Austin, Texas—I noticed that there were aging strip malls in the less affluent corners of town that were beginning to function in similar ways to the *centros comerciais*. Austin is a major technology hub, and with the continued growth of that sector has come parallel growth in new immigrant communities, primarily from South and East Asia and the Middle East, but also from Nigeria and other parts of the world. Grocery stores, restaurants, and other stores that catered to specific national or regional immigrant communities have found affordable storefronts in older spaces that would likely otherwise be empty. As in Porto, there are strip malls where adjacent businesses create synergy—one strip has a Chinese grocery store, a Vietnamese restaurant and a ramen house in close proximity, and they seem to reinforce one another’s success through the concept of “one stop shopping.” This Chinese grocery, and other Asian markets throughout Austin, has a bulletin board at the front of the store, allowing for promotion of cultural events, other goods and services of interest to the communities, and—for promotion of immigrant church groups. While many strip mall enclaves seem to have come together through happy coincidence, their success has not gone unnoticed; in 2006, Chinatown Center opened in north Austin, on north Lamar Boulevard. This strip mall was created to bring multiple Asian businesses together in one large strip mall. In addition to an Asian market, there are Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean restaurants, as well as insurance agents, travel agents, and banking branches that have speakers of Vietnamese and “Chinese” (presumably Mandarin) on staff.

North Lamar in Austin is also home to many other new immigrant businesses, and almost all are located in strip malls, and many of these are neighbors with businesses owned and operated by Mexican and Central American immigrants who have a long-established presence in these neighborhoods. Relations between these waves of immigrants seem, at least on the surface, to be cordial. A Japanese-owned karaoke bar has a sign on the door, en Español: “We have over 1,000 songs in Spanish; come and sing with us!” An indoor “flea market,” where Spanish-speaking Americans and immigrants shop, eat, and dance, serves as the site for an Eid al-Fitr celebration for the local Muslim Community Center. In Austin, as in Porto, there is no critical mass of recent immigrant groups in any one neighborhood. Clusters of immigrant businesses can serve as alternative locations for community formation in the absence of neighborhoods.

I came to Porto expecting to find some variation on the immigrant churches I knew in the United States. I found those churches, of course, but I hadn’t anticipated the ways that a few charismatic and extroverted people could also connect people who would otherwise be much more isolated in a new land. Individuals like Paulo and Leonor are not themselves irreligious, but in and of themselves, they manage to bring together friends and colleagues from Africa, sometimes for a bit of hedonism, like on a club night, or sometimes for bigger events, like CulturÁfrica, that celebrate commonalities in their shared experiences as immigrants.

I also hadn’t foreseen the role that immigrant business opportunities could play as spaces for immigrant communities to coalesce, though pre-Portugal visits to Richmond, California’s East Pacific Mall might have put the notion into my head, if I’d been a bit more savvy. My interest in, and steady focus on, the anthropology of religion and spirituality almost caused me to miss a phenomenon that has implications in America, and probably in many other places as well. Even looking beyond the *centro comercial* as immigrant enclave, these spaces are going from burdensome semi-abandoned properties to fertile grounds for artistic expression. Centro Comercial Stop is the prime example of this, but other *centros* are becoming spaces for art, and
for book fairs—for bohemian improvisation. Hopefully, this continues to exist parallel with, rather than in place of, immigrant entrepreneurship in the centros. Successful coexistence of this sort may be facilitated by people like Paulo Seco, who inhabits a space between the precarious existence of the immigrant and the florescent genius of the artist, perhaps working with visionary business people who know how to make things happen—like Leonor or Sylvie.
Final Thoughts

From the perspective of a more traditional ethnography, this study may seem to be spread wide across a very loosely defined community, and lacking the depth that has distinguished ethnographic study from other examinations of social relationships. These are valid criticisms, but I can say in my defense that this is also symptomatic of the community of study itself. There was a very real community of Africans in Porto, with overlapping friendships and alliances, shared experiences of a new and often alienating homeland, and shared spiritual and commercial ties. The ties that connected this community together were netlike, however; each individual was connected to a few others, and some of these connections were tenuous relationships renewed only infrequently.

Classic ethnographers worked within close-knit geographic-based communities, and did not feel the need to justify the ties that established such as communities. But in my case, and in the case of many urban ethnographies, the idea of community is problematized from the get go. Is a community defined by geography? By the closeness of ties between people? How closely must individuals be connected, if they are to be considered a community? And how is that relational proximity defined? The concept of the city as an alienating force is not new (Bradshaw 2008:6–7), but such alienation can be even more overwhelming for the immigrant. If a Portuguese in Porto is alienated just by being in the “strange land” of an indifferent urban space, then how will the stranger in this strange land fare?

Perhaps, when things come together well for this stranger, the city might be a space where exists an interplay of forces: alienating forces which keep people isolated and anonymous, and community-building forces which bring people together and reinforce bonds. Alienating forces for African immigrants in Porto can include language barriers, skin color, historical narratives, and dispersal of a smallish immigrant community over a large metropolitan area. Community-building forces include some of the same factors on a smaller scale—language barriers, which separate immigrants from French speaking or English speaking countries from the Portuguese and from each other, can also unite a language community. The skin color which marks an immigrant as the Other in a very White city such as Porto also brings Africans together. There are additional forces as well, working to create or reinforce community among these immigrants. The government plays a role, sometimes intentionally creating or subsidizing organizations for mutual support, and sometimes unintentionally creating solidarity within groups that face stifling bureaucracy or unfavorable legislation.

I anticipated finding Porto's Africans in various types of religious communities, and I certainly found what I had expected, in enough different forms that it was possible to imagine a social landscape of immigrant religion, wherein particular congregations might form and disperse over the course of a few years or a decade, but there might be a constant of four or five mostly or entirely African congregations at any one time. If the African population of Porto grew significantly, perhaps the number of churches would expand, or perhaps the existing churches would get bigger. Or perhaps a critical mass of immigrants might be able to transform an ethnically diverse congregation, like those of the Nazarenes or Jehovah's Witnesses, making the groups more responsive to their needs and their preferences.
Like so many urbanites in America and Europe and throughout the world, it seems like many of the Africans in Porto are isolated during the week from friends and acquaintances, people who might have been a more constant presence in an earlier time and/or another place. Community happens in bursts and flashes, and it truly might not mean what it once did, but sometimes it is all we have. For younger immigrants, not part of families in Porto (or at least not part of "traditional" families), religious groups are part of a continuum of community that may include other Africans or White Portuguese. If anti-immigrant sentiments don’t build in Portugal, a younger generation may have the best of both worlds—a circle of friends and colleagues that brings immigrants into the Portuguese mainstream, and helps them gain visibility on their own terms, but still helps them to retain and celebrate the best, and most unifying, aspects of their parents’ and grandparents’ cultures.

Immigration from Africa to Portugal has continued to have a Lusophone character while incorporating increasing numbers of Francophone and Anglophone Africans; meanwhile, a greater percentage of immigrants is coming from Brazil and Eastern Europe than in decades past. Perhaps Africans in Porto will remain invisible not as much because of their small numbers but because they are a minority even among immigrants. Alongside these shifts, there is the inevitability of increasing migration from the Middle East and particularly from North Africa, with many arriving as refugees and others joining family members as part of newly self-sustaining communities. Immigrant communities will likely continue to develop and expand in Lisbon, but Porto and other urban areas will likely see increases as well, and the processes and negotiations of immigrant influx in these cities will take on different characteristics as they develop within different geographic, historical, political and social environments.

By its nature, an ethnography can never be complete, and this study feels particularly in need of continued research and analysis; as the landscape of immigration in Europe changes daily, statistics and other information become outdated seemingly overnight. There are other dedicated ethnographers on the scene already, helping to document a pivotal moment in modern history, recording both the things I missed and the things that have developed since I said my goodbyes to Porto; these ethnographers see with clearer eyes and keener ears than my own. My contribution is smaller than many, but that should not reflect on the people I met in Porto or their

By the same token, it is hardly necessary to point out that the religious and spiritual lives of those living in Europe are in great flux as well. In Portugal this is particularly true, as the country’s flirtations with secularism were squelched by half a century of avowedly Catholic dictatorship under the Estado Novo. The Catholic Church may now be losing its hold on many young Portuguese, as in other traditionally Catholic countries of Europe, and yet the process is neither as pronounced nor as antithetical to religion in general as in these other countries. Losing confidence in Catholicism, many Portuguese find a welcome in evangelical Protestant movements, and this discovery of a different sort of spiritualism is being actively promoted by a great number of missionaries, mainly from the United States, who work the university campuses, knock on doors, and “infiltrate” football games in a quest to spread the word. It remains to be seen if fresh and dynamic movements within the Catholic Church will bring numbers of young Portuguese back into the fold, if they will continue to secularize or if they will find their way to “spirit-filled” churches. In any case, the relationship of Portuguese to the Africans in the pew next to them, or at the house of worship just up the street, will be transformed as their religious beliefs and practices shift.

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willingness to open their lives to me—the congregations who welcomed me, the individuals who shared their time and their thoughts, and the friends who invited me to be a part of the best parts of their lives—I am indebted to them all. I hope that God/Allah blesses them and keeps them safe, and brings them happiness wherever they might go.
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