

**REBEL DESTINIES:
REMEMBERING HERSKOVITS**

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PAS Working Papers

Number 15

ISSN Print 1949-0283

ISSN Online 1949-0291

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**REBEL DESTINIES:
REMEMBERING HERSKOVITS¹**

Though confessing no hard data on the matter, I have come to assume that I am among the oldest living students of Melville J. Herskovits as well as one of his very last. This arguable assumption evokes in me neither a sense of privilege nor a signal responsibility. It has, however, awakened the realization that I had never given formal attention to Herskovits' influence on my own thinking or ventured a critical assessment of his work. Yet my impressions of him are vivid and provide me with a coherent image of a person who did in fact affect my life in important ways. These are, I believe, worthy of record and are offered here as a memoir of appreciation for this remarkable man.

While others may deal more objectively and incisively with specific aspects of his career and writing, I shall risk the charge of self indulgence by reflecting on my personal encounters with Mel Herskovits in the autobiographical context of those few years in which he loomed large on the landscape I inhabited. The task turned out to be more unwieldy than anticipated, for there was a considerable degree of ambivalence in my personal and intellectual relations with the man, an awkward mix of gratitude and peevishness that some others also seem to have experienced. Nevertheless, time and hindsight have precipitated a potent residue of regard for an individual who was not only my most engrossing mentor, but with whom I now perceive a special identity and owe some substantial account for the direction of a career and an example of innocent trust and courage.

I

My coming to Northwestern University in 1953 was by a circuitous route. Twelve years

earlier I had been an undergraduate student at the University of California in Berkeley, not far from my hometown in the agrarian flatlands of the San Joaquin Valley. For me and many others from the outback, Berkeley was a mecca of worldly and intellectual dispensations, and the university a gateway to enlightenment. But my bearings in those days were at best plotted by dead reckoning and for the most part at the mercy of contingency. My courses ran the gamut from obscure offerings in sumi brush painting, astronomy, semetics, and eastern philosophy to a spate of magnetic classes in anthropology. Other than harboring a determination to be a writer and yearning to see far places I had no clear idea of what to make of myself.

Only one memorable landfall of those days occurs to me at the moment. It was when I and two like-minded friends conspired to beget and edit an off-campus magazine called *New Rejections*. It became for a brief run the forum of a few aspiring young writers whose work had been spurned by the authorized student literary publication which, of course, we held to be vapid and regressive in content. But what I now find most notable about that little venture is that its three annual issues spanned an interim in which our lives were re-routed. With the final issue we were no longer students and the outlook was transformed.

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked and within hours the country was at war. Almost overnight it seemed that long-dormant emblems and pronouncements of patriotic zeal had been resurrected and emblazoned everywhere. Uniformed authority and the unfamiliar cadences of military ordinance penetrated the campus as well, undermining time-honored illusions of detachment. Hundreds of young men – dazed, naked and white as I – were lined up daily in the gymnasium for physical inspection and assignment to draft status. Some enlisted immediately while others like myself readied themselves for imminent uprooting. To me and

most of my peers university life was suddenly anachronistic. Cities were blacked out at night as rumors spread of coastal bombardment by planes and submarines. Subversives were said to be plotting destruction of factories and public services. And in the towns and countryside throughout the West Coast Japanese American citizens were being harassed and forced to abandon homes, farms and businesses as jeering neighbors celebrated the departure of buses heading for the internment camps.

I was among those estranged by what seemed to be a blind popular conversion to a martial and chauvinistic state of mind, and yet torn by what was clearly a legitimate call to public service. Most of us had grown up imbued with the strong anti-war convictions – either secular or religious – of the post-First World War generation of our parents. As an avowed pacifist, I was prepared to resist conscription on the grounds of conscience. But I found a stance of noninvolvement difficult to justify. The spectre of fascism in Europe and the resolute courage of those who had fought in Spain with the Lincoln Brigade had haunted and challenged me for years. Moreover, the horror of events in Germany had been made real through the friendship of a family of Jewish refugees, a brilliant professional couple and their daughters whose home had provided a number of us a haven of warmth, intelligence and provocative discussion. I came to realize that the only solution to my quandary was to seek service as a noncombatant.

After an unsuccessful attempt to join an ambulance corps heading for North Africa, I responded to a Naval Reserve recruitment poster announcing a merchant marine officer training program. This was it. I could participate without bearing arms and, best of all, go to sea. My application was accepted and I dropped out of my last senior semester at the university. A few weeks later, following a brief orientation session at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, I was

assigned as a Cadet Midshipman on a Liberty ship heading southwestward from Seattle to some unspecified destination. Two other ships were reported sunk on the same route, but we eventually docked at Sidney, Australia, where, by some obscure channel of wartime mail, a cardboard tube was awaiting me containing a certificate of graduation from the University of California. Grateful as I am for this unearned bonus induced by my Alma Mater's patriotic fervor, I was never later able to fault a student for coming up short of a few paltry credits for graduation – all else being tenable.

At the end of that long and eventful first voyage I decided – for reasons that should soon become clear – that I was constitutionally unsuited for officer status. So I jumped ship in New York, resigned from the program and took a bus to San Francisco where, a step ahead of my draft board, I joined a union and shipped out as Ordinary Seaman. Some years later I passed the exams for Able Seaman and earned my Green Ticket – an A.B. for which I was more proud than my academic B.A. For the duration of World War II I worked on merchant vessels throughout the Pacific and Atlantic. During those months and years of voyaging at least one of my seabags was filled with books, a miscellaneous lot usually including some works of anthropologists as well as of American literature and world history which had been among my undergraduate interests. Kroeber's *Anthropology* and Lowie's *Primitive Society* (texts by instructors from whom I had taken courses) were well-thumbed items in a more permanent collection that shipped out with me trip after trip along with Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Radin's *Crashing Thunder* and, of course, Melville's *Moby Dick* and the South Sea tales.

Even had the war not impelled it I think I might have gone to sea for a time anyway. Or,

had I been able to continue on at the university, it would have been either in literature or anthropology. And, if the latter, my choice of area for work and study most likely would have been the South Pacific. Since high school days Polynesia had held me in thrall as I poured over maps of obscure atolls and read every popular account I could get my hands on of those fabled places (including, alas, Churchward's *Lost Continent of Mu!*).² Years later, I believe in one of Lowie's courses, I made special note of any relevant ethnographic references and became in time somewhat well versed in south sea culture and lore. The writings of Peter Buck attracted me most of all and thus when I made my first trip to Hawaii in 1942 the high point of shore leave was a pilgrimage to the Bishop Museum to meet Te Rangi Hiroa. That singular man must have decided that the enthusiasm of a young seaman for things Polynesian was sufficiently curious to warrant attention. He guided his rapt guest through the museum and then, in an unforgettable gesture of discerning hospitality, husked a coconut for us in the courtyard while we talked of his life and research.

This episode, together with subsequent voyages to New Zealand, Samoa and Funafuti, might well have set the course. But I was yet to witness the last days at Okinawa, the evacuation of Bikini, and see the detritus of war glutting the white sands of blue lagoons, transforming the lives of islanders forever. This did much to correct the compass error of juvenile fancy. Moreover, while in Honolulu, I had looked up an old pen pal Francis Motofuji. He and his family were kindly, though circumspect, hosts with whom I experienced another aspect of Oahu, the sprawling neighborhoods of Hawaiian, Asian and Portuguese on the urban outskirts besieged by the burgeoning military and confused perceptions of friend and foe. His friendship provided an antidote for the venomous racism sweeping the United States before and after Pearl Harbor.

It had left in its wake the fractured lives of a number of my Japanese schoolmates and a sense of helpless rage among their friends. Knowing Francis helped to palliate my guilt about not having made greater outcry in their defense.

As time went on my portable library began to show evidence of an increasing involvement in contemporary social issues – race relations, slavery in American history, the labor movement, the struggle against Fascism and capitalist exploitation. In particular I recall the deep impression made upon me by the works of Herbert Aptheker, Eric Williams, W.E.B. DuBois and, especially, Melville Herskovits' *The Myth of the Negro Past*³ which became for a time a kind of scripture. These books often were among the educational materials sent aboard ships by unions and seaman's services. Our makeshift libraries also contained an array of current labor and Marxist pamphlets that a few disgruntled crew members regularly tossed overboard unless others like myself managed to ferret them away for the lonely off-watch hours below decks. It was inevitable that the waxing radicalization of my views would propel me into confrontation with the entrenched right-wing leadership of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, the organization I had mindlessly joined when first shipping out. At a fateful meeting during the general waterfront strike of 1945-46 I rose as a ship's delegate to ask a naively rhetorical question as to why our union was failing to observe the picket lines in the coastal ports. Somewhat hazily I recall the moment of stunned silence in the hall, then being thrown downstairs and beaten up in the street by Harry Lundberg's disciplinary "goon" squad. Of course I was forthrightly expelled and denounced as a communist, a charge that perplexed me at the time. Rival unions touted it as an instance of labor heroism and I was immediately invited into the militant National Maritime Union where I became an active member during my

remaining tenure at sea. The new political climate was inspiring, for the union was among the first to institute a vigorous program of racial desegregation in its hiring halls and ships. The process was a stormy one, for a brewing resistance frequently erupted into dockside and shipboard violence. Yet there developed among many of us an unprecedented comradeship between whites and blacks on the job, a sense of common purpose and an altogether new perception of the potentiality for understanding and change.

In such a setting it is not so strange that what I had read in anthropology should have seemed so wholly consonant with the expressions of social criticism and dissidence that informed our daily lives. To my mind they merged into a single voice of humanistic appeal for cultural tolerance, social reformation and the critique of orthodox history. But such romanticism sometimes led to misapprehension of the intent of specific voices. During the general maritime strike of 1946-47, for example, I was a member of an education committee sponsored by the waterfront unions in San Francisco. One of our projects was a series of classes on "Negro History." Our text was a work by W.E.B. DuBois, *The World and Africa*, along with a reading list of books and pamphlets made available by the Knowledge Is Power Bookstore on the embarcadero. Early in the course a black ship's steward, my colleague on the education committee, introduced a book I had not seen. It was a tattered copy of Melville Herskovits' *Rebel Destiny*⁴ in which my friend had underlined certain passages that he planned to use for instruction. Whether he had read the book in its entirety or had appreciated its ethnographic import was scarcely relevant to anyone. But what was clear to me was that he had been profoundly moved by the description of those recalcitrant fugitive slaves up the Surinam River and by the fact that a white American and his wife had lived among them and discovered their

African heritage. In every session of our class, attended by a scattering of curious seamen and longshoremen, he found occasion to read aloud the following underscored lines of the Preface:

Today, when a Bush Negro drinks with a white man his toast is 'Free!' ...

The old men on the river have a tradition of recalling the struggle of the ancestors for freedom and survival, and it is not without significance that one of the three worst crimes among the Bush Negro – one that ranks with incest and murder – is informing on a Negro to a white man.

This was the period when the policy of the vanguard left had switched from support of “Negro nationalism” to “integration.” However, my colleague proved unreconstructable. His political incorrectness remained adamant despite our confounded efforts to set him straight. A few months later we shipped out together on a coastwise tanker. One of the tasks of the crew’s education committee that we reactivated was to distribute union civil rights literature in each of the ports along the way. When we went ashore at Portland he was the only black member of our little troop. On the dock he handed me his bundle of leaflets and announced that he was going to spend the day with an old girl friend and her family: “You guys got your agenda here and I got mine. Anyway, whites need this more than us. Right?” I never forgot him nor our brief encounter with *Rebel Destiny*.

It was some time before I was to give that extraordinary account of a field trip among the Saramacca a serious reading. There was in it a quality of directness and freshness that I have since come to associate with some of the best moments of anthropological observation. Much that I was to experience on first encounter with Africa had been anticipated for me by that

intrepid pair in the mountains of Guiana. Many years later I recounted the story about *Rebel Destiny* in the union hall to the author himself. He was only mildly amused, but then proceeded to lecture me, as was his wont, on the perils of quotation from sources out of context. Had I read the work with care I should have noted that he and his co-author, Frances, had been at pains to prevent any partisanship of a political nature from biasing the account. This is a prime rule of fieldwork I should not forget. Though an anthropologist's prime regard must be for his native associates, in Dutch Guiana it was a colonial government whose officials extended the courtesies and cooperation that made the expedition possible. To imagine one's self an instrument of social change or the agent of a cause is a delusion that distorts the mission of science. The scientific observer must maintain a stance of ethical neutrality while letting the people speak for themselves. Moreover, I had quite missed the point, stated forthrightly in the Preface itself, that the book was not intended as an ethnographic treatise but merely as a record of the attitudes and customs of the Saramacca as they expressed them and as they lived them.

These were heady and argumentative words for a student of my peculiar background. Actually, they were something of a disappointment, for though I had told the anecdote in hopes of revealing an insight about myself and an early instance of my regard for him, I was removed quite brusquely to suitable distance. But more of this later.

II

It was not until 1950 that I was able to return to U.C. Berkeley as a part-time student. This move was long a-coming, for shoreside employment was not easy to find and I had few of the skills that would earn an adequate income off the sea lanes. Kathleen Addison and I had married during the war and our two children – Anya and then Erik – were born after it ended.

My long absences in the Pacific and Atlantic were unavoidable then, and the experience of separation and coping was shared by almost everyone else we knew. But after 1945 the realities of a relationship and a growing family made that way of life increasingly untenable. For a few years I tried to resolve the problem by shipping out on short coastwise tanker runs and immersing myself in the tumultuous trade union activities of the period, an involvement I shall never regret or fail to appreciate as a vital element of personal motivation and social consciousness. All the while, however, the desire to go back to school, to gain a broader perspective of the world, was a gnawing frustration. Fortunately Kathleen was the kind of wife who urged me to do so despite the uncertainties and financial difficulties that loomed before us. She continued to work while I strove doggedly at a series of temporary jobs: truck driver, fire alarm dispatcher, gardener, Social Security check disbursing, and liquor store clerk are among the recollected lot. The children persevered as children somehow do and the family remained intact.

After exploring the fringes of academia, I was at last accepted as a part-time graduate student in the Department of Anthropology. There, under renewed influence of A.L. Kroeber, Samuel Barrett, Robert Lowie and Robert Heizer, I began to develop a specialization in American Indian studies. Especially memorable to me and a number of other students who sought him out was the presence of Paul Radin whose enigmatic relation to the department was that of a brilliant but prodigal son. We anticipated his occasional courses in the Extension Division and invitations to small gatherings at the various hotels where he and his wife Doris stayed while in Berkeley. Radin instilled in us an awareness of the links between anthropology, history and literature, insisting always that the role of ethnographer as ostensibly objective observer must be tempered by a disposition to enter as fully as possible into the ways of thinking

of individuals in other cultures. He saw fieldwork as an art requiring special qualities and motivations on the part of those who chose to undertake it.

His encouragement and informal guidance was responsible in part for my first tentative visits among the Washoe on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada where the beginnings of a small Peyotist faction had been studied some fifteen years earlier by Omer Stewart and Edgar Siskin. Little else was known about them except for Kroeber's brief cultural resume in the California Handbook and the ethnographic notes of Barrett and Lowie, all published in the first decades of the century. Nevertheless, the opinion prevailed in the department that the Washoe had been *done* and that for all practical purposes their culture was near extinction. This was puzzling to me in view of the fact that there was a flourishing Peyotist movement in the mountains, and I had visited hundreds of Washoe scattered in settlements throughout western Nevada. As the California Indian Claims Case was a dominant preoccupation at the time, I often have wondered whether the politics of expediency and privileged domains had something to do with the peculiar attitude about the Washoe. Undeterred by this situation, two fellow students, Stan and Ruth Freed, did persist in conducting a proficient investigation of kinship and cultural continuities that was to become the basis for a dissertation and a number of important articles over the ensuing years.

My own venture, on the other hand, was far less systematic. Before long I was enmeshed by the profoundly affecting drama of the lives of my Peyotist comrades, their families, beliefs, personal struggles, thwarted aspirations and factional disputes. Thus I was drawn inevitably into an advocacy role in defense of the religious rights of the Native American Church as well as support for the claims of a dissident sector of the tribe that opposed the territorial boundaries and

monetary compensation being proposed by distant and impersonal agencies. For a time I became a scribe, typing letters and assembling materials for my earnest friends. We traversed the entire territory in the company of elders, noting place names, trek routes, ancient settlement sites and the lore of early events. The rough maps we drafted haunt me still as images of the unrequited title of a people to a realm from which they have been dispossessed. My rambling notes were permeated with the fascination of discovery in another world secluded and disregarded among the towns, ranches, mountains and deserts of modern western America. They were largely in the form of narrative, of recollections of lives, of relations and events recorded in the course of informal interviews or jotted during on-going activities. Interspersed among them were attempts at more systematic collecting and organization of data on tribal history, factionalism, relations with the non-Indian community, cultural identity and change. I don't think I was driven by any notion that this untidy array was to provide the materials toward some requisite academic product, nor did I solicit guidance from mentors.

Those early months of weekend and holiday excursions across California and over the mountains were journeys to a private reserve where I could learn and interact in my own way. None of the pedagogic cautions about the risks and inadvertent mischief of adventurism in initial fieldwork that I was later to impose upon the most heterodoxical of my students burdened me then. There was, in fact, little such instruction available even should one have sought it. Those were the days of sink or swim or see what you can do. I believe I swam, and I did learn what I wanted to do. That experience convinced me that anthropology was a door to the world I wanted to know: only later did I comprehend it as a discipline. Despite the excited disorder of that early foraging, I acquired a store of knowledge, of friends, and passports to future entry that were to

develop into a long association with the Washoe people. The die had been cast.

All this was going on as I pursued graduate work in anthropology. My program was both eclectic and highly elective. A preoccupation with contemporary social issues led me to studies in race relations and American history with sociologist Wolfram Eberhard and historian Kenneth Stampf. Some of my student papers dealt with the records of slave revolts, with the abolitionist movement and the peculiar role of the American Colonization Society. I recall how heartening it was when Eberhard expressed a special interest in a paper I had written for him on the relations of Black American colonists in Liberia with the indigenous peoples. His urging that I continue the inquiry was a spur to later decisions. An essay written for John Carter's class in American literature became my first published paper. It was an analysis of Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* in which the tragically heroic Babo leads a slave ship mutiny with the avowed aim of returning to Africa.

I was convinced that Melville's purpose in this tale had been misrepresented in conventional literary criticism and that I was the first to comment on the matter. But it was also the first of my two encounters with the specter of plagiarism. Having written the paper during the early Spring semester of 1950, I sent it off to *Masses and Mainstream* in June where it was tentatively accepted by Herbert Aptheker, but later returned because of space restrictions. A few months later *Science and Society* found it interesting but not suitable. *Modern Quarterly* accepted it, then ceased publication. At last a shortened version was accepted by *Phylon* but not printed until 1956. Scarcely weeks had gone by when I received a reprint from the author of an article that had appeared in the *Modern Language Quarterly* of September, 1950. With mixed admiration and dismay I read what was a more developed and erudite discussion of much the

same points I had written early in that year. The reprint reached me during the first phase of fieldwork in the interior of Liberia. It cast a long shadow of frustration in an already demanding situation. What could account for the striking similarities between the two pieces? Could I somehow have seen the other article before writing my own? As my correspondence files were not with me there was no way to confirm dates or the itinerary of my manuscript. I wrote to the editors of *Phylon* outlining my recollection of sequence and, though they seemed vastly unconcerned, the question continued to haunt me until I returned from the field.

I recall the immensity of my relief to discover that indeed I had written and first submitted the article months before the publication of its elegant counterpart. The riddle of resemblance remains unresolved, for I had no inclination to pursue it. I cite this episode for two reasons: first, as a belated matter of record about my earliest professional publication; and second, because I was at the time a student of Mel Herskovits embarked on the initial ordeals of entrance into the discipline. Among his many injunctions was that of integrity in scholarship, the avoidance of even the appearance of impropriety. Plagiarism was a crime deserving of banishment, but almost equally heinous was a failure to make adequate acknowledgement of sources. Our student papers and dissertations were blackened with heavy marginalia demanding “citation,” “reference,” “who, what, where!” etc. (I have since exasperated generations of students with this inherited radical of pedagogy, replete with exegetic anecdotes). Thus I do not think my trepidation was unreasonable in the circumstances. When I told Herskovits what happened his reaction was characteristically practical and didactic: “Well, you see how important it is to have kept record of your work. Imagine if you had not! There would always be a question. But how is it that you allowed five years to pass between writing and publication

without checking the literature again? Then you would have found and cited the other article.

And then you could have footnoted the provenience of your original manuscript. You see?"

Yes, I did see, and the lesson became as embedded as my recollection of the gist of his words.

But this digression has led a bit afield from Berkeley and how I came to Northwestern. I suppose I am trying in this meandering way to recapture a sense of the times and those experiences that brought me to a totally unforeseen juncture in 1952. My rather irregular and divergent graduate program had reached the point of crucial commitments. A dissertation topic on the Washoe was struggling to be born but I was confronted by an increasing dilemma about a field of specialization. The impatience of my mentors was understandable. Here I was in the major center for training in American Indian research and, in their view, any other pursuit would be a great mistake. Those were the days when the few departments of anthropology were little fiefdoms presided over by major figures jealous of autonomy and prestige. But the intensive North American Indian focus that had been the hallmark of the department during my undergraduate days had begun to wane. Kroeber, with whom I had taken courses more than ten years earlier (one on Primitive Art consisting entirely of an endless selection of slides accompanied by rapid fire extempore comments with weekly exams of single sentence slide identification for which I filled a fat notebook of frenzied sketches and now almost illegible marginalia), had become so occupied with the California Indian Land Claims case and major conferences in Europe that he was seldom about. Yet I was able to see him now and then about my Washoe material. His interest was piqued mainly by the mapping of territorial range and ethnohistorical accounts of land use. We argued a bit over certain contended areas but it was clear that he had become exasperated with his time-consuming role as expert witness in

litigation. Though I had not intended my work as a contribution to the claims case, the data intrigued him especially where it was in conflict with compromises being established by the hearings. At one point I remember him saying to the effect, "Keep at it. This is worthwhile. But stay clear of lawyers and courts in these matters. It is a morass." The advice was unnecessary: I was not inclined to enter in, nor was I asked to do so. Omer Stewart was point man on the Washoe and, though we did not see eye to eye on the matter of boundaries or the organization of social units, I am grateful to him for his generous help in studying the Peyotist movement in the area.

Robert Lowie, the other major cynosure of the old department, had retired and he, too, was away much of the time, excepting for an occasional eagerly-awaited seminar. Yet the few times I was able to meet with this kindly and devoted scholar were always a source of deeper understanding of my own data and a renewed commitment to the work. My respect for him went back to dimly recollected courses he had taught on American Indian cultures and one devastatingly ponderous semester on what I think was titled Comparative Ethnography but that we students called Cross-cousin Marriage Around the World. That class was a remarkable sleeper, for what had been for many of us a mystifying plethora of relentless detail (relieved only by marvelous reminiscences of Curt Nimuendaju and the Tupinamba) was to awaken later as a treasure-trove of insights and method from the lecture notes of a master.

The local mantle of leadership in American Indian studies was passing to Robert Heizer who, together with Samuel Barrett and Edward Gifford, sustained the remnants of that once pre-eminent program. They and Kroeber were the main anthropologists offering testimony for the petitioners in the California Claims case, a stance that I greatly admired for it clearly demarcated

them from others who were testifying as expert witnesses with the Justice Department. It also was a fact I was proud to share with my friends among the Washoe, though some continued to express resentment about what they considered to be a pre-emption of their own claim by the vigorous cases of surrounding groups in California and Nevada. My own inclination to partisanship was affected by this ambivalence among my Washoe associates and tended to estrange me somewhat from what I perceived to be an attitude of detachment and privileged opinion on the part of the established academic scholars whose early work had provided the baseline for the area in which I was working. A few years later, when I returned to fieldwork with the Washoe, I had gained the kind of experience that allowed me to appreciate fully my debt to earlier mentors as well as to a continuing association with Heizer and Stewart.

But in this period of transition the most stimulating and memorable academic experience for me was with members of the department whose research interests diverged from what had been its focal concerns. John Rowe's courses on South America were demanding introductions to scholarly method and commitment. Though I have forgotten much of the rich substance of his classes, the dedicated patience with which he monitored our student papers and made available his voluminous bibliographic files remains a vivid recollection. A seminar with David Mandelbaum was an agonizing but eventually rewarding first confrontation with social theory. As a new graduate student returning to a competitive academic arena after almost ten years of absence, I felt myself to be far outclassed by the erudition and articulate assurance of the younger coterie in attendance. Mandelbaum had just received the bulky collection of manuscripts from the international conference *Anthropology Today* that were being reviewed for publication. Each of us was assigned three or more of the essays for written critiques to be read

and discussed by the group during the semester. My first effort became the butt of the merciless sarcasm I had been told was the underside of Mandelbaum's generally benign and supportive disposition. It was handed back to me without comment at the beginning of a session, suspended between two fingers like a pestilent object. The affect was devastating to all present and, for me, the harbinger of a doomed career. Fortunately, a sense of outrage drove me to combat rather than to ignominious withdrawal. At the expense of all other tasks I determined to untangle the ravelment of current anthropological theory and discourse.

During the tormented weeks that followed I learned more about the discipline than in any equivalent interval before or since. That seminar is recollected as a kind of watershed ordeal, a veritable rite of passage. Not only did I emerge rehabilitated, with a top grade to boot, but Mandelbaum proved to be a mentor of compelling intellectual power and good will from whom I enjoyed valued support and collegial association for many years. The other special influence at this time was from courses with Theodore McCown in Near Eastern and African prehistory. They provided an entirely new perspective about the cultural complexity of the continent and its enormous antiquity. My unusually well organized notes from those lectures were to remain remarkably up-to-date resources for classes I taught in later years.

Actually, when I come to think of it, Mandelbaum and McCown were the only members of the department with whom I had confided my nascent interest in shifting to African-American studies. I had already ascertained that this area was considered peripheral and not very promising among current research trends. And though I had not given any serious attention to where one might pursue such studies, I did learn that Melville J. Herskovits, the leading American figure in the field, tended to be dismissed as something of a heretic whose scholarship

and relations with colleagues were problematic. Oftentimes there was a hint of anti-Semitism.

England was the place to go if one wanted to do research in Africa: otherwise, what was there but Northwestern, or even Howard! The message was clear. Why would anyone choose to trade the prestige and ambiance of Berkeley for any of that?

It was Mandelbaum, however, who told me of his admiration for Herskovits and how he had once been his undergraduate student. Yes, much of his work was controversial and he had rubbed many of his colleagues the wrong way, but his contribution to the study of race relations and to African research would have lasting impacts. Moreover, though he was strongly opinionated, he was stimulating and cordial on a personal level. I gave little thought to these remarks at the time, for I had no prospect of going elsewhere. But one day McCown called me into his office and handed me a flyer from Northwestern University announcing fellowships in African studies. Students should have alternatives, he said, and he had been aware of my interests in this field. If I wished, he would send a letter supporting my application.

When I discussed this with Paul Radin he was enthusiastic. “Go there,” he urged. “You can continue your Washoe work at any time. California has become parochial and, except for some new blood, it is enmeshed in the reconstruction of dead or dying cultures. Also you need funds, and you are not likely to get any from this department. Africa is alive, a place where I had always wanted to work.” As for Herskovits and his African and Afro-American programs, he was the American pioneer, a true student of Boas as scientist and humanist – “perhaps a bit obstreperous in debate, but a man of conviction. He loves his field work, prepares his students for it, and sees to it that they have the opportunity to do it.”

This was enough for me. I sent the application with little expectation that anything

would come of it. At least, to my mind, I had taken a concrete step in a new direction. Then I forgot about it as more urgent matters prevailed. But a few weeks later the world shook. A welcoming letter of acceptance came from William Bascom who was temporary chair of the department at Northwestern. A fellowship would not be available until the second semester but, given adequate performance on my part, was assured. Though I had few doubts about what I wanted to do, elation was tempered by practical realities. Kathy and I had deep roots in the Bay Area – family, close friends, work and long-standing commitments. The children, too, would be wrenched from schools and friends. We had limited funds and it seemed almost everyone we knew thought such a move imprudent if not capricious. But in the summer of 1953 we sold some possessions, bade farewell to our house of many years, packed two small children along with books and household essentials into a car with a rented trailer, and headed across country to Evanston.

III

My first meeting with Melville Herskovits was disconcerting. I had been summoned to his office for the standard new-student interview. Prepared to meet a giant (my legendary shipboard companion), I faced instead a very large desk behind which sat a round little man with a shiny beaming face and a pair of rimless spectacles perched on a modicum of a nose. He was immediately cordial and encouraged me to speak of my background and interests. But I felt under intense scrutiny and his outgoing manner did not conceal a certain aloof dignity and assertion of status. At one point he asked whether I spoke Portuguese. When I lamented that I did not, a flicker of surprise and disappointment crossed his face. Sometime afterward I learned that he had already pegged me for research in Brazil or Portuguese Africa based upon the

impression of my name. The moment brightened, however, when I revealed my interest in African studies and a tentative desire to go to Liberia. He thought this a capital idea and then proceeded to tell me of his many acquaintances among Liberian officials, discoursing at some length and cogency on the cultural history of the country where he said he had once intended to do fieldwork.

I was duly impressed and ready for the perfunctory overview of the program and course of study I was expected to follow. It was a small department, he pointed out, and students were required to work with every member of the staff. Self motivation was crucial for there was little time to expend on those who wanted to be taken by the hand. The program was rigorous and demanded full involvement. Each student must develop a specific research goal and eventually write a dissertation based upon first-hand observation: "fieldwork is the lifeblood of anthropology." Much more ensued concerning culture and the mission of science. After about an hour he inquired of my wife and children. What about housing, schools and funds? Were they prepared for the ordeal? Would I take them to the field if I ever got to that point? He and Frances would want to meet them. I was then dismissed.

For the next two years the personality and indefatigable energy of Melville Herskovits dominated the lives of my family and fellow students. The pressure to perform well was intensive and we chafed under the additional burden of feeling that every aspect of our lives was under inspection. It often seemed to us that Mel and Frances Herskovits presided as foster parents whose exclusive band of charges were to be instructed, goaded and shaped into products after their own image. The tutelage even extended to our attire, particularly in formal occasions to which we were summoned. For example, I can still envisage the knowing look and maternal

tone which Frances Herskovits whispered an aside to me at a reception for Raymond Firth: “Warren, you really should do something about your ties.” This was an event for which I had been assigned the novitiate role of student host. My embarrassment became complete when, in accordance with her explicit previous instruction, I introduced these very amiable guests as Professor and Lady Firth. “Mrs. Firth,” her husband announced crisply, “is not yet a lady in that sense.” Years later, I came to know Raymond Firth as a colleague and we enjoyed the reminiscence. But Frances Herskovits never acknowledged how she had thrust me beyond the limits of protocol.

As for Mel Herskovits (whom I never addressed as other than Doctor Herskovits in my early student days), the injunctions were myriad and continuous. We learned that the word “primitive” was never to be used with reference to “non-literate” peoples, that atrocious terms such as “socio-cultural” and “structural-functional” should be expunged from our vocabularies, and that ethnic jokes were neither amusing nor tolerable. “Black,” we learned was both inaccurate and derogatory for Africans, as well as for American Negroes or Afro-Americans (black was not yet beautiful in the wilderness of nominal change). Petty and arbitrary as the many importunities of this kind may have seemed to us, they were part of a grand design to inculcate a mode of behavior and an ethic that would make us worthy representatives of the department and eligible for the sacred rite of fieldwork.

In retrospect, I also must acknowledge that his dogged insistence about such matters commanded my respect and resonated with many of the attitudes and convictions already in place from my own background. Long before I knew any of the details of his life that would have validated this strong sense of linkage, his engagement in social issues and his militant

humanism struck me as familiar and congenial. For much the same reason I was never then or later particularly exercised by the philosophical critique of his brand of cultural relativism or the derision of what was often perceived as the quixotical posture of his campaign against ethnocentrism. In my view, then and now, these were hallmarks of a man in advance of his times. They were the products of a life of confrontations, the historical moments of which few have taken the trouble to reconstruct. Herskovits was neither a grand theorist nor a pedant. He was, rather, an ingenuous pragmatist motivated by a commitment to what he believed to be the essence of science. In his time this required a moral and intellectual courage that cannot be denied him. Most of his students understood this in one way or another: he was a little big man who exuded an authentic kind of power. Our differences with him were more in the nature of clashes of temperament and the need to assert independence from a parental yoke. For some of us the problem was aggravated by his obstinate defense of the entire corpus of his contributions to cultural theory as a unitary system. To tamper with any part was tantamount to an assault upon the whole, and that whole was his bequest to the continuity and development of the Boasian tradition.

Those nearest to him soon became aware of his personal vulnerability in this regard. Despite his combative manner there was a need for approval that was both poignant and guilt-provoking. His unreserved loyalty and support to students and close colleagues was matched by an artless expectation of reciprocity. He could be hurt deeply by perceived slights, but never held a grudge for long. He was a constitutionally trusting and cheery person incapable of harboring personal animosity or the belief that anyone might wish him ill. But in the public arena he could be irascible, rising to the fray at every sign of bigotry, factual inaccuracy, or

misrepresentation of cherished concepts no matter how large or small. His correspondence was voluminous and his visiting lecture schedule extensive and diverse. One wondered how he managed to do all the writing that appeared on his publication list year after year. When I became his graduate assistant I got some intimate glimpse of the organized energy this entailed. Among my tasks was to sort his mail into very specific categories ready for him to read, and woe be unto me or his secretary if any item was out of place when he arrived. He would go immediately to his desk, take pen in hand and begin to scribble responses on a lined pad. He obviously took pleasure in having me or someone else about so that he could pause now and then to exclaim over a particularly intriguing portion of a letter or his rejoinder to it.

As far as I could tell he answered every inquiry whether from school children or cranks, every invitation to speak, every request for information or comment, and wrote promptly and at length to students in the field and to colleagues throughout the world. In addition to other tasks, I was to cut out and file clippings from newspapers, magazines or other sources that he had bracketed in red during his browsing the evening or morning before. Some of these referred to talks he had given, to the activities of the Program of African Studies, to his professional commitments elsewhere, or to statements of opinion he thought especially relevant to some issue with which he was involved at the moment. They were marked for inclusion in a kind of scrapbook kept in the office for visitors to scan while waiting to see him. It was my impression that he used the telephone sparingly, preferring written correspondence. Letters from students received special attention and were annotated with regard to style and content much as he customarily did with their papers. One former student recalls having written a letter to which a secretary had appended the note "Dictated but not read." It was returned with an initialed

scrawl, "Received but not read." Still another had a letter sent back with numerous typos and misspellings indicated, replete with the comment, "You would not want this letter to be found in my files." An especially caustic response was reserved for anyone spelling his name with a final *z* rather than *s*! Such stories are numerous and served as comic relief from our petulance about his exhaustive requirements concerning scholarly exposition and protocol. At the same time we recognized the unrelenting tutorial intent that motivated his hardheaded attention to every detail. There was nothing patronizing or dictatorial about it but, rather, a compulsive adherence to principles that he applied as rigorously in his own conduct and that he believed to be the essential mark of a civil and learned person. I do not recall that we ever felt him unfair or ill-disposed toward any of us. He relished argumentation and tolerated other views as long as one had the stamina to hear him out in the end. Moreover, he had more energy than any of us, and it was his nature to be a hound of heaven.

Herskovits attracted a wide range of students of diverse interests reflecting the facets of his eclectic approach to anthropology. Their backgrounds and research aims might be in history, dance, political science, psychology, economics, folklore, music, religion, art or, for that matter, *any* "aspect of culture." No topic of study was deemed too peripheral as long as it was pursued with rigorous adherence to "scientific principles of investigation" and gave promise of illuminating the human condition (viz. "man and his works"). In fact the only career orientations that I can remember being disallowed were those motivated by theological doctrine or inclinations to social engineering. The staunchly secular and "anti-applied" climate of the department caused a few to go elsewhere or to be advised to do so.

A matter of special note is the number of women, African Americans and Africans, who

gravitated to the program. Though I have heard an occasional comment to the contrary, in my experience I found Herskovits to be remarkably gender-blind as well as color-blind. At a time when very few women were enrolled in the discipline, fully half of the students in the department while I was there were women, and the proportion of those receiving advanced degrees from 1940 through the 1950s was also large. No point was made of this that I can recall and if one were to seek fault in Herskovits' relation to female students it might be that he dealt with them precisely as any other. There was little indication that they might have special problems with regard to male mentors, marital situation or eventual fieldwork in remote places. They were aspiring anthropologists and that was all there was to it. Though most of the women students I knew saw this as a refreshing challenge, a few were chafed by what they felt to be an insensitivity to their predicament. Thirty years later this marginal complaint might well have acquired the sharp edge of feminist critique, but my prognostication is that Herskovits by now would be one of its champions with few crimes of his own to answer for.

The presence of African and African-American students provided an additional dimension to the character of the program. We were all aware that this had not come about by chance but was the result of a long struggle against discrimination led by Herskovits at the university and in the local community. Segregated housing and discouragement of ethnic minority participation had been so extensive as to be a profound embarrassment to many visiting scholars and potential students. The situation provoked Herskovits to a deep and unremitting outrage. He wrote searing letters to the local press and on more than one occasion had canceled scheduled professional meetings because of the racist policies of local hotels and other establishments. The university administration was besieged by his complaints about campus

attitudes toward minorities and the restricted facilities available to them. It was due largely to his efforts that a unique institution known as Anthropology House was founded within a block of the campus. It was a rambling old residence in a once stately neighborhood that soon became the refuge of a motley corps of graduate students and their consorts, invited guests, visitors and special events. Though it aroused considerable curiosity, there were few overt expressions of disapproval from the citizenry even when a splendid multitude thronged about the premises for what I believe was the first public inter-racial wedding reception in the area.

IV

Living at “Anthro House” was a momentous experience for me, Kathy and the children. It was not long after we arrived in Evanston that we were invited to take up residence there. The idea was, I think, that being a bit older than the others and the only couple with children among the students, we might function as a stabilizing influence and provide a cloak of respectability for a situation that may have appeared to many good citizens of the proximate community as an alarming state of anarchy. We were given the largest quarters and assigned the droll title of “House Family.” Our task was to preside over weekly house meetings, help delegate responsibility for rent collection, bill paying, cleaning, tending the monstrous coal burning furnace, dealing with complaints from the outer world as well as internal altercations, and generally to perform as proctors without portfolio or subordinate constituency. Be that as it may, there was little evidence that our presence did much to disturb the traditional aspect of the place. It was run entirely by the inmates who lived and breathed anthropology and rigorously defended their autonomy. Bull sessions and parties at all hours attracted a continual stream of habitués while others retreated to rooms or any nook and cranny to study for an exam or write a paper.

Personal problems were probed exhaustively, world politics and the current state of affairs in the United States were decomposed, and in the basement sanctum there usually could be found a small recumbent audience around a decrepit television set transfixed by the Joseph McCarthy hearings or something equally engrossing.

The graduate students I had the good fortune to be associated with during the mid-1950s were for the most part a hard-working and independent lot. Our residential fastness provided a safe haven for open forum where we could share our views and our anxieties about what was expected of us. We followed the progress of the more advanced students and those returning from the field or writing their dissertations. They were tracked like wary prey and when they came through the area we assaulted them with questions about their work and experiences. As is frequently the case when there is a forceful personality at the helm there is muttering among the crew. We critiqued our classes with ferocious zeal, reserving special heed, of course, to those of Herskovits. There was some persistent grumbling about the restrictive nature of the curriculum, the sparse and seemingly biased reference to other approaches in anthropology, and the overwhelmingly privileged status of "Papa Herskovits'" Boasian orientation. The ferment of rebellion sometimes surfaced during sessions of Herskovits' required seminar on Cultural Dynamics where we were charged with writing a synoptic analysis and leading discussion on a topic such as Cultural Relativism, Cultural Focus, Cultural Drift, Cultural Pattern, Reinterpretation or Enculturation delegated from a list and with no option. On more than one occasion a position rival to or critical of his own was essayed by one of our courageous though apprehensive fellows while we sat securing against the gathering storm. Our professor's face would redden as he scrawled fiercely on his notepad. Then, after curtly thanking the perpetrator,

he would launch into a devastating rebuttal intended to rid the world once and for all of such heresy. For those not overly cowed, the discussions that followed were lively and informative. We learned that he could listen, that he loved repartee, tolerated challenge and, above all, bore no malice.

Once, for example, one of the keenest wits among us presented a paper entitled, "Cultural Focus: Hokus Pocus?" We sat transfixed by his wonderful audacity while what amounted to a fledgling pre-postmodern deconstruction of a pet theory provoked in his mentor the familiar flushed frown and scribbled notes. When the ordeal was over there was an agonized moment of silence. But Herskovits had composed himself. Crossing his arms on the table and peering benignly over his glasses to his now thoroughly drained student he remarked with quiet solicitude, "Most interesting, but I have but one comment at the moment. Shouldn't your title have been 'Cultural Focus: Hokus *or* Pocus?'" The old boy had disarmed us again.

Though Herskovits dominated the local scene, he was less involved in teaching commitments than usual due to his many professional engagements. Therefore most of our formal instruction was with others. We felt a particular regard for William Bascom, that generous and erudite man who was at the time teaching the core courses in field methods and West African ethnography. They provided the kind of unencumbered factual information and guidance that we desperately needed. Francis Hsu's lectures on social organization and ethnicity were welcome though sometimes obtuse departures from our standard fare. For me, however, a major leap forward occurred when the brilliant southwestern ethnologist and linguist Edward Dozier joined the staff. His presence opened up new vistas of current anthropological thought and his association with Fred Eggan and others at the University of Chicago led some of us to

venture a semi-clandestine attendance of lectures in which versions of Radcliffe-Brownian structural-functionalism held sway. Dozier's impact upon me as an anthropologist and as a profoundly affecting personality was enduring. He and his wife Marianne were warm and accessible people who were to become for me and my family among the most cherished of friends.

Another significant influence on a number of us came from the young Africanist and political scientist David Apter who at that time was under thrall to the Talcott Parsons phenomenon. During brief encounters of imagined apostasy we doted on his vigorous exposition of the *Structure of Social Action* and a system of concepts somewhat beyond our ken but gloriously alien and promising of ultimate closure. My own emancipation from the all-embracing notion of culture as a seamless totality of psychological and institutional patterning commenced here, I think, and incongruously enough in this context, was reinforced by the Marxist historical materialism that remained an obdurate component of my worldview. This was to bring me into direct confrontation with Herskovits on more than one occasion when he sought to purge from my speech, my papers and, later, the many drafts of a dissertation any employment of the potent new analytical distinction between social and cultural processes ("pure sophistry") or, most certainly, any hint of "determinism" of whatever stripe.

There was a particularly heated exchange one day in his office that seemed to exasperate him beyond endurance. In trying to defend my position I somewhat lamely argued that an essay of mine⁵ placing art in a functionalist sociocultural frame was not inconsistent with his own discussion of the society/culture dichotomy in *Man and His Works* or Boas' distinction between esthetics and artistry. Implying I was impervious to further verbal council, he seized a pencil as

though it was the weapon of choice and furiously attacked a notepad on his desk. In a few moments he thrust the result toward me with a heavy sigh: “That, young man, is *culture!*” What I saw was a bold schematic outline entitled “The Concept of Culture” in which *Culture* was divided into *psychological* and *historical* categories, and thence into *action* (behavior) and *ideation* (concepts), and still further into *social aspects* (institutional) and *religio-aesthetic aspects* (creative), the whole mediated by *language* and finally by the *integrating mechanisms* of values, relationships and functions.

That concluded the session, but a few days later a more refined mimeographed version of the figure appeared on the department bulletin board and was distributed to his class on Theories of Culture. I have retained a copy of that document all these years as a memento of the incident and still puzzle over its meaning or its relevance to our conversation. I do understand, however, that it was his intention to bring me back to first principles and that he was determined to deter any further such straying among his flock. Looking back, I regret that my memory has failed me about details that would now help me to grasp more of the substance of his discourse during informal exchanges of this kind, less tainted by the subjective skew of egocentric recollection.

When I reflect on my own relations with Herskovits I am struck by the ambivalent feelings he provoked in me. On the one hand, he could be the most contentious and obstinate person I have ever known, always certain of his rectitude and seemingly oblivious of interpersonal sensibilities. I now realize that I must have been equally pugnacious in my own right and that, given our singular trajectories, we were destined to clash during frequent orbital oscillations. As an older student, insecure in status and emboldened by family responsibilities, I was easily vexed by the perception of patronization or rebuff. Also, I suppose my prior

identification with Herskovits as a familiar spirit of heroic dimensions was abashed by the mundane strictures upon his day-to-day role as mentor and administrator in which there was little to meet my expectations on that level. Thus, to me, he was not the awesome authority figure he was to many of the others but, rather, a dominant peer with whom to grapple and to covertly emulate. On the other hand, the man inspired genuine respect. His personal and intellectual honesty was as transparent as his unfailing loyalty to his associates and to his legacy. I knew he was no ordinary man.

One of his most appealing personal attributes was an innocent social conviviality that transcended the severest differences of opinion or notions of deportment. For example, despite the fact that he knew Anthropology House to be a nest of dissident solidarity – tantamount to a counter-culture of the department – he was expansively proud of it, eagerly attending any parties or other events to which he was invited and frequently bringing visiting colleagues like Meyer Fortes, Fred Eggan, Raymond Firth and Joseph Greenberg to meet with us. It was his showpiece and a link to that part of student life he apparently once had much enjoyed. His pleasure at being among us was mutually exhilarating, for he became relaxed and the usual formality vanished. It was at such times one was most aware of him as a person and in a very real sense learned the most from him.

The actual centerpiece of the program, however, was the bi-monthly seminars of the Institute on Contemporary Africa that provided us a demonstration of his remarkable range of interests and associations. The roster of invited speakers was prodigious and included international experts from every pertinent discipline. Many were leading African scholars and spokesmen who at that time had few opportunities to address academic audiences in the United

States. There were also colonial officials some of whom, to our thinking, held shocking political and racist views. But in Herskovits' agenda, these colloquia were the crucial stuff of his instructional program. Here, his students were exposed to the reality of the intellectual and professional world into which they soon were to be ejected. By exhibiting a variety of viewpoints and types of persons of the kind we might eventually meet elsewhere, it was his intention that we should learn the rudiments of objective inquiry as well as the graces of productive discourse. Each of us was assigned the task of organizing the daily routine of a particular guest speaker, of summarizing the seminar presentation and the discussion which followed in final mimeographed form for distribution. The process was, of course, all-consuming and we lamented among ourselves the violence that was being done to our already desperate schedules.

After each seminar we were called together for a critique of the presentation as well as of our own performance. There we learned that some of us were unprepared for trenchant participation or that others had been too combative. Guest speakers were to be engaged in purposeful dialogue, but always with utmost courtesy no matter how they might diverge from our own persuasions. Our task was to extract information without expressing partisanship and to try to understand the social context in which an individual's ideas had been formulated. Our personal convictions were irrelevant in such a setting. If we had not absorbed this fact we were not ready to employ the kind of "scientific detachment" essential to fieldwork. Many of the people invited to the sessions were much like those we might meet in the field and upon whom we might find ourselves dependent for practical information and cooperation. Therefore the seminar experiences were akin to fieldwork. Our job was to gather data, not to instruct or to

induce change.

Herskovits' demeanor in these seminars and in relations with all visiting guests of the program was quite different from the assertive public style with which we and many of his colleagues were well acquainted. Under these conditions he was the charming and attentive host, rather grandly introducing his students (particularly those for whom the visitor might be a future resource), and skillfully mediating discussion to reveal the salient features of an approach without a hint of endorsement or disclaimer. This was the anthropologist in his element, observing, collecting data and reserving judgment for later evaluation. At times, and often for our benefit, he would subject a speaker (or even one of us) to his celebrated "hypothetical situation," a somewhat sly technique of presenting an *as if* scenario for reaction. We became astutely wary of this gambit and I was later to confirm that it was not without its complications among my acute and much more wily African associates.

More than any other mentor I have known, Herskovits was able to convey the excitement, rewards and pitfalls of what he considered to be the privileged mission of anthropology, the going in among peoples of other cultures and being accepted as a student of their way of life. His discussions of theory or method seldom strayed far from ethnographic examples or the field situation itself. In fact, once one had formulated and he had accepted a project for investigation, he seemed less concerned about *the problem* as about one's preparedness in terms of logistics, knowledge of the specific area, useful contacts and the rigors of successful entrance. It was essential to "go through channels," to determine your local status early on, to define yourself with integrity, to establish trustworthy relationships with responsible resource persons, to realize always that you have not only an obligation to your discipline but to

the people among whom you must live and work. We were urged to seek out anyone who had been in the country to which we were headed. Also we were directed to correspond with key officials and other residents of the area informing them of our plans and requesting guidance. The readings suggested to us were extensive and pertinent.

When I look back I am amazed at the enormous amount of basic information I had about the little-known region I had chosen for research. As the time approached to actually go I was as ready as one might expect and this was due largely to Herskovits' careful prodding and unstinting personal involvement. But I had yet to experience how profoundly valorous this involvement was on the rocky road that lay immediately ahead.

V

In the spring of 1955 I passed my doctoral exams and presented a dissertation proposal for fieldwork to be based among the Gola of Liberia. When Herskovits once asked "why the Gola?" I enjoyed the presence of mind to reply, "the answer is the same as for why the *Saramacca*?" We shared a hearty laugh. Actually, I was not sure how those people had become so fixed in my mind, excepting for the fact that in all the reading I had done on the region they stood out as the least known and the most truculent of groups met by the Liberian colonists and travelers through the interior. I was intrigued by their successful resistance to subjugation well into the twentieth century and the symbolic role of their territory in Liberian commentary as the last stronghold of unrepentant tribalism and savagery. They were deemed the most "backward" of the indigenous peoples, defiantly holding to their traditions and boastful about their history of hegemonic expansion. These were a people I much desired to meet.

I did not express such thoughts candidly to others. They were not the sorts of reasons

that would justify a major research project and might well have aroused Herskovits to exhortations about inappropriate proclivity to championship of the underdog, or worse. My announced reasons were acceptable enough: to go in where others had not gone; to record what I could of an unrecorded culture; to understand the factors that had sustained the identity and solidarity of a people through a century or more of drastic environmental and political change; to observe the unique consequences of an attempt by descendants of black American colonists to forge a nation on a portion of the west coast of Africa where polities like those of the Gola had once held sway. Many other interests, less objective and more fanciful, were excited by the prospect of adventure in fabulous places and among a mysteriously alien peoples. But the former served to propel me through my committee of mentors.

After applying to various funding sources and enduring anxious weeks of waiting, I and a fellow student learned on the same day that we had been awarded what were in those days generous grants from the Ford Foundation. Our elation and great relief reverberated through celebrations at “Anthro House” and elicited carefully modulated expressions of gratulation and suppressed pride from Herskovits. We knew how seriously he took such recognition of his students and how assiduously he had promoted our interests. Suddenly, the accumulated tensions of pupilage seemed to fall away and we were able to admit the gratitude we felt for him and to experience the subtle shift to collegueship in his relation to us.

But my own rejoicing was short-lived. In the midst of preparations for an extended field trip I began to have belated misgivings about applying for a passport. I had not given serious thought to the possibility that the problems others were having in the fetid political climate of the McCarthy period were relevant to my own situation. Now, however, the naiveté if not

irresponsibility of this delusion overwhelmed me. What might be the consequences for the department and its vulnerable overseas programs were I in some way to be used as an instrument of attack? What of Herskovits whose often controversial public role with regard to race relations and African affairs had earned him admirers as well as acrimonious critics? What right did I have to violate the trust of this man who had given much of himself while I heedlessly pursued my own goals? I struggled with this problem for some time, discussing it with a few friends and, of course, with my wife who was the most helpful in bringing me to an inevitable decision. Strange and overwrought as my frame of mind may seem to some today, those who remember that brief era in American life will surely confirm that it was to a large extent warranted.

I recall very well the day I went unannounced into Herskovits' office and told him that I intended to decline the Ford grant because I had been a member of the Communist Party while active in waterfront unions. Others with similar backgrounds were being barred from foreign travel and I had decided that to apply for a passport at this time would be foolhardy. If it were denied, the consequences could be detrimental to all concerned. As I spoke I was filled with a guilty apprehension about the impact of the admission and a consuming regret that I had not made any attempt to inform him earlier. I felt I had betrayed him and the program, and deserved nothing better than to be sent about my business elsewhere.

But Herskovits appeared utterly unperturbed (though I was to learn later that he had been stunned by the revelation). After a few moments he inquired whether I had been a member of "the organization" since coming to the department or had any intent of continuing my association. I told him I had no such connection or intent since leaving the West Coast but, though I had withdrawn from the party because of increasing disagreement with its policies, I

could not speak for the future or assert that my personal political views had undergone basic change. When I finished, he sat back as though the matter was closed. Looking at me severely he said, "Do you want to be an anthropologist and carry out your work in Liberia?" As I blurted out an agonized "Yes!" he stood up almost threateningly: "Well then, Warren d'Azevedo, go back home, clear it with Kathy and the children, and apply for that passport!"

That was all. But my sense of relief and gratitude is with me still. I did apply and, after what seemed an interminable wait of two months, the request was curtly refused by a Francis G. Knight, Director of the Passport Division of the State Department, on grounds that I was known to be under the discipline and control of the Communist Party. Herskovits was incensed, and immediately set about soliciting in my behalf. Not once did he question me further about my statements to him denying current membership. Within a few days he put me in contact with a prominent Washington law firm that took my case without fee and assigned a very capable young lawyer to work with me. Had it not been for the latter's faithful guidance over the next few months of briefings and State Department hearings I doubt that I could have coped with the seemingly impervious wall of government bureaucracy and the sense of hopelessness that the countless delays and chilling official implacability evoked.

The crux of the case seemed to rest on my refusal to reveal the names or the details of events involved in my early association. To my bored interrogators this was sufficient evidence that I had neither severed connections nor experienced "a change of heart." Moreover, a poem of mine entitled "The Oath" had appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation*, a car with my license plate had been "reported" in front of the home of a "known Communist" during one of my recent visits to Berkeley, and I had received a letter from "The American Scientist

Federation” inquiring about the case! In view of such momentous intelligence and my failure to recant, the passport must continue to be denied. My lawyer assured me that from a legal standpoint my position was a sound one and perhaps ultimately winnable, but that in the present political situation the struggle might be long and tedious. The only way to settle it immediately was to do what was wanted of me, but he had already ascertained that this was out of the question. So now one could only try to keep the issue alive, and wait.

A large number of friends risked involvement by writing supportive affidavits to the State Department, including most of my mentors and associates at Northwestern. Years later I was to read what Herskovits had written. In his forthright manner he declared that I had pursued studies under his direction since 1953 and that in the many opportunities he had to know my “thought processes” he had no reason at any time to doubt my honesty or my assertion of disaffiliation from the Communist Party. “It is not possible,” he wrote, “for me to recall any single instance either in the discussion of colonialism or social theory where the expression of his point of view seemed doctrinaire or when he seemed committed to any one ideology.” He had found my position to be “that of the essentially scientific student, a position which is in strong opposition to the theory of economic determinism.” Special note was made of a paper I had written for him evaluating an article on West Africa by the Soviet anthropologist Sobchenko. It was, in his view, “critical and incisive.” As for my alleged continued connection with the organization in question, he concluded with characteristic practicality: “...it is extremely unlikely that any post-graduate student, no matter how great his energy and intellectual capacity, could make the record he has made and devote any significant amount of time to doing anything else in view of the amount of work we demand from students at his level.”

The poignancy and trusting simplicity of these remarks come home to me when I remember the occasions in which I had troubled him by a vigorous defense of historical materialist interpretations. I am sure he must have rationalized this tendency as a vestige of youthful activism from which I was in the process of being disabused by exposure to “scientific method.” He had not been comfortable with my stance in the passport matter where I insisted that my withdrawal from the party had been due to an inability to accept its increasing parochialism and ideological vacillations, but this did not mean that I had disavowed the ideas and values that had brought me to it in the first place. Though I was no longer a member of that organization, I saw no justification legally or morally for the restriction on rights of citizenship whether one was or not.

At no time did Mel Herskovits press me or in any way suggest a compromise of my own notions of personal integrity. In fact, he seldom referred to the matter. Rather, he continued to advise me concerning the Liberian field study as though its implementation was a foregone conclusion. He and Frances were extremely kind to Kathy and the children, remarking frequently that I would be the first among their students to go to Africa with a family. Extensive advice was given about fieldwork procedure, health, clothing, setting up a household in the bush, education of the children, cultural shock, isolation and homesickness, food, escape and recreation. It was as though we were actually on our way, without a doubt.

But as the weeks went by, with no sign of change in the passport situation, I decided we should go to Nevada where I could continue my research among the Washoe while waiting it out. That would be my alternate project if I was prevented from leaving the country. The prospect did not please Herskovits overmuch for I think the Far West was, from his urban eastern

aspect, a somewhat outlandish region, the province of “that California bunch.” His parting words to us were, “You are going to Africa. Don’t let Kroeber talk you out of it!” Aside from the very unlikely possibility that Kroeber (the symbolic sovereign of all that) would give any thought to the matter, this good-natured jesting did not conceal a real concern that the move might kindle defection to “the West.” Herskovits guarded his flock jealously and his shepherd instincts were aroused by any sign of straying. Nevertheless, the department gave us a three hundred dollar field grant (not in the least parsimonious at that time) and fondly waved us on our way.

For the next eight months we lived close among the Washoe settlements around Carson Valley, working with old friends and almost forgetting, in that idyllic setting, the problem we had left behind. But periodic reports from my persevering lawyer (for whose diligent efforts we shall ever be grateful) kept us mindful of the infuriatingly tedious stonewalling by Washington officialdom. At last, in December of 1955, we were informed that a passport would be issued. No explanation was given, though I was to learn twenty years later from documents made available under the Freedom of Information Act that the State Department had reconsidered its legal standing in the case and had determined “the derogatory information was insufficient to warrant a denial of passport.” (But, apparently, such mischief in high places is self-perpetuating. The same document ordered that the American Embassy in Liberia be requested to place me under surveillance during my impending stay there and to report any actions that might “adversely affect the interests of the Department or the national security.” It seems that two young embassy types did make what for them would have been a lubberly trek to the Gola interior not long after our arrival, reporting they had been unable to uncover any evidence of

subversion on my part, noting by way of qualification that their investigation was rather impeded due to the fact that “most of the people d’Azevedo works with are inarticulate and do not speak English.”)!

VI

We returned to Evanston from our sojourn among the Washoe and were greeted by jubilant friends. But there now loomed before us the not fully comprehended undertaking of preparing, within a few short weeks, for a two-year field trip to a remote and largely unknown destination. Had it not been for the generous help of Bill and Berta Bascom, Ed and Marianne Dozier and a number of my fellow students I doubt that we could have got off with our heads and our copious dunnage all together. In the midst of the tumult Kathy and I remember how reassuring were our conversations with Simon and Phoebe Ottenberg who had just returned from extended fieldwork in Nigeria. Most meaningful to us at the time – and throughout our own venture – was their wonderfully perceptive advice about living for long periods without breaks in a dense and scrutinous African village. We found it all too true; for if we needed a shouting argument or any refuge of withdrawal there was never ever privacy from curious neighbors or their clustering children anywhere around our mud-and-wattle house. You couldn’t just take a drive, a walk, or go to confide in an old friend – and the bush was uninviting. Thanks to the Ottenbergs we were duly primed for this vital adjustment that no one else had thought to mention.

Mel and Frances Herskovits hovered over us like a brooding brace. There was much solicitude about the children. Frances, in particular, provided such detailed and repeated counsel about their health, diet, essential medicaments, schooling and living conditions that we often

were driven to distraction, only later appreciating its value. As for Mel, he had descended from the high perch where he customarily surveyed *the field* as sentinel of the ethnographers' laboratory and seemed now to revel in the most domestic minutia – pots and pans, water filters, tropical clothing, shaving (no beards or mustaches!), preferential local foods, and the like. But also I must have very specific kinds of notepads, pencils, typewriter ribbons, index cards, paper, erasers, mailing materials, film containers, dehumidifiers, budget book and, certainly, a compass. Directives continued to mount until the very eve of departure.

His final contribution to the confusion was to insist that I take a tuxedo. Not ever having owned or even worn one, and seeing no earthly use for so bizarre an item in up-country Liberia, I resisted by procrastination. The other students were appalled at the demand and urged me to ignore it. But Mel Herskovits was not to be put off: had I packed the tuxedo, a white shirt, tie, and black shoes? Thus, practically hours before boarding our train for New Orleans and a Delta Line ship, I vented my irritation by rushing into an Evanston thrift store where for ten dollars I bought an incredible tux that may have been worn by a be-bop orchestra leader of the 1930s. Now, when asked again – and indeed I was – I could say emphatically, “Yes. I’ve packed a tuxedo!” But the joke was on me. Some weeks after arriving in Monrovia we received a command invitation to attend the inaugural ball of President William V.S. Tubman. Black tie required. Though Kathy was able to assemble a quite fetching gown from bits of this and that, I had no recourse but to dig that wrinkled, wide-lapelled, and cinch-cuffed monstrosity from our moldering field trunks. Aside from the aghast looks and sneaky quips of some British acquaintances, the outfit did me well, for we not only got through the door of the Executive Pavilion but were seated among a group of finely gowned tribal chiefs who, I think, much

admired it. I never told Mel this story: he merely would have said, “Well, so you see!”

This seems the place to acknowledge how well our entrance into Liberia and thence to the land of the Gola was served by Herskovits’ constant indoctrination about procedure and personal conduct in the field. Had I not heeded his homilies concerning necessary dependence upon the most unlikely persons, his injunctions about “going through channels,” or about observing local protocol minutely, our project could have foundered at the outset. It was, for example, an elderly missionary woman who befriended our children aboard ship and who strove mightily to bring the glad tidings of the gospel to our alarmingly freethinking family. For three weeks across the Atlantic and down the coast of Africa we were at her mercy within that rolling and cloistral ark. Kathy and the children found her kindly and diverting, thus allaying much of her preachment, but when she got wind of my poorly disguised atheism all hell could not turn her from her calling. For the first time since my childhood I experienced what it was like to be a heathen in the loving eyes of a servant of god, the captive of an indomitable will.

Yet it was this extraordinary fellow-passenger who became our initiatory benefactress. When she learned that we were to disembark at Monrovia with no one to greet us and without advance arrangements, it was she who guided us numbed and bewildered, bag and baggage, onto the steaming and tumultuous port, through the clamorous labyrinth of that strange little African city, and to haven we would never have found on our own. Moreover, she turned out to be a highly respected foreigner, the famed “Ma Miller” whose Lutheran Mission and school far up the St. Paul River was something of a principality in its own right where a goodly portion of a generation of elite Liberians and their wards had been trained for the task of Christian exemplarship. Her access to officialdom and the respect it afforded her service to the country

was great. She was to become a fast friend of the family and, at times, custodian of our children. I can hear Herskovits' voice intoning, "So, you see?"

It was also Ma Miller who gave us the name of a few persons in Monrovia who might provide a place to stay. In the meantime, however, we headed bag-and-baggage to the Monrovia City Hotel where we had made arrangement by mail. The fact that we had arrived with "Ma" seemed to have made an impression on our motley gang of porters, for when I expressed some concern to their leader about the security of our mound of luggage he waved his arms and cried out, "Oh, don't worry. You in Liberia Now! Everything fine here!" And it was.

We got into one of those remarkable broken-down taxis, spewing smoke through the jammed streets of the hot and humid city. The crumbling mansions and spreading shanty towns seemed eerily reminiscent of the Old South. And when we got to the hotel we were told it was full up. Very apologetically we were put up on the roof where there was a sort of open room or shelter. Beds were brought up and our enormous pile of luggage was covered with tarps. We were to use the bathroom and sinks on the floor below. But we managed to settle in. It rained torrents that night and all of our things were damp and steaming when the sun came out in the morning.

That first night was memorable to say the least. We were awakened by the sounds of screaming and yelling in the street below. Looking down we saw that there was a great tin-roofed amphitheater next to the hotel where the movie *King Kong* was being shown. Every time King Kong appeared on the screen, the entire audience swarmed screaming into the street. Then they would creep back again, and the tumult was repeated. Tired as we were we watched the spectacle for hours. I suppose that first day had enveloped us in the kind of estrangement that

might have been thought to produce the phenomenon known as “culture shock.” But, actually, we were more entranced than traumatized by our entrance into this exotic environment, though I was to experience that predicament upon leaving rather than arriving in Liberia. As for Kathy and the kids, I think that our frequent movings about and our sojourns among a wide range of peoples and circumstances in our own country had prepared us all for such events – extreme as this one may have seemed.

A few days later I went to see Ruth Hill who Ma Miller had told us about. She was the director of the YMCA in Monrovia and lived in a house on lower Randall Street. Her place was one of those ubiquitous white-plastered bungalows built in the old style high off the ground with space for families of local native peoples underneath. Ruth was an admirable woman who was to become one of our closest friends. She welcomed us warmly and provided two rooms for us to use, while our baggage could be stored in sheds behind her house. Her two very reliable houseboys assured me that they would be on guard against “tifi tifi,” the night crawling thieves that were reported to be as numerous as cockroaches.

When we were installed at last we began to savor Monrovia life in earnest. It teemed around us in the streets and surrounding neighborhoods. Anya and Erik spent a lot of time on the back porch observing the family life of the noisy throng living below. They were entranced by everything, and full of reports and questions about what they saw. So I don't think any of us had time for “culture shock” or even homesickness. We were exploring.

Just as fatefully, it seems, the first Liberian official we met was a former student of Herskovits who, as Director of Immigration, welcomed us warmly by grandly dismissing the usual bureaucratic imbroglio, waving aside a throng of petulant clerks and stamping our papers

with a flourish. He and his wife showed us about the town and had us to their opulent home for dinners and social gatherings. We were struck by the grandness of their way of life in contrast to the squalor of the streets and spreading “tribal quarters.” It was difficult to get used to the fact that our aristocratic hosts, hospitable to a fault, yet haughty and severe to underlings, were the same young couple we had known as African students and unpretentious peers in the States. They were now distanced from us by a subtle shield of status and culture that we had yet to comprehend. Their generosity and spontaneous warmth was tempered by a defensive watchfulness about our reactions as Americans to their way of life and their country. But through them, and others whom we met, we began early to learn what was expected of us as visitors and befitting friends.

Though everyone was cordial, our plans were odd and precarious to most. Only missionaries and concessionaires went into “the bush” with families, and *they* had facilities and organizations to sustain them. What did anthropologists *do*, anyway? Did we realize how difficult it was to live out there, how backward the people were, and what had happened to so-and-so at such-and-such a remote place? Our anxieties began to mount as we discovered that few urban “Americo-Liberians” had any but the vaguest notions of their country outside Monrovia. Many professed a refined horror of it, and others seemed to take a kind of pride in declaring that they had never been to “the hinterland,” or entertained any desire to do so. I was aware that we were now experiencing the peculiar status division in Liberian society, a legacy of its colonizing past and one of the salient features I had proposed to study. During that first week or two I made attempts to break out of the hovering protection of the American and upper-class Liberian set, seeking out contacts among low-echelon government and tribal officials who might

inform me of the Gola. But my efforts met with polite and reserved curiosity about my “purpose” and whether I had received “letters” from the proper authorities. There, scarcely twenty miles north of Monrovia, the land of the Gola extended deep into the interior, yet the people and their territory remained an enigma. The fact that those were the people with whom I intended to work evoked the familiar question among our current acquaintances, “Why the Gola?” There were so many interesting “civilized natives” like the Kpelle or the Bassa or the Vai. Who would want to go among the Gola? They were improvident and hostile, and always had been a problem for the country.

Those first few weeks were a sort of limbo. I was increasingly impatient to get our family settled somewhere and to get on with the work I had come to do. We were, nevertheless, learning more than we realized about an important aspect of Liberian society, one that also corroborated Herskovits’ oft-uttered dictum about “going through channels.” In accordance with his insistent reminders, I had written to several key officials and others informing of my intended research. And, upon arrival in Monrovia, I had gone directly to the Executive Mansion to deliver a request for audience with the President, an act impressed upon me as customary and requisitory to the extreme. But as the days passed without word, I determined to find independent ways of getting up-country. The delay was becoming intolerable: I had to see what was there and what the Gola really were. It seemed so simple to do so. A road had just been bulldozed sixty miles into the bush by the Liberian Mining Company at Bomi Hills. It cut through two or three major Gola chiefdoms heretofore inaccessible by other than a two or three day trek. Perhaps I could hire a taxi or hitch a ride with one of the mining staff.

In retrospect I often have thought how fortunate it was that an opportunity to go did not

present itself at that point and that I had reluctantly heeded the dissuasions of our local acquaintances. We were cautioned by everyone not to venture from the city – even for a casual excursion to the nearby “hinterland” – until we had seen the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Interior as well as the Under-Secretaries of the new Bureau of Folkways. When we expressed perplexity over such a cumbrous process, we were given to understand that numbers of impetuous foreigners regularly were declared *persona non grata* with twenty-four hours to leave the country for even minor infractions of customary etiquette in this regard. Liberian officialdom was “touchy” in matters of “respect,” and became particularly disturbed about unauthorized strangers wandering through the native interior. A presidential order of deportation could not be appealed. The American Embassy was notoriously supine about such matters. When in trouble, it was best to seek counsel from the British or French embassies, etcetera.

At last the long-awaited “Green Letter” came from the Social Secretary of the President informing me that an audience had been granted. On the appointed day I donned a jacket and tie and was ushered into the heavily guarded chambers of the “Old Man.” President W.V.S. Tubman sat behind an enormous desk – a small, austere man with very thick glasses, flanked by two resplendent and armed attendants. Others arrayed to my rear nudged me into a chair directly facing him. After staring intently at me for a moment, he welcomed me to his country euphemistically as “Doctor d’Azevedo.” Did I have some credentials to show him? At that moment I was vastly relieved that I *did* have gold-sealed letters from the President of Northwestern University and from the Ford Foundation for his aide to place before him (of course, it was Herskovits who had demanded that I procure such papers!). Glancing at them

briefly, he inquired about the health of my old professor, “the renowned Doctor Herskovits whose researches in Africa were appreciated by all civilized Liberians.” Would I extend to him “felicitous greetings?” Then he asked the question that I was to hear at every introductory meeting with commissioners, chiefs and village headmen ever after: “What is your business in my country?”

When I concluded a brief statement of intent, he asked whether I knew of the work of “the famous Doctor George Harley.” Not waiting for my affirmative response, he proceeded to advise me how this great man had set an example that he hoped all who came to study the indigenous people of the country would follow. Harley had been a “civilizing influence” and he understood the long and difficult struggle of the government to bring peace and progress to the interior. The President’s next question also was rhetorical and especially familiar: “Why should you wish to study the Gola?” He would counsel against it. They were a troublesome people and it had often been necessary to deal sternly with them. He did not think I would want to expose my wife and children to the discomfort and dangers of the primitive conditions that prevailed there. Certainly my Professor Herskovits would agree. However, should I persist in my desire to study those people, he would suggest that I take up residence under the protection of the fine Baptist Mission at the town of Suehn on the border of Gola territory. My family would be safe there among “civilized people.” He would make such a recommendation to the Interior Department and to the Research Officers of the Bureau of Folkways. With that, he waved an end to the audience and I was shown out.

While writing the above I have become aware of how my description of this meeting is analogous in many respects to that of my first encounter with Herskovits. Two more vastly

different beings in personality and circumstance would be difficult to imagine: the one, a social scientist and devoted teacher; the other, a brilliant demagogue whose regime was more autocratic than any Liberians had previously endured. Yet, I recognize in myself a peculiar sense of congruence, not of the persons, but of my own stance in each instance. In each, I felt myself on the threshold of a world I yearned to enter, and in each there was a looming personage who had the power to allow or prevent passage. Therefore, it is not so strange that Melville J. Herskovits and W.V.S. Tubman should be perceived as gatekeepers on my involuted route to Africa.

Sure enough, within days of the audience I was visited by the Honorable Oscar Norman, Assistant Secretary of the Interior. He brought with him another "Green Letter," this time signed by the President and introducing me "to all Provincial, District and Assistant Commissioners and Paramount, Clan and Town Chiefs of the Liberian Hinterland." This, I was told, was my "passport" to the interior and must be with me at all times. As it turned out, Oscar Norman was an extraordinary man who I was exceedingly fortunate to have as a friend and advisor in the coming months. He was the first Gola appointed to high office and, together with the Vai scholar, S. Jangaba M. Johnson and Bai T. Moore, a Dei-Gola writer, constituted the small corps of "native researchers" in the new Bureau of Folkways. I soon gathered that they had been given the charge of keeping track of me and, as I later learned, to pre-empt the resources of my work for early Bureau publication where possible. Nothing could have been a greater advantage to me at the time, for their extensive contacts in the western interior and their special interest in the progress of my research opened doors that would have remained closed.

However, I was not destined to get to the heart of Gola country soon. Oscar Norman arrived one morning with a government vehicle and driver to take me and the family on a visit to Suehn which he said “the Old Man” suggested was the most befitting place for us to be stationed. It proved to be a most disheartening experience. We passed over miles of billowing red dust and through an occasional dreary rural settlement with its dilapidated houses of rusted corrugated iron and outlying thatched quarters of native retainers. I knew from my earlier readings that this had been the old area ravaged by the Dei - Gola wars and Liberian conquest in the nineteenth century, the route to the once-powerful trading center at Bopolu. It was here, as well as elsewhere along the St. Paul River, that the Liberians had settled their “Congo” wards as an agricultural tenantry creating, in effect, the sprawling rural suburbs of Monrovia. Suehn, itself, was an attractive mixed-tribal village, once the fortified town of the famous Gola chieftain Getumbe who had led repeated wars of resistance against Liberian penetration. Little did I know at the time, nor did my guide inform me, that the town was the family residence of one of the old warrior’s descendants, now the Paramount Chief of a major cluster of Gola chiefdoms stretching to the northwest. Rather, we were taken directly to the extensive compound of the Suehn Industrial Mission presided over by the remarkable black American missionary known as “Ma Davies” who seemed to reign as a benign autocrat in the area. She greeted us with great warmth and expressed her pleasure at the prospect of having such a family under the protection of her mission. We were then shown the house we could have at a most reasonable rent: it was one of those ubiquitous, cavernous, two-storied and corrugated settler monstrosities that we had come to regard with horror. When I asked about native housing in the village, she and her staff were astonished. That was really out of the question for people of our sort. The townspeople would

not know how to deal with us and we would find it most uncomfortable. And there were the children!

After a sumptuous lunch of rice, palm oil and other local produce we bid farewell to the gracious host of our very first venture to the verges of the hinterland. I must say for my friend Oscar Norman that he appeared to have anticipated our reaction. I told him again that I wanted to work in the real Gola country, if I could ever get to it. Yes, he understood, but I must be patient. It could not be done so quickly. The "Old Man" had given firm instructions. Yet he himself, as a Gola, wanted me to see his people in the interior. But there were difficulties. I had read about the attempted assassination of the President during the election campaign a few months previously. A number of supposed conspirators of the opposition party were tracked down in Gola country and killed. It was said that they had been harbored by Gola friends and relatives. Much of the old fear and hostility about the Gola had been aroused by the event. The President was vexed and wanted to punish the tribe, Norman told me, but he was ready to forgive them. Had I come last year I might never have gotten into that part of the interior. The government does not like to show its problems to foreigners. So, at that moment I learned how fortunate the delay had been in my coming to Liberia. I also admit to a private elation in finding that my chosen people were living up to their reputation. Mel Herskovits most certainly would have reproved any such leanings, and I never shared this bit of whimsy with him.

The upshot of all this was that the Gola came to me before I went to them. I do believe that Oscar Norman had something quite directly to do with it, and someday I must write about it in all the wonderful detail it deserves. But briefly, I was confronted one day outside our quarters in Monrovia by a young man who pronounced himself to be the great-great grandson of Kpomomo

Kpo, the mighty war chief of Kpo Clan in Lofa-Gola Chiefdom.⁶ The people had heard that I had come to study their history. As he could speak and write English very well, and was known by all his elders for his command of “high Gola,” they and the Paramount Chief had appointed him to be my interpreter and guide! Hyperbole notwithstanding, his story turned out to be true. When hearing of it, Oscar Norman shrugged noncommittally: “Well, we can try. Paramount Chief Zuanna Johnson is my uncle and I do not think the President stands against him.” (Of course, Zuanna was the man whose family compound I had not been taken to see at Suehn). A few days later, accompanied by Norman and the young man Isaac Kanlé, I was driven to the village of Klé,⁷ the seat of the Lofa-Gola Chiefdom forty miles up the unfinished Bomi Road.

After first presenting my “Green Letter” to an exasperatingly pompous District Commissioner I was escorted to the compound of P.C. Zuanna Johnson, one of the most impressive and modest men I have ever met. In my first of many such ceremonial exchanges, young Isaac Kanlé translated my clumsy response to the question “What is your business in my country?” into an elegant declamation in “high Gola.” He then presented the bottle of English gin and roll of white cloth that he had insisted I bring as a sign of “cold water and peace.” The chief made a quiet speech thanking me for my “good sense” and welcoming me to his country. “We are not in darkness here as some may think,” he said, nodding in the direction of Monrovia. “We have learned of your ways and about your fine wife and family. We know of your love for the Gola and that you will show our history to the world. If you come here, you will be my stranger-son and live in that house among my family in my own compound.” He pointed to a large roundhouse nearby with ornate carpentered shutters and doors, surrounded by a grove of banana trees. It was, I was told, the “hotel” he had built for important guests. It was now for me

and my family as long as we wished (rent and such matters to be discussed later). Then we were led by his headwife and a number of his sons through the beautiful old village of Klé, soon accompanied by a crowd of curious and delighted residents. When we returned, Chief Zuanna beckoned to a waiting group of wives who placed a great pan of uncooked rice and a flapping white chicken before me. This was to denote the hospitality of the town and that we should never be hungry there.

I knew I had found our home among the Gola. I also knew that it was Oscar Norman who had brought about this change of affairs. Without his tacit intervention it is unlikely that I could have navigated the “proper channels” to so early and successful an entrance into the homeland of those “unruly and backward people.” Apparently he had managed to resolve any problems that might have arisen from his contravention of orders from “the Old Man,” for I never had indication of government displeasure about the situation. When I returned to Monrovia to report to Kathy, Anya and Erik what I had found, it will always remain a matter of grateful wonder to me how pluckily they made that drastic move from the now familiar refuge of friends in an alien city to a sun-baked roundhouse in a distant and isolated tribal village. We bought an old jeep station wagon and, at the peak of the hot, humid dry season, began to haul our field equipment up the Bomi Road and prepare a home in Chief Zuanna’s compound. Exhausted and overwhelmed as we were, we will never forget the eager friendliness of the people in receiving the first white foreigners to live in the village and, for many of them, the first they had seen. By the time the deluges of the rainy season burst upon us, we were as snug as we could have hoped, and over the following year and a half we lived and breathed the Gola way of life.

Now it might seem that I have digressed again from the declared intent of this memoir. Not so. For the long and luminous shadow of Herskovits reaches into every part of it and was yet to congeal once more into his corporeal self. Later that year, one of his letters to us announced that he and Frances were planning a grand tour of Africa and expected to visit us in Liberia. Of course, the pertinent officials and institutions had been informed, but would we oversee the “appropriate arrangements” for their arrival? I was in a state of mild shock and a surge of the old ambivalence about my mentor enveloped me. Here I was, in the first stages of a totally demanding field project, being summoned in the most cavalier fashion to what would be the ambiguous and surely time-consuming role of general factotum. Shades of those research assistant days! On the other hand, to be visited in the far-away field by one’s senior professor was a very rare event. Yet, at the same time, my still tentative schedule of work and our struggling adjustment would now come under professional scrutiny. The days of reckoning were at hand. So, we prepared the best we could.

Fortunately our children were now enrolled in Ma Miller’s up-country Kpolokpelle Mission school. Kathy and I finally yielded to her entreaties when it became clear that the situation in Klé was not going to work out for them. Though Erik at the age of five had been quickly incorporated into the local band of boys his age in the village, he remained something of an oddity with his very white skin and access to a rare store of clothing, food and even toys. It soon became apparent to us that he had been delegated as purveyor of prized goods from our household. Along with his proclivity to fantasize himself as Roy Rogers or Superman, he was soon propelled into swaggering leadership of a motley gang of village urchins who fueled the fire by conferring upon him the honorific title of “Vanya da Dua,” a blustering warchief of

legend. This was not what he needed at this point in his life and we became increasingly aware of it.

Anya's predicament was even more disturbing to us. At nine or ten years of age she found herself among other girls who were mainly occupied with farm work, care of infant siblings and anticipating entry into three-year Sande training. Already, they were being perused by their parents and eagerly attentive males as potential wives or lovers. Although she made what we considered gallant efforts to form friendships, even going out at times to make farm, we were painfully aware that this complex problem could not be resolved.

The recently installed government village school was something else again. Classes of desultory attendance were usually held in the open air or, if it rained, in a palm-thatched shelter. Two very imperious teachers, vigilant of status and assigned duty, held forth in one of the many rural versions of Liberian country-English. Instruction was by rote and infractions of response or of discipline were dealt with by switch. There were no pencils, papers or books and when it was learned that we had brought such items with us for instruction of our children, Anya and Erik bore the brunt of the tidings by being elevated to the dubious function of assistant mentors. In our view the crisis came on the day the head teacher visited us in all seriousness to inquire whether we might allow Anya to be made principal of the school! In short, the situation had become intolerable, and the prospect of Ma Miller's orderly mission boarding-school far up the St. Paul River became the sole but welcome alternative.

Trying as this problem had been for Kathy and me, I must concede all due credit to Anya and Erik who now remember this episode in their lives as one of marvelous adventure and personal encounters. Thus, should Mel Herskovits have been apprised of this quandary in our

adjustment to “the field,” and our ultimate reliance on a benevolent missionary, I am certain we would have heard him intone, “Well, so you see?”

Perhaps this is the appropriate place to insert note of my one cheerful recollection of that episode. It has to do with the occasion when we provided a portion of our store of drawing paper and crayons to the local school. Over the following week or so a flood of the most remarkable artistry emerged from children who had never before seen or used such materials. Images of daily life, of farming, cooking, plants and animals, as well as festive events and the imposing appearance of secret society effigies, abounded in strong line and brilliant color. I still have a collection of this handiwork which awakens in me a somber insight into the untapped reservoir of creativity and urge for expression inherent among these children. Given the tools and the opportunity, the floodgates open. But this digression has led as somewhat afield, again.

For at least three weeks prior to their arrival I ceased all formal fieldwork and devoted my energies to ensuring an “appropriate” reception for Professor and Mrs. Herskovits. There is no denying that more than a little self-interest was involved – on two fronts, actually. When my “Stranger-Father,” Zuanna, learned that my “American Chief” and his wife were coming to the country he was adamant that they should have a reception at Klé “in the old Gola way.” It was inconceivable that they be greeted only by the civilized *kwi* in Monrovia: they must see what the Gola can do. I understood very well his competitive political motivations in this regard. A Paramount Chief’s prestige flourished through such demonstrations of largess and, in this instance, it was an opportunity to cement relations with Monrovia. But he also wished to do me honor by honoring my superior. Thus “*Erkoviz*,” my *other* surrogate father, soon became referred to by Zuanna as “my brother.” Nothing less would do but that they meet and split kola

together.

The other front was Monrovia officialdom. It did not take me long to discover that, while Herskovits was known by reputation to some, his impending visit as a “Professor and a scholar” would not be high on the list of diplomatical functions. In fact, no plans had been made for them to be met at the airport, as was customary for visiting dignitaries, nor had there been any thought to receptions, transport, or local itinerary. I was painfully aware that Liberian protocol required that such observances be made, even perfunctorily, at some level in keeping with the perceived status of a visitor. Part of the problem was that the President was out of town and, apparently, no one had been delegated responsibility. So I did the right thing: I went through channels.

Knowing that the Secretary of State, Momolu Dukuly, was an avowed admirer of Herskovits, I got an appointment to see him. He expressed astonishment at the news. No one had told him (though I learned this was not the case), and the “Old Man” was so pressed by state business he must have neglected to instruct his aides. Something surely must be done. I will say for Dukuly, an urbane and worldly man who had once addressed Herskovits’ seminar that he did set something going. For as I went down through the bureaucratic channels I was met with bright exclamations of “Oh yes, Doctor Herskovits ... what an honor and pleasure ... we are ready!” Ready or not, few were galvanized into action.

Again, it was that worthy marginal man, the Honorable Oscar Norman, who explained matters to me. With the President absent from the country, no one wanted to take responsibility for anything that was not his own personal interests. If the “Old Man” was not around to allocate special funds, any expenditures had to come from their own departments or, perish the thought, out of their own pockets. “These *kwi* big shots are like chickens,” Norman said,

referring to Americo-Liberian bureaucrats in general. “Unless the rooster is there to keep them in line of main business, they do nothing but peck about for their own chop. They have no interest in the country, but are good at grabbing what they can for themselves. That is why I am satisfied to be a poor Gola countryman. You have already seen the difference.” Though my friend Oscar was not exactly a “poor countryman,” this rarely expressed scorn for the urban elite and the uncertain pride in his tribal origins was symptomatic of the frustration experienced by those few like him who, despite “native” or “Congo” backgrounds, were occasionally appointed to subordinate government posts. They knew they were tokens to a desultory national program of “integration” and that the prospect of advancement into the upper echelons of the social or political hierarchies was unlikely to the extreme. Their positions were held precariously through the patronage of well-placed superiors and dependent upon “knowing one’s station.”

Such were the constraints on Oscar Norman when I turned to him in despairing hopes of arranging an “appropriate” official greeting for the Herskovitses whose plane was due within a day or two. His embarrassed response to my appeal brought me to a belated realization of his predicament. As a very “Under-Secretary” of the Department of the Interior and director of the struggling new Bureau of Folkways consisting of three or four “Research Officers” with tribal connections, he was in no position to assume the prerogatives of his superiors. Yes, the Bureau of Folkways would be the proper agency to greet these famous students of Africa and to show them the real people of Liberia. But it was not his place to take the lead in such matters, and no one had directed him to do so. Moreover, even if it were proper to do so, his bureau did not have the funds or the power to requisition a government vehicle for that purpose. He was glad, however, that I had invited Herskovits and his wife to come to our house in Klé. That was

something he, himself, could not propose without authorization. It was my home now and I could invite whom I wished. Yet he would have a hand in it, to be sure, and I would see that the Gola knew better than the *kwi* how to deal with special strangers. This assurance did little to console me at the time, for we had been absent from our village for some days, having left instructions with our household help about preparations for guests and engaging in somewhat vague discussions with P.C. Zuanna and our local friends concerning the character and logistics of an hospitable reception. But everyone seemed preoccupied with other pressing business and I had a sinking feeling of imminent failed enterprise. So much for jaded faith and misplaced anxiety.

Mel and Frances Herskovits arrived at Robertsfield, their plane the usual hours late, careening over the tops of Firestone plantation rubber trees and bouncing to a halt some distance from the airport building. They disembarked fresh and energetic amidst the roiling dust and crowd of noisy porters. I had the distinct impression that when they waved from the ramp they thought the turmoil was for them. But Kathy and I constituted the only reception committee, grabbing their bags and escorting them quickly as possible to our old rusty jeep. During the sweltering trip back to Monrovia we suddenly realized how happy we were to see this robust and keen elder couple who brought with them an invigorating whiff of the outside world. They were marvelously eager and curious about everything that we already had begun to take for granted. We were pelted along the way with questions about plants, animals, topography, demographics, housing types, farming, the physical characteristics and derivations of people on the road, their clothing, their speech, gestures and activities, the weather pattern and points on the compass. Each of them had a pocket notebook that was pulled out frequently to jot an item of interest.

Frances remarked that she did most of her recording of observations from memory at night before sleeping. These would be typed up along with Mel's when they returned to Evanston. For his part, Mel Herskovits seemed to have filled several pages with scrawled entries by the time we reached their hotel in town. Any mention of specific persons, institutions or titles was duly noted and it became clear to me that he had extracted my proposed plan for the visit and was subjecting it to substantial revision. In fact, I had written out a tentative itinerary that I have not been able to find since and the details of which are now forgotten. But I am confident it still exists in one of his notebooks amplified and rescheduled in the course of our brief sojourn together.

What was unforgettable, however, was the eerie sense of displacement I felt in the company of these two transported persons whom I had known in another place and in other roles. Here they were, no longer academic mentors – and certainly not tourists or presumptive advisors – but two older anthropologists performing as one might have inferred from their writings and anecdotal reminiscence. They seemed indefatigable and determined to leave no stone unturned. Every sight and occurrence was met as though the world was newly created and they were the first to observe and record it. The contrast with our own sense of exhaustion and neglected tasks was unnerving: they were the eager experiencers and we were the routinized elders. At moments I felt quite extraneous excepting in my appointed role as a fortuitous resource in the local landscape, a purveyor and dragoman for the expedition of discovery. I think I understood that such flashes of peevishness emanated from apprehension about my own work and a desperate need for some sign of approval. Also I believe that I was experiencing that peculiar and usually repressed antagonism aroused in the unripe fieldworker when his pristine domain is intruded

upon by others of his kind. One is not ready for the mirror.

Actually, however, Mel and Frances Herskovits were as delightful and supportive a pair of visitors as one could have hoped. Frances was more animated and youthful than we had known her, full of insightful questions and deeply solicitous of our welfare. She was sincerely disappointed that we had not brought the children down from the Kpolokpelle Mission where we had left them in care of our friend Ma Miller. Though we explained that our jeep and our house in Klé were too small to accommodate us all, and our schedule too tight and brief to warrant interrupting their schooling and transporting them from so far up-country, it was obvious she would have liked very much to see them, for she pressed us about every detail of their adjustment to life in the country. Mel was more stimulated and bouncy than ever, truly in his element, marvelously companionable and not in the least tutorial as I had expected he might be. I never once felt under interrogation about the progress of my work, but I was aware of how intently he listened to any comments I made about the country and the people. His questions were collegial and without any note of reprove.

There were, however, a few instances in which I sensed that he was on the alert. These had to do with my remarks about the inequities of Liberian social relations in which I made invidious comparisons of the historical role of the Americo-Liberian elite and the American slave-owning castes in their attitudes and policies with regard to subordinate peoples. And at one point, when I expressed the opinion that the emerging anti-colonial movements in Africa were reflected in the increasing frustration of the indigenous Liberian underclass and its urbanized youth, he asked me rather sharply if those observations were relevant to the study I had come to do. I could not help but wonder whether he had reacted out of concern that my

political orientation was infecting my role and the objectivity of my research. Whatever the case, I do believe that there was a subtle and unresolved tension between us on that score. It was always the source of some consternation that the strongly held social views that were revealed throughout his life and work, and that I found so resonant with my own, appeared to be consistently modulated in his discussions with me. My tendency to interpret this in relation to myself was, perhaps, symptomatic of my defensive posture at the time as well as of my desire to ally myself with the rebel I was certain resided within him.

It was some time before I came to realize that the feisty rebel of his youth had now matured into an even-tempered liberal scholar who eschewed the “politicalization” of ideas or the products of science. Time and time again he brought me – and, I am sure, others – to toe with the principle he referred to as “scientific detachment,” and just as frequently I felt myself resisting its implications despite my respect for his motives. He had paid his dues, as we said on the waterfront, and I was loath to hold him to a model of radical righteousness whose demands I had not sufficiently met. The man was an original, and I fear that I was too slow to appreciate this while I knew him. Had I been able to realize that our apparent incompatibilities were more a matter of diverse backgrounds and commitments than of temperaments or values I might have learned more of him than I did. As it was, I believe there was between us a mutual recognition of some native affinity in disposition that was at once the source of attraction and a kind of domestic strife. And I suspect he found me more problematic in this regard than he did most of his students for, in a sense, he saw me as endorsing an image of himself that he had long discarded. For my part, I suppose I wanted him to be something he was not, though what he was had provided me a greater service than I might have expected from anyone else. Our destinies

were not parallel, as I tended to imagine at times, but they had intersected at a most important juncture in my life. And now fate would have it that I was his host in Africa, in my field station in the remote and little-known country I had striven to reach and where I would not have been were it not for him. My sense of obligation was overwhelming. I wanted the visit to go well, to be worth their while and, above all, to justify my own presence there. It came to pass that a good part of my perturbation was unnecessary. Things have a way of working out. But, in the process, I learned much that was useful about myself, and my perception of my mentor was deepened.

For the first two or three days of their stay in Monrovia, we ushered them through the schedule of office appointments I had attempted to arrange with key government officials, going down the proper channels, of course, beginning with the Acting Secretary of State, the Honorable Momolu Dukuly, whose extravagantly cordial greeting belied the likely fact that he had not given any serious thought to the arrival of his “most illustrious guests” until the moment they stood before him. He extended the regrets of the President who was away on state business but who would have desired to greet them personally. It was also most unfortunate that so many of the people they might wish to see had “gone to their farms during the season” or were otherwise occupied with pressing matters. Charming and expansive as he was, it was obvious that neither Dukuly nor anyone else had made preparations, and the situation was awkward. Herskovits carried the day, however, by amiable recollections of their earlier association and an impressive account of the tour that he and Frances were making through Africa where they were meeting with various leading figures, visiting former students and collecting material for a book on cultural change and national developments throughout the continent. As he spoke, I took a

certain wicked pleasure in watching Dukuly's ardent absorption and, as we left, hearing him suddenly reminding us of a luncheon reception planned on such-and-such a day to accommodate the many persons who wished to meet Doctor Herskovits. It was the first I had heard of it, and I am quite sure the idea had just occurred to him.

Nevertheless, a hastily assembled luncheon did take place at the decaying and somewhat infamous old Izeta Hotel where, it was rumored, a number of Liberian bigwigs dallied with their mistresses and entertained their friends. It was a strange affair attended by a handful of persons few of whom seemed to have the slightest notion of why they were there except for lunch. Kathy recalls that much of the conversation had to do with the benefits of British and French colonialism and how Liberia had been constrained to go it on its own despite a supposed "special relationship" with the United States. This was a view commonly expressed by upper-class Liberians but I was never sure whether it reflected genuine opinion or was a defensive sardonic ploy when in the company of foreigners. Mel and Frances clearly were bemused by the proceedings, and I was crestfallen to have gotten them into it. But Mel rose to the occasion when asked to speak. Complimenting Liberia on its progress as a rare independent nation in Africa he outlined the great strides being made everywhere on the continent. The mood of the gathering warmed considerably. Dukuly expounded at length in praise of "that great friend of Africa" and raised his glass in toast only to be told that no one else had anything in their glasses to drink. With his usual witty aplomb he retrieved a bottle of scotch from his bag and went about dribbling a few drops into each glass while bantering with his guests about how some of the "greedy ones" would bring him to ruin by their excessive drinking and eating. Oscar Norman, who had sat discreetly and somewhat glum throughout the proceedings, remarked

wryly to me at this point, “While leopard eats groundhog he calls him greedy.” The toast was given amidst shouts of approval and the festivities concluded shortly thereafter.

What had bothered me most about this incident – and now, the account I have just given of it – was its susceptibility to caricature. Before coming to Liberia I had been deeply incensed by the patronizing tone of parody in many writings about the country. Not only was this a common theme in such widely read works as Elizabeth Furbay’s *Top Hats and Tom Toms*, Graham Greene’s *Journey Without Maps*, and throughout journalistic commentary, but it also was the subject of satirical anecdotes that circulated among American and European visitors about the backwardness of the people and the pretensions of its ruling class. I had determined to resist it as vigorously as I would its counterpart in the “darky humor” and other forms of invidious imaging of minority peoples in my own country. Yet here I was on the verges of it, spurred by my annoyance at thwarted efforts to arrange an “appropriate” official reception for Herskovits, stung by the appearance of diminished status, and fretting that I had confronted him with the very image whose reality I had sought to deny.

Once again, however, I was brought to task. If Mel and Frances were put off by what had occurred, there was little sign of it (other than the implied comparisons with receptions that had been afforded them elsewhere). When I ventured the lame remark that, after all, this was Liberia, their quizzical looks led me to regret it immediately. Mel responded a bit tartly saying that he had always thought it to be a remarkable country, historically something of an anomaly among African polities, and how fortunate I was to be able to experience it first hand. Frances found Dukuly to be a most interesting man who had arisen to high office despite his Mandingo extraction and Muslim orientation, obviously a brilliant statesman whom they counted among

their old African friends. I had brought this subtle admonishment on myself by underestimating the tenacity of the Herskovitsian commitment to intercultural clemency and one's aptness to fall from grace in this regard. They were not to be cajoled by an errant student, a neophyte in the hallowed lyceum of fieldwork. I doubt very much that the moment would have been lightened, or my standing rescued, by quipping that some of my best friends were Liberians. The fact that this actually was true merely would have intensified my discomfort.

Things went better during the next few days. Going down the echelons of bureaucracy proved to be more fruitful now that official recognition had been tendered by the Secretary of State. All at once, scores of people wished to meet the visitors. I was astounded by the number of officials that Herskovits knew personally, either as former students or as guests of the African Studies Program. Some of these included the Secretaries of the Interior and Public Instruction as well as various assistants in the departments and on the staff at the newly reconstructed University of Liberia. In remarkably short order Mel had compiled a list of persons in key positions he wanted to interview, some previously arranged for on my itinerary and others that he intended to see in connection with the comparative materials he was gathering for what was to become his last book *The Human Factor in Changing Africa*. His pace was headlong and, with Frances always at his side, I chauffeured him from place to place about Monrovia as he filled his notebooks. It deterred them not in the least if someone they were to meet was not present, for they struck up lively conversations with anyone who was around and we moved on to the next assignation.

We also found time to tour the city which intrigued them because of its architectural and other similarities to the Caribbean and the nineteenth century American south. Their appetite for

exploration and information was voracious. At the end of the day, when I wearily hoped they were ready for a rest, they happily accepted any invitation to a social event. I do not recall where, what, or how we ate during those few days, excepting that our own funds were very limited and we would not have been able to wine and dine them in any but the most minimal way. Nor did they seem concerned about such matters, and I do not think it ever occurred to them to offer to entertain us or even to share in the cost of gasoline for our car. We were their local hosts and they accepted our hospitality on whatever level it was provided. They enjoyed the world as it was, and apparently delighted in their good fortune to be on tour and to be where they were.

Then there was the side of Mel I had not seen before, his almost childlike exuberance and capacity to make a good time out of very little. One afternoon we were invited to a picnic on the great stretch of palm-lined beach that once graced the Atlantic shore of Monrovia (decades later to become the killing field of the Doe regime). It was a glorious day to loll about in the shade, as coveys of Liberian children raced along the surf. We were accompanied by Iris White, a vivacious and lovely Jamaican student of Herskovits who was married to the sociologist Robert Roberts currently teaching as a visiting professor at the University of Liberia. She had lived at Anthropology House in Evanston where their memorable wedding reception took place. Now pregnant with a second child, she presided over this small and cheerful reunion on the Monrovia seaside. Mel was in exceptionally fine spirits, being the life of the party and extolling the splendor of the scenery. All at once he announced that he wanted to swim. Returning to the car, he changed into a pair of baggy trunks and emerged plump and white as an unbaked dinner roll. To the amazed delight of cavorting black urchins he trotted along the surf

splashing wildly with flailing arms and shouting “Come on in, Francie, the water’s great!”

Frances sat primly and watchfully, now and then calling to him not to overdo or go out too far, for there was a real danger of sharks. Seemingly oblivious of all entreaties, he continued to frolic waist-deep among the breakers and admiring youngsters. Kathy at last joined him, as much to rein him in as to enjoy a bit of wading herself. Finally he was persuaded to desist, returning in a state of wonderful exhilaration and chiding Frances and the rest of us for our torpidity. Frances admonished him about the effects of the tropical sun on his already pink body, covered him, and we settled back to a pleasant afternoon conversation. This rare image of him at play is indelible, and in some profound way enhanced my regard for him. When I reflect that scarcely six years later he would be dead, I cherish that interlude on a bright shore of Africa.

VIII

As the time approached for us to take them up-country to our field station at Klé, my misgivings grew. It was one thing that their brief stop-over in Monrovia had been – in my excessively punctilious and solicitous view – much less gratifying than I had hoped, but it was quite another matter to host them in the remote village that had been the center of our lives for many months. How would they be received by the villagers? How would they accommodate to the cramped quarters of our mud-and-wattle roundhouse, to local foods, to bathing from buckets, and to the makeshift latrine in the banana patch? Far surpassing such concerns, however, was the kind of account that would be given of me by the people among whom I had worked. What would these two sharp-eyed guests think of our entrance into the field and the progress of my research? After all, it was they who had got me here and they whose guidance had set the standard of imminent judgment. The pristine isolation of my enterprise was about to be

transgressed. Though I now feel a bit sheepish about this revelation of my frame of mind at the time, the fact remains that I was still a student embarked on my first major fieldwork and prompted by a strong sense of obligation to a venerable mentor who had dropped out of the skies into the midst of my groping efforts. I even worried that news of my passport problem had filtered through the American Embassy. Diffidence and overzealousness had taken its toll.

I also fretted about the absence of any word from Klé, though I had sent a number of messages by drivers up the Bomi Road to Paramount Chief Zuanna informing him and my trusted assistant, Isaac, of the time of our intended arrival and inquiring about preparations for the visitors, nothing came down the road. It was as though Kpo Clan had disappeared from the land. In desperation I went again to see Oscar Norman who was my lone Monrovia contact with the Gola interior. How should I proceed? Zuanna had not given word, and I understood this was customary. Should I just go, or wait? Tomorrow was the day I had said we would arrive. Norman's bland response infuriated me. Reminding me that this was the season when most families were busy cutting bush for new farms and that Zuanna was no doubt occupied directing his many wives and boys in such work, he suggested I be patient: "Spider weaves his web slowly, but when it is finished he eats well. Zuanna and the people work quietly in the dark and when we you come there you will see how Spider builds his house." Such homilies did not mollify me overmuch, but when he said that he and some of the staff of the Bureau of Folkways would be happy to take the Herskovitses in the department car, the prospects began to improve. I should go on ahead with Kathy to see that our house was in order and they would follow an hour or two later. Thus we could be present to greet our guests properly. Moreover it might be a good idea for me to procure a goodly supply of English gin and bolts of white cloth to encourage

the people and to show respect for their elders. I could be sure the Gola would not embarrass me before my guests. This is not the Gola way. Have a cool heart and be at peace.

Tomorrow came. Kathy and I rose early and shopped for supplies at the Waterside markets. Then we went to the hotel where Mel and Frances were staying and crammed their bags into the remaining space of our jeep. The two travelers had finished lunch and were now busy with their journals. Our arrival kindled an abundance of spritely anticipation. Oscar Norman had come earlier to inform them that they would be collected about three o'clock to avoid the noonday heat. The road was rough and dusty, so they should dress comfortably. Frances asked Kathy if the loose cotton frock she was wearing would do. Yes it would do very well. Mel had on a pair of voluminous Bermuda shorts that I assumed he expected to change before leaving. But he was fussing with his cameras and film packs, and there was no indication he heard my casual suggestion that trousers and a jacket were expected of an important foreign visitor when being received, even in the interior. The chiefs and elders always donned their gowns for such occasions. However, his attention was totally absorbed by a sluggish shutter release, and I was pelted with questions about humidity and the use of exposure meters in the intense light-variation of forests. Might it rain, and what was our water supply? No, I said, we were in the dries and rain unlikely; our water came from a creek and we boiled and filtered it for drinking. Do people object to being photographed? – Well, some old people do, but are quite happy about it if you ask permission and give a small token of respect. What about mosquitoes? – We have netting to sleep under and we keep our legs covered in the evenings. What is customary deportment in meeting people? – Probably the same as elsewhere in Africa: just follow Norman and me, for we are your guides. Will we be able to observe any ceremonies and

daily life?: – Scarcely avoidable: we are in the midst of it! They were both taken with Oscar Norman. He was such an outgoing and informative chap, said Frances. How did he get to be where he was? What was his background and did I have his genealogy? They were looking forward to the trip with him and the chance to discuss many matters.

Kathy and I took our leave, already inundated with questions and intimations of things to come. In those days the trip that now takes little more than forty-five minutes by paved motor road was an axle-breaking ordeal of two hours or more even in the dries, depending on the depth of ruts and number of detours. But it was a welcome breather and we had a chance to commiserate over our dwindling funds and how we would deal with two such dauntless guests for three days and nights in our little village. We had no idea what we would find there after being gone for more than a week. Would our house be clean and ready? Would the water barrels be filled? Would our two helpers be around or off to farm? Were Zuanna or any of the other chiefs in town, and did they know we were coming today? What could we do to keep Mel and Frances occupied? When and how would we pick up the fractured threads of our own work?

On and on we ruminated through the dusty half-towns and saluting the curious villagers on the road. As we drove deeper into the forest, passing an occasional clearing being slashed for burning or a gaggle of excited children chasing the dusty wake of our car, Klé seemed to recede further and further into the distance as an unreal destination. Did we actually live there? It was as though we were coming to it for the first time. Our heady interlude in the city seemed to have broken the spell of connectedness. We were strangers again, grown whiter and more foreign than we had been.

It was a relief to know that Mel and Frances were being carried up by the Oscar Norman

and a group from the Bureau of Folkways in an official car. At least there would be some semblance of Liberian protocol in their arrival. I would not expect the pompous District Commissioner to greet them in a dignified manner without such intervention from higher authority, for we were not on the best of terms. He had once spotted me one early morning walking down from our latrine, some hundreds of yards from his compound, as the national flag was being raised to the blast of a bugle. I was escorted promptly to his court by a solemn troop of Frontier Force cadets. He then took a most perverse pleasure in dressing me down for failing to come to attention, wherever I might be, in respect for the ensign of the sovereign state of Liberia. My apologies and pleas of ignorance as a newcomer were to no avail and I was fined and led back ignominiously to my dwelling. My protector Zuanna was deeply vexed and had the fine rescinded, but a seed of vengeance was planted deep. A few months later I had the wicked and, perhaps, contemptible pleasure of seeing the Commissioner totally disgraced by his own hand as he collapsed in drunken sobs at his wedding, calling upon his old mother, his bride and the assembled dignitaries to forgive him for his sins. I happily joined the astonished chiefs and other townsmen in beseeching this local representative of the government to “Be a man, Lehai, be a man!”

This evened the score a bit and we got along somewhat better thereafter. But had the Herskovitses come into his administrative jurisdiction without official escort, I could imagine him berating Zuanna with lofty complaints such as “Who are these ill-mannered strangers entering my district without proper introduction? Do they know who I am?” Zuanna would have had to negotiate around the implied assault upon the Commissioner’s status, and the tables might be turned again in our private little wars of vantage. No one, and I least of all, cared much

for the Commissioner, famed for the ostentatious public whippings of so-called thieves in his compound or the blazoned motto over his court entrance: Love all, Trust none. He was neither loved nor trusted by the populace, even by his very distant tribal relative, Zuanna, who did his best to quell his excesses. Yet he was an arm of government among us, corrupt, willful and quite unpredictable. The less truck with him the better.

Such were my turgid thoughts as we approached Klé. Most depressing, however, was the spectre of interrupted research, the interviews and treks I had hoped to accomplish by this time. There was a rarely held initiation ceremony I should have attended in a distant village. Two sacred elders of the Bon-Poro and Sande societies had at last agreed to work with me, but I had not yet made the intricate preliminary arrangements. The season for bush-burning and planting was pending and almost everyone I wished to see would be totally involved in the annual tasks of opening farms. Then would come the deluges of May. There were only a few months left of my sojourn. There was so much to do. And now Herskovits was about to descend into the muddle and bear witness to my incompetence.

We do not remember the exact moment when that joyless trip was metamorphosed into its opposite. I think it was as we came to the old log bridge over the drinking creek. Small clusters of townspeople waved and called to us, the women in bright new lappas and the men carrying striped umbrellas as on festival days. An arch of palm fronds had been erected over the road, and beyond, where the route widened into the central clearing of Klé, the ground had been swept smooth and gleaming in the sunlight. The usually drab compounds of the Commissioner and, later along the way, of Zuanna's crowded quarter, seemed renewed with fresh whitewash and flags. Our own house was almost unrecognizable. It had been transformed into a rustic

palace. Arches of palm fronds and flowering vines festooned the yard and the doors and windows. It had been newly rubbed with white clay and the delicate handswept design employed by local women, so that its girth and height appeared larger than we had left it. A bit to the side of the front entrance an open thatch-roofed palaver-hut with woven hammocks and bamboo seats had been constructed, its mud floor and low wall still damp.

Isaac Kanlé, my peerless interpreter and friend, was there to greet us, standing proudly with his three wives to receive our exclamations of appreciation. Momo, our peerless overseer and cook, and our houseboy, Bai, also were on hand. Together they were all eager to show us through our little house with its pie-shaped rooms scrubbed, its crude furnishings oiled and its iron cots neatly made up as Kathy liked. There were jars of flowers in the children's room where the guests would stay. How we wished that Anya and Erik were there to see what had been done, for their absence was now our only regret. We could hear the glorious sound of water being splashed into rainbarrels behind the house by a bucket brigade of small boys organized by Isaac to carry the elixir from the distant creek. While we talked, Zuanna's headwife Hawa came in to say the Chief wanted us to know that all was in good order. Assistant Secretary Oscar Norman had sent word that he would be bringing the guests late in the afternoon, and all the people of Kpo Clan were ready.

It is difficult to describe our feelings at that moment. We had jolted through a space-warp of some kind back there at the drinking creek, a fissure between worlds. Monrovia and its dismal settlements slowly creeping outward into the vast bush was on one side, while twenty miles beyond us to the north the new American mining concession had begun to excavate the sacred mountain of Bomi. The umbilical link between them was the recent ore-train rail and the

winding red scar in the laterite earth we had just travelled. But here, in between, were the Gola chiefdoms of Kpo, Mana and southern Senje, not yet fully impacted by the ecological and social rupturing that was soon to follow. It was home to a people who still perceived their way of life as ancient and inviolable. The fact that their world had been contracting, and that they had become an anachronism to those intruding upon them was but a dim apprehension in their view of reality. And we, the special strangers they had allowed to live intimately among them, were now privileged to know them at their best, to experience the reward of that groundswell of traditional hospitality and familial good will reserved for honored persons. All the accumulated petulance and impatience of day-to-day drudgery over the past months faded away as we came to the realization that indeed we had been accepted into the community and were deemed worthy of this expression of esteem.

Isaac told me how Paramount Chief Zuanna had spent much money and used all of his influence during the past week to insure a grand reception “in the old Gola way” for our guests. Clan Chief Zokai and Town Chiefs Zosei and Momo had called upon the people of the surrounding villages to make preparations. There was to be no farm work during the three days of the Herskovits visit. Paths were to be cleaned, houses fresh rubbed, and rice was to be set aside for feasting. Of course, I would do my part: had I brought the gin and white cloth? Singers and drummers had been notified, the leaders of Bon-Poro and the Sande had been respectfully requested to bring out their “dancing images,” and the people were expected to dress in their finest today. It was to be a wonderful time. Even the President of Liberia would not see more. Zuanna had informed everyone that this was their chance to show their “stranger-family” and the *kwi* what kind of people the Gola were.

I gathered from Isaac's account that Zuanna and the other chiefs also viewed this occasion as a rare opportunity to impress the distant officialdom in Monrovia. Though scarcely alluded to, the scandalous affair involving the hunting down and killing of former Secretary of State S. David Coleman and his son on a nearby farm for an alleged plot to assassinate President Tubman during the 1955 election campaign, was still a potent issue. The repercussions of that incident had sorely affected Gola relations with government. Zuanna and many heads of families in the region were distantly related to Coleman, and some had supported his opposition party. Tubman responded by obstructing Gola interests and letting it be known that he and his administration viewed the circumstances as evidence of Gola complicity and a perpetuation of a long history of insubordination. Thus for Zuanna, whose appointment as Paramount Chief hung in the balance of presidential mercy, as well as for Oscar Norman whose position as a Gola director of the Bureau of Folkways and an Assistant Secretary of the Interior was insecure, this reception of a foreign dignitary in the heart of the southern Gola hinterland provided an instrument of reconciliation and assertion of good faith. It was a time-honored form of diplomacy well-understood by both parties, but especially so as an accommodative tradition of "tribal authority" seeking conflict amelioration by demonstrations of prestige.

These and countless other factors conditioned the setting into which our unsuspecting guests were now wending their way up the Bomi Road. But all such contingencies became irrelevant as we were swept along by the excitement of ceremonial readiness around us. Knots of dancing and singing people from surrounding hamlets were forming along the road behind their gowned headmen. Others passed by our house calling that they had come to see my "Merican chief, the Big Man who taught you about Africa." Some brought gifts of fruit and

vegetables from their farms, “so your visitors will eat well in this country.” No one had any clear idea of who was being greeted, yet everyone knew it was time for a celebration and that the chiefs were footing most of the bill. My associate, Isaac Kanlé, was ecstatic: “We have not seen this since President Barclay came to Besao. All of the people from the towns are coming. Your stranger-father Zuanna has not forgotten you. This is a wonder to see.”

IX

Just as the sun touched the tops of the cottonwood trees, Paramount Chief Zuanna sent word that we should meet him on the road. There he stood, wearing his brilliantly embroidered cap and white Muslim gown, surrounded by his local wives, children, and the retinues of the town chiefs of Kpo. Embracing me as his son, he led the way down the road toward the drinking-creek bridge. Already, hundreds of people had gathered along the way, pressing back as his singing women and drummers announced his arrival. At the creek, the crowd had become dense and a shout went up as they spotted the chief. Palm fronds and umbrellas undulated over the small ocean of expectant villagers. Even the Commissioner’s two buglers were there making a dolorous racket. To our great relief we learned that Lehai Cooper was away – leaving his assistant Mr. Holmes in charge.

There is something about the spontaneous choreography of an African celebration that will never cease to amaze and delight me. Everyone seems to know his or her role in a drama of communal display, how the part that is played will appear to an observer looking on, how the whole will be splendid and memorable. One is caught up in it, learns the steps and gestures instantly, becomes imbued with a joyous awareness of complete involvement and shared will. Packed as the throng may be, no one jostles or competes for place. Each person looks self-

absorbed or intent only upon the larger spectacle, yet each is subtly responsive to every movement and sound of those around so that the crowd appears to seethe with ripples of empathy. There is boundless energy and all cares are put aside. Even the protocol of status deference seems temporarily suspended.

Although we remained on the road for more than an hour as the shadows lengthened over Klé, there was no indication of impatience. Rather, the singing and dancing groups became more vigorous and the crowd grew. Every now and then someone called “They come!” but it would prove to be a false signal. At last we could all see the thin line of red dust rising over the stands of low bush far down the road, catching the last rays of the sun. A few minutes later three grimy cars appeared, bumping over the ruts and scattering stray goats, chickens and droves of frenzied children. A Liberian flag fluttered from the hood of the lead car, and all three were sounding their horns to majestic effect as they came steaming and lurching to a halt well within the milling crowd. The Commissioner’s buglers bugled wildly, the Paramount Chief’s ceremonial ivory horns were whooping, and the multitude surged forward crying “*O fela gbe na* – the Big Man comes.”

The press was so great that we could not see the cars until Zuanna’ people made a wedge to pass us through. The passengers were still inside, but not visible behind the caked dust of the windows. When Zuanna, Clan Chief Zokai and I were in place, the order was given to clear a space and the crowd quieted down a bit. The first to emerge from the lead car was the driver, followed by Oscar Norman officially garbed in suit and tie. Then the rear door was opened for Frances who stepped out into the heat and dust looking spritely in her wide summer hat. This was too much for the crowd who, despite all efforts to keep them back, raised a cry of greeting

and pushed in to see and touch the strangers. Clan Chief Zokai, all six foot six of him, was striding among the people waving his arms to clear the way. Then, towering over the car and looking about searchingly, he kept repeating “Where the Big Man? Where the Big Man?”

I shall never forget that scene as I, too, tried to discover Mel Herskovits in the commotion. All at once I spied him surrounded by a knot of joyous villagers and all but imprisoned by a canopy of reaching arms. Zuanna also was trying to reach him while Zokai, with Herskovits scarcely chest-high next to him, was still scanning the crowd and shouting frantically, “Where the Big Man?” How Zokai could have missed the extraordinary figure before him is explainable only by a propensity to equate importance with size, or by the fact that he was one of those rare Gola of exceedingly lanky stature whose lofty elevation above his fellows seemed often to confuse him. At that moment, I became especially aware that the Gola, and I among them, were generally a short people. But, in that crowd, Herskovits appeared shorter than any, even shorter than Zuanna who was considered to be a small man. I remember somewhat abashedly that I wished he were a bit larger for the occasion. Moreover, I was totally nonplussed by his attire.

Mel Herskovits, my esteemed mentor and honored guest of the Gola, had on a pair of voluminous British khaki shorts, below which his plump white knees and calves glistened distinctively among the forest of lean brown legs. Above the impeccable white shirt, his head appeared to have been replaced by an oversized pith helmet of early safari vintage. I do not like to admit that I was embarrassed by the sight, but I was. Here, again, I found myself deprecating him for a relatively trivial matter of deportment, a reaction provoked most likely by my undue concern for how he would be perceived by others. Yet I could not help but wonder what had

gotten into him. Pith helmets and other accoutrements of colonial garb had been prime targets of ridicule among his students, and he himself had cautioned us against presenting any such image in the field. Now this apostasy! Had he picked up the outfit somewhere along the way on his African tour – in some colonial territory where it was deemed imperative? If so, why here, in the Liberian hinterland among my discerning Gola friends? Was it a sly joke because I had advised him on what to wear? No, he would not do that! Perhaps he had noticed that an occasional Liberian official or local chief donned helmets as a rakish emblem of provincial authority. Maybe I was the only one to make such a point of it. Who else really cared? No one ever mentioned it. Nor did I have the temerity to inquire.

If this very digressive reflection on my initial consternation over Mel Herskovits' entrance into Klé serves any useful purpose it is to confirm the old adage that clothes do not make the man. I need not have troubled myself about the Gola on that score, for they well knew "You cannot guess the taste of a strange meat by the skin of the animal." While I was composing myself, a semblance of order had been brought to bear around the automobiles. The tumult subsided, and Mel and Frances stood with cheerful dignity in the small clearing that had been made, backed by a group of smiling women vying to hold umbrellas over the heads of the guests. I could see the perspiration seeping through the dust on their faces and clothes, but they showed no sign of discomfort. Greeting me and Kathy with nods of pleased acknowledgement they kept their places, waiting in grave anticipation of their roles in the unfolding scene. Oscar Norman had taken charge, lining up the Acting District Commissioner and the assembled chiefs to one side. On the other side were those who had accompanied him from the Department of the Interior – Jangaba Johnson and Varney Fahnbulleh the Liberian ethnographers, as well as a

number of others I do not recall. They were joined by the young Bai T. Moore and some of the staff of the small UNESCO Fundamental Education center recently established near Klé. Paramount Chief Amadu Zuannah of the Dei also had come to pay his respects.

It was an impressive array. Obviously the Honorable Norman had determined that the Bureau of Folkways was to make its mark on this day and that, through his mediation, the “native” appendage of government administration would initiate and preside over this tentative renewal of official intercourse with the Gola interior. I was happy to see him make the most of it. Raising his hand for silence, he announced in Gola that he had brought these two famous American visitors from Monrovia where they had begged him to show them the real Gola country, and to find how they were treating their beloved apprentices Warren and Kathy d’Azevedo, and how the former was coming along in his work of studying the history and life of the Gola: “They bring greetings from all the people of the United States and all the countries of Africa they have been visiting, and they will not be disappointed in this country.” Then, addressing the Acting Commissioner in an imperious manner I had not thought likely of him, he declared in English, “Mr. Acting District Commissioner Holmes of Suehn-Bopolu District of Montserrado County, as representative of the Interior Department of the Government of Liberia, I place these important strangers under your protection. They must come and go in peace and enjoyment among the people here.”

My friend Norman had pulled his rank effectively. Acting Commissioner Holmes, who had been shuffling his feet impatiently for a chance to speak and take charge, seemed stupefied by this unexpected shift in protocol. Ordinarily, his absent superior might have taken over the proceedings, inviting everyone to his compound to witness a public whipping, or leading us in

his infamous rendition of the anthem “Liberia, Sweet Land of Liberty.” We were spared either punishment, and the doughty Norman immediately turned to Zuanna, raising his voice again in Gola (as Isaac interpreted in my ear), “And now, Paramount Chief of Lofa-Gola Chiefdom, my great uncle Zuanna, I bring you these fine strangers who love the people of Africa and who are the elders of the stranger-family you have taken under your wing. You are the one they look to who will show them the way. The government smiles on you and the Gola people today, for I am the one it has sent to do this thing. This is the cold water we bring to cool your heart. The Gola will be great again in Liberia.” With this, he raised his arm in a Poro sign eliciting a deep answering halloo from the men in the crowd.

Then Zuanna stepped forward, folding his gown around him with ceremonial gravity and beckoned Isaac Karnley to translate the proceedings for the guests. He spoke quietly to the Herskovitses as Isaac loudly proclaimed his words in English: “My heart is full today. There is no need to ask you your business in my country. My good son Honorable Norman and his people from Monrovia have carried you here, and my dear stranger-son, your son and student, has told me fine things of you. So, Doctor Erkoviz and Madam Erkoviz, you are truly my brother and sister. All this country will be yours while you are here, and no one will stand in your way.” As he approached Herskovits, an attendant shook out a large blue cotton gift-gown and the chief helped Mel into it (an act requiring the removal of the pith helmet which, somehow, disappeared and was not seen again). One of the women presented Frances a woven country lappa which was placed as a shawl over her shoulders. “Now,” said Zuanna, “you belong to this country. The chiefs are ready to take you into their towns. Here is Clan Chief Zokai of Kpo with his great elders, and former Paramount Chief Boima Gotombo. And there is

Town Chief Zosei of Klé with his elders, and there is Town Chief Momo of Besie and his elders, and there is Town Chief Haidja of Gonzipo and his elders. They will lead the way.”

Through all of this, Mel and Frances stood with solemn attentiveness, occasionally nodding or smiling acknowledgement but maintaining the proper bearing of aloofness. I sensed while watching them that they were in their element, that they had witnessed many such events before, and that they understood, as few other foreigners would, what was happening and what was expected of them. Mel raised his arm at just the right moment, indicating that he would speak. Phrasing his remarks so that Isaac could render each segment into measured Gola, he thanked the Honorable Oscar Norman, the Acting District Commissioner, and the representatives of the Liberian government for opening his way into the land of the Gola. He praised Liberia for its independent status among countries of Africa and for its “enlightened policy toward the ancient peoples of the land.” In a remarkable exhibition of retentive memory he expressed gratitude for the honor that Paramount Chief Zuanna had conferred upon him by the gowning and the designation of “my brother,” and proceeded to acknowledge in turn each of the chiefs and elders to whom he had been introduced. Lastly, he extolled the Gola people who had taken his student and family into their lives and treated them as one of their own. His brief statement hit all the right chords and was punctuated by cries of approval from the crowd. Then he reached into his bag for an object wrapped in the white cotton yardage I had left with him, passing it to Oscar Norman who passed it through me and Clan Chief Zokai to Zuanna. It was an intricately carved rice bowl – Cameroonian, I believe – and it was held up for all to see. I could not have suggested anything more appropriate for the occasion, and once again I was aware that my guests had been there before me.

The exchange of gifts was the signal for Zokai to take charge. Hitching the sleeves of his gown to his shoulders and stretching to his full height he summoned the people to escort the strangers into town. What ensued was a sight to behold. Suddenly the crowd was in motion as the drummers and the corps of singing women opened the road to Klé. Zokai swayed above the throng clearing space for the cluster of guests, chiefs and other dignitaries to follow. The procession began to undulate slowly down the road in that stately dance of ovation reserved for the arrival of distinguished persons. I was overwhelmed with pride and gratitude as Zuanna, now weary from standing and troubled by his lame leg, leaned heavily on my arm and moved us to the front of the line behind the drummers. I turned to see how Mel and Frances were doing and was rewarded by a clear view of them dancing slowly along with a wide row of admiring attendants on each side. Kathy was with Frances, accompanied by a bevy of women praise singers thrashing their beaded gourds into a wonderfully stirring sound. Mel and Frances, like some of the rest of us, were sweating profusely in the late afternoon heat, yet they too seemed blissfully absorbed in the rhythmical polyphony and movement about them. I was impressed by their obviously deep enjoyment and, particularly, by the sophisticated easy grace with which they expressed that ubiquitous African style of gesture and bearing.

Everyone in the crowd was acutely conscious of the bonding that had taken place, and soon the entire host seemed to be moving in concert with them, eyes half-closed, arms bent close to the side, torsos responding to the drums, as we danced slowly and triumphantly toward Klé. As for me and Kathy, we were borne along in a haze of exhausted elation. We had gotten Mel and Frances to our field station among the Gola, and they were receiving a more glorious reception than we could have imagined. We realized that we were being honored in this way by

the people who had been our neighbors and friends of the past year and with whom, until this moment, we had not experienced so reassuring a confirmation of general acceptance and good will. Most gratifying of all was that we now had the remarkable good fortune to share the moment with these two persons who had done so much to make it possible.

Over the next few days our village and the surrounding area seemed suspended in a ferment of celebration. It continued day and night. Farm work and other prime tasks had been brought to halt by the jocular decree of local chiefs and the people seemed intent on nothing more than singing, dancing and display. Even the masked personages of Poro and Sande associations made uncommon appearances to the honor and delight of Mel and Frances. It was also bandied about by surreptitious wags that such times released young men and women from customary family scrutiny and that illicit liaisons were undoubtedly taking place in any secluded nook of village and bush.

Whether or not our two rapt guests were aware of each and every aspect of the proceedings was rather irrelevant in view of their lively absorption in all taking place about them. Kathy and I and Isaac were pelted with a barrage of questions over the next hours and ensuing days that at times drove us to exhaustion. At one point Isaac said to me “Your teacher asks more than he tells. Is that what you are learning from him?” I had no ready answer at the time but duly noted in my journal that only a Gola man could have been so much on the mark. Much later I was convinced of this when Isaac remarked that “Our greatest elders say it is wise to listen and ask, not talk and tell. You hold word until you are ready to use what you know.” He then asked me if that’s what anthropologists do. Careful not to slip into a lecturing mode, I said, “Yes, we try.” That seemed to satisfy him.

Late that first evening Mel and Frances accommodated to the minute spaces of our roundhouse with aplomb, using the washpans, the nearby latrine and the nail clothes-hangers as though it had been their everyday custom. Moreover, they seemed quite at ease as they slipped under the mosquito-netting of our children's cots. All was taken for granted and we were awarded a few baffling comments about how well we were living. As we all stretched out to sleep, I heard Mel speaking to Frances: Did she remember such and such a field trip in Guiana when their living conditions were so much less habitable than these? And then, there was....and then remember, etc. So there, scarcely fifteen feet away, behind the hanging mats, I was to be reminded that the old boy had been there first! It was nice, however, to hear Frances softly chide him with "Yes, but Mel, they have the children." In this as in many other instances we were to become increasingly aware of how these two intrepid characters shared perceptions, continually calling one another's attention to some observation and then ameliorating their judgements much as they had done throughout their productive relationship. While Kathy slept, I lay beside her realizing how fortunate I was to have her with me, her unflagging support under the most trying conditions, and her keen assessments which so frequently provided a corrective to my initial assumptions.

Sentimental musings aside, however, and as marvelous and fulfilling as this episode had been, Kathy and I were quite relieved as the time came to put this indefatigable pair on their way. Our limited resources were rapidly dwindling away, especially during this extravagant period of gift-giving and "dashes" customary at such times. Also I had begun to feel the mounting pressure of suspended research tasks while our tireless guests gorged on every detail of the exuberant life around them, apparently blissfully unaware of the hiatus their presence had

created. Then, of course, we yearned to see our children whose plight in the far-interior Kpelle mission was a constant concern. I also had every reason to believe that Paramount Chief Zuanna and all the local headmen were more than ready to bring their country back to good order. The drain on their own private stores would be reversed and, perhaps, of equal importance, the rambunctious proclivities of local youth could now be brought under check by their attentive families. As Isaac remarked, "Even monkey does not play when belly is empty."

At last the day came when we packed our guests and their luggage into our battered jeep as our old host Zuanna and his singing women presented Mel and Frances a flapping white chicken that no one knew what to do with. It finally went atop the luggage where it clucked furiously as we bumped down the dusty roads to Monrovia and thence to Robertsfield airport. Eager and fresh as ever they ascended the ramp to their plane, turning to wave like the departing celebrities they were indeed.

X

As Kathy and I drove back to our village the effervescent glow of those few days quickly gave way to the raw sunlight of our actual situation. At the rate we were going my grant funds would scarcely last over the next six months of remaining time. I had yet to complete what in my mind were some of the most crucial tasks of my proposed research agenda. Though I had assembled a massive file of basic ethnographic material and come to a fairly clear understanding of the social organization in all its variant manifestations, I had yet to tour the extent of assumed Gola territory and the more interior Gola clans to obtain the kind of historical perspective I felt I must have before leaving. Kathy did her best to control my compulsive bent to exceed the bounds of reason, but I remained adamant that all must be done. In retrospect I marvel at the fact

that she was able to cope with me while keeping a very rural household going and also managing to carry out some research with women and children that was of inestimable value later on. Yes, and there were the kids.

Nevertheless, I was able to complete the first accurate mapping of areas claimed and occupied by the Gola together with extensive interviews with elders in each section, and obtaining genealogies of founding families and population movements. We, Kathy and I, also gathered a large file of notes on social organization, family life, and ritual and artistry. Much of it, I must say, remains an untapped reservoir for analysis and writing. Moreover, after the heady episode of the Herskovits' visit my energies were stoked by an additional fuel that drove me to an unprecedented flurry of activity. I even began to acquire a halting proficiency in Gola, but only on a level that caused me to be more appreciative of the efforts of some of the villagers to communicate with me in English. Isaac advised me politely to refrain from using my limited asset in dealing with my Gola informants in that it somewhat confused them and interfered with his efforts to interpret.

Our children had survived reasonably well thus far at Ma Miller's mission and we were able to see them frequently. Anya now had her long blond hair braided in "corn row" style by her Kpelle girlfriends, and Erik had become so proficient in Liberian English that his voice was often indistinguishable from those of the troop of mission kids. In fact he had come to enjoy his skill to such an extent that it was some time back in the States before we and his teachers were able to wean him from it in general discourse. But we still cherish the recordings of his tales learned from mission schoolmates and shared with his suitably awed American peers.

But all this was coming to a close. My eighteen months of field trip were up and grant

funds had shrunk at an alarming rate. I was forced to face the fact of departure, the portent of which I was ill-prepared by the literature of my discipline or academic guidance. There had been much instruction about *entrance* and its intriguing accomplice *culture shock*, but absolutely nothing about *exodus* or the latent anguish of departure. I don't recall this ever being talked about whether by mentors or fellow aspirants, a tacitly vacant zone of experience. The upshot was that I was not ready for it. I was still working in overdrive, determined that every day that passed must bring me nearer to some illusory moment of closure. There was the relentless and never-ending elaboration of agenda, always something more that must be done. The fact was that I had already accomplished far more than might be expected for the time and circumstances of that journey, more than I needed to do for the task ahead. A last letter or two from my hovering mentor were of little help. Had I got this or that bit of data? Was I clear about the "acculturative situation" in my area? Were officials properly informed of my plans? Etc. etc. When I come to think of it, the ground had been laid for what ensued. I had begun to feel estranged from my parent culture, caught in a kind of limbo between the world I had been studying for a year and a half and the world "back there." The most helpful advice at that point, were it to be had, would have been "Enough now. Get the hell out and return whence you came as quickly as you can!" But such was not the case.

What followed was a watershed of consequences. During those final weeks I became more and more convinced that I could not leave as scheduled. I must stay a month or two longer to do what had to be done. As the time approached I felt a mounting sense of revulsion about returning to the States together with a grieving over the necessity of pulling up roots from the soil and the people where I had so arduously sought understanding and acceptance. I find it

difficult now to define that peculiar frame of mind, but it became increasingly consuming.

Despite Kathy's urgent counsel I persisted, helping her and the children pack their bags and accompanying them as they made farewell visits around the village. I was impressed by the number of local women who had come to our house with small gifts and the swarm of kids around Erik and Anya. But there was none of the air of festivity that there had been on our arrival. We were aware of a marked decline in effusion, if not some veiled hostility. For example, some of Erik's friends had jokingly referred to him as "dirty dishrag," an epithet meaning "you are no use to us anymore." And now and then someone had said to us "Where my part?" indicating an unresolved obligation. Little did I realize at the time that these modest gifts and gestures of goodwill also carried with them a subtle reminder of our debt to the community. That was to come later.

I drove the family down to Monrovia and the waiting ship as the reality of separation slowly penetrated. What was I doing, and why? What now? I do recall standing on the dock waving goodbye while trying to convince myself of the necessity of my decision. To this very day I can feel the emptiness that enveloped me as the ship moved out and I stood among the sweating workers on the dock.

For the next two weeks or so I immersed myself in a flurry of essentially deranged activity. My notes during that interim exhibit a scattered repertoire of informants from houseboys to local elders and itinerant entertainers, each intended to divulge some as yet deficient body of data. I was becoming importunate, pressing for information and becoming brusque if the response was inadequate. On a number of occasions Isaac cautioned me with utmost deference that my demeanor was irritating to some of my guests. Moreover, I became

aware that fewer persons were willing to work with me. The earlier curiosity and eagerness to participate in what I was doing was giving way to some reluctance and apathy.

Unfortunately, I strove on undeterred. At the same time I was suppressing moments of panic about funds, being almost broke with little prospect of relief in time. The strain of this predicament took its toll. I had lost a lot of weight, scarcely ate or slept, and was told by others that I looked thin and haggard. The ultimate blow came when I learned that Isaac would be leaving for admittance into the judiciary training program at the University of Liberia, a move he had yearned for and which we had promoted in every way we could. Yet it could not have come at a time when I needed his role the most. Actually I should have been back in the States receiving the news with delight. But here I was at wits end, driven further to distraction by what seemed a calamity.

The dread of having brought a promising field investigation to a sorry end became a waking nightmare. Why had I not quit in an orderly manner and left at the appropriate time with the family? How could I have left them to voyage back without me? What had I gained by staying on? What would Herskovits say if he were to learn of my behavior over the past weeks? These and other such questions plagued me daily, bouncing around in my head like lead marbles.

I could no longer avoid the fact that my project had run its course and that I was no longer in shape to carry on. Our home and field station in Klé must be shut down! So it had come to this, and I had none to hold accountable but myself, something I proceeded to do with a vengeance. In a haze of desperation I turned to our friend Ruth Hill in Monrovia who once again invited me to stay at her house. There I holed up while struggling to comprehend the

logistics of dismantling a way of life that had been laboriously forged and maintained over the past year and a half.

It is with the greatest difficulty that I manage to recall the details of the ensuing weeks. I do know that I was in a state of physical and mental emaciation, facing each day with presentiments of self reproach and impending doom. The condition of our old jeep station wagon offered little succor. The tires were worn smooth and it leaked, sputtered and rattled like the noble wreck it had become. Under the pall of this state of mind I began daily trips to Klé over the familiar dusty roads, through the bush and farmland once so inviting and filled with promise. Our roundhouse was no longer the pride of the Chief's compound. The shuttered windows proclaimed absence, the mud walls needed new rubbing, while weed and trash had invaded the place once kept clear and swept by our houseboys. It was a dismal scene.

Each time I came up I checked to see whether anything had been disturbed within, but all was in its place. I realized that this was all the protected property of my stranger-father, thus relatively safe from intrusion. My suspicions were an embarrassment. Also, each time I came I faced the ordeal of meeting those who had been my friends and neighbors. I had let our two houseboys go with gifts of used clothing, reserving the better part of our remaining household possessions like the dishes and utensils for Momo, our cook, whom we held in highest regard. But I did not have sufficient objects or funds for the customary gifts of gratitude for my old guardian Chief Zuanna, or the town chiefs and elders of the local villages and families that had befriended us. Nothing was said as I bid farewell the last time, but I felt in their quizzical look and reserved demeanor that something had been expected of me.

It was in this atmosphere of discomfort and misgiving that I stuffed four large steel

barrels I had gotten from an acquaintance in Monrovia with the aggregation of my labors – a pile of scribble notebooks, hundreds of typed pages, portable typewriter, boxes of card files containing Gola terms, kinship charts and genealogies, maps, rolls of film, photos, woven cloth and embroidery, basketry, farm and hunting implements, children's toys, musical instruments, two drums and other sundry items. Two of the barrels I had set aside for the fine carved Poro and Sande masks which I had kept wrapped in raffia mats on the rafters over our beds. This was particularly fretful because some of them had been acquired from a famed carver and friend under conditions of utmost secrecy. His status in the local Poro organization as well as my position as honored guest of the community was at risk should such a transaction become known. My anxiety about them increased as I arranged them into the steel barrels and clamped and locked the lids with undue care. Though they were for eventual museum placement I could not suppress a feeling of theft, of furtive betrayal of trust. Thoughts overwhelmed me about the possible consequences of detection. What if they should fall into the wrong hands! What if ...?

Such were my thoughts as I loaded the last of the barrels into the jeep and bid a somber farewell to our dwelling in Klé. The notion that I was carrying away loot kept sounding in my head like a dirge. Even when I locked them up in a shed under the house in Monrovia their presence there below continued to be a burden of liability. Then I was forced at last to sell my ailing jeep at a price scarcely befitting its honorable service, and I am sure it became one of those outlandish taxis that clogged the streets of Monrovia. A final blow came when I learned that the ship I was to board for New York would be delayed three weeks. This was the last straw, for now I must fill a space before departure with nothing but guilty remorse for company.

Not only was I agonizing about becoming flat broke, and the ridiculous worry about

exposure, but I was experiencing a rising revulsion about returning to America, a sense of alienation I had not felt before. I was still enmeshed in the world of the Gola, though not actually part of it, yet detached from my own native culture, though of it. I was in limbo. Also not an hour of a day passed that I didn't think of Kathy and the kids, regretting the separation I had created. What would they think of me if they could see the mess I had made of my self-imposed exile? But even more searing was the humiliation that awaited when my mentor learned of a failed enterprise. Nothing short of banishment would be in order!

This increasingly pathological state of mind with its attendant paranoia has caused me in later years to wonder how I could have got into such a state, something I had not experienced before or after. It remains a singularity, for there is no place for it in the course of my developing identity. When I reflect back I can only attribute it to the compulsive efforts of those last few months in the field and seriously impaired health. Something totally unforeseen was triggered in my being, some lurking symptom of lunacy. I can only surmise that it arose from putting so much of myself into a bloated notion of the task that when it came time to withdraw I could only muster this deranged resistance.

I have wondered also to what extent others have experienced similar difficulties after an extended field trip. I don't recall it ever being discussed by mentors or students, though I can well imagine why. As with me, it became consigned to a concealed recess of potential disgrace only cautiously revealed to a few others. I remember being profoundly relieved to discover that one of my fellow students had gone through a similar ordeal, though not quite so extreme as mine. We agreed that the matter of *exodus* from the field situation was as critical as that of *entrance*, though few would be willing to reveal their personal encounter with it. Certainly, we

agreed, we would not want to reveal it to Herskovits. I do take some personal satisfaction, however, from the fact that I have invariably included reference to this problem in my courses on field method and have enjoyed the expressions of gratitude from students returning from abroad.

But I have strayed a bit afield. Back in Monrovia in my state of desperation and loneliness I began to seek solace from whomever happened to be available, hoping in this indiscriminate way to find some sort of release from the dilemma. What I usually got in return were raised eyebrows and questions about my health. However, I was not deterred. I even went so far as to ask a few associates like Oscar Norman and Bai Moore about it and what they thought I should do. When I spoke to Isaac Karnley who was now happily engaged in the university program, he looked at me with controlled concern and politely advised, “Don’t trouble yourself so much, Zubon, or others will think there is something more to what you say. You have done well. You are much respected. Respect yourself.” When I look back, these words from my young Gola interpreter and research assistant leave me abashed. How on the mark he was and how incapable I was of knowing it!

However, it was my great good fortune to be taken in tow by two discerning acquaintances for whom I have unabating gratitude – Alex Shaw a British member of the UNESCO team, and Heinrich Mooey a visiting lecturer in mathematics at the University of Liberia. Alex came to me one day and said, “Warren, you must stop shooting your mouth off. It’s not doing you any good, and people will think you are coming unhinged.” With that he had me pull together my few belongings and drove me unresisting to his residence where, over gin and bitters, he lectured me in his most imperious manner: “You must remain in here until your

ship arrives. If I find that you have wandered out I shall take to locking you in.” Although this was announced in a tone of true British drollery, I knew that he had good reason, and when he told me that he and Heinrich would be around to check during each day I actually found it consoling. Food and drink were left for me, but I think I slept most of the time.

As promised, Alex and Heinrich came around two or three times daily, but had no reason to be concerned of my whereabouts. I was in a condition of somnolence, as much from exhaustion as from the fine gin left invitingly in my room as medication. Every other evening or so they took me to Accra Number Two, a notorious nightclub where we danced with voluptuous urban ladies to the frenzy of Monrovia Highlife bands, returning in the wee hours. I do believe this routine was life-saving and I shall forever honor those two gentlemen for it.

At last the ship arrived. Alex and Heinrich helped me pack and get my necessary documents together. I do not think I could have done it by myself. Most troubling was the stop at the other house to unlock the shed where the barrels had been stored and have them trucked to the dock. This rekindled the feeling of foreboding that had been quelled by kindly confinement. Would the dock officials require that the barrels be examined? Would the *loot* be discovered? What would be the reaction of the Liberian government, or of the “long arm of Poro?” Fortunately I had no inkling at the time that I had been under surveillance by the CIA for my entire stay. Lord knows what this might have caused me to say or do! But all this distress came to nothing. I and the barrels were put aboard without delay while my two resolute companions bid me fond adieu, leaving a goodly store of gin in my cabin.

XI

I have no recollection of that voyage across the Atlantic. I must have slept throughout.

But when we reached New York I had recovered my wits sufficiently to disembark with a degree of composure. After wending my way through customs I was able to make sure that the barrels and other crates were sent on to Evanston. And I also recall, as in a sharply reified dream, the eerie image of hordes of very white Americans, with only an occasional black face among them, all jostling and shouting a strangely familiar lingo. I was back in the land of my birth, dismayed and gladdened at once. But two thoughts predominated: How could I face my family after this episode, and what would I say to my vigilant mentor? I suppose I was facing what had been termed “culture shock,” but at the terminus rather than the onset of a voyage of discovery.

The first thing I did, of course, was to call Kathy in California where she and the kids were visiting her family. It was wonderfully reassuring to hear her voice sounding very happy to get my call and without the slightest tone of admonishment. Would I be finding a place for us to live in Evanston and she and the kids would be out as soon as possible. And then I called Herskovits. He greeted me with characteristic matter-of-factness inquiring merely of mutual acquaintances in Liberia, the weather on the trip over and the like. Not one question about how I was, nor do I think such a question ever occurred to him. He concluded by telling me, as though a mere reminder, that a research assistantship was awaiting my return. I was overcome by relief and gratitude. Here I was, a quavering supplicant expecting a wretched fate but suddenly finding that I was a worthy citizen again. I can well imagine that this account of my frame of mind at the moment will strike some as ridiculous if not exaggerated. So be it. That is what I felt and what I remember as though it happened yesterday. And though I record it with some trepidation I do so with a nameless sense of obligation to any of those others whose

temperament may incline them to a similar plight.

When I returned to Evanston, the saga of my departure from the field receded into the recesses of personal history. In fact, I seldom thought of it. And in my reunion with Herskovits there was no place for it anyway. He dismissed summarily any inclination on anyone's part to disclose personal problems of this kind. Such matters were inconsequential in his domain of rectitude and served no purpose but digression and confusion. What was important was the unadorned data of observation, what you have learned about the people you have studied: "That, my dear sir, is the task of the anthropologist!" Once or twice when I ventured to speak of the psychological problems of adjustment in the field he dismissed the subject with the raised eyebrows and pursed lips of one hearing about some unnatural malady. There was no place for it in present company. It has occurred to me that he surely must have encountered such phenomena in himself or others but perhaps with the attentive Frances by his side had succeeded in editing such quirks from the script. I never faulted him for this but took it to be a cautionary signpost on the winding road of our relationship.

There was that one individual with whom I was able to discuss such things, a fellow student who had returned from an extended field trip a year before. On a few occasions of relaxed exchange we reminisced on the topic. To my great relief I learned that he had experienced a similar episode when returning, though not as quixotic or extravagant as I thought my own to be. But it freed me from the oppressive sense of insularity and of harboring some peculiar personal drama. In retrospect, I am much obliged to him.

Meanwhile I had found a small apartment in Evanston and the arrival of Kathy and the kids did more to bring me back than anything else could have done. We were a family again.

There was not the slightest hint of incrimination from them about my absence, and the healing began in earnest. As research assistant in the department I was essentially a factotum, an adjunct of the very capable secretary, sorting mail, and preparing and distributing class materials for Herskovits' courses. On occasion I monitored exams and even had the heady assignment of giving carefully scripted lectures in his frequent absences. In the latter instances I often diverged from the pedantic format given me to present material of my own as well as embellishments that I found to arouse student interest. My mentor would not have approved, but he was nevertheless satisfied to hear student comments about having enjoyed my participation. I think that perhaps my penchant for teaching over the coming years had an early boost in those fortuitous sessions.

During that first semester of my return there were two other events of note. First, I was able to get the barrels opened on a day I felt up to it. The whiff of raffia and humid air caused a moment of vertigo as though still in Klé. I must confess to a brief return of the former malaise as I lifted those sheeny black Sande and Poro masks out one by one. They seemed to be glowering accusingly at the abductor.⁸ But with Kathy's help I was able to repack them decently for dispatch to the Smithsonian and the Lowie Museum as earlier agreed, along with examples of tools, woven cloth and other handiwork. Two of my favorite masks by my carver friend I kept for a while, but eventually sent them to the Liberia Collection at Indiana University. I saw them recently on display, their surface lusterless and cracked with age, and had to suppress a desire to remove them for glossing and refurbishing as I had seen their creator do. But I now felt some atonement for my pillage. At least I had carried out my task as an ethnographic collector, something approved by *my* culture if not *theirs*.

And then there was the day I returned from the university and noticed a sleek new car parked in front of our apartment. As I passed by a young fellow in suit and tie leaned out and asked if I was Warren d'Azevadio. Ignoring my correction he introduced his equally dapper companion and said they would like to have a chat with me. When I pressed for a reason I was told they represented the FBI. Not sure how to handle the situation, I invited them in to meet my family. "Oh no, we can't do that" they said politely and left. That was one of a number of post-Africa visits from the agency during the coming year. They always pulled up in front of our residences in unmistakable official-looking cars, something I could not help but take to be a subtle form of harassment. On one occasion I agreed to go with them to a local coffee shop for discussion. Again and again I was pressed for review of my activities and the names of persons I knew while a member of the Communist Party. There were even questions about people I knew in Liberia. Despite my revulsion I tried to remain courteous while diligently withholding information about other persons. Apparently this tack was sufficient to put my name on the back shelf, for these disquieting encounters eventually came to an end.

Some years later when I had applied for my Freedom of Information file I was pleased to find that I was reported to be cordial but uncooperative, and the American Embassy in Liberia had advised the FBI and CIA that it was "unable to uncover any information of a derogatory nature concerning Subject's conduct and associations in Liberia... Subject spent a great portion of his time in the hinterland in the association of tribal groups in the study of their language and culture; consequently, few literate or articulate people [!] had an opportunity to become acquainted with him. Rabat status-closed." In the same file were references to my current mentors from "an informant who has furnished both reliable and unreliable information

in the past” that one Professor Bascom had been invited to attend a People’s Conference for Legislative Action to be held in Springfield, Illinois on May 24-26, 1941 and that the conference had been called by the Trade Union Committee for Legislative Action! Cheek by jowl with this intelligence was “Information pertaining to Melville Jean Herskovits, Dean of Anthropology, Northwestern University” whose name had appeared in the Illinois Edition of *The Worker* on July 10, 1949 as a sponsor of a Bill of Rights Conference in New York which declared the Broyles Bill in Illinois to be a “threat to Civil Rights throughout the nation.”

Needless to say, I found considerable satisfaction in discovering my esteemed mentors in my FBI file. What excellent company as well as confirmation of the concordant ambience I felt in the department of my nurture. It was much later, however, that I was to learn of the extensive surveillance Herskovits and others had been under during the McCarthy episode, and the extent of his early activism. Much of it had to do with his endless battle against ethnocentrism to the very end of his life. Yes, it was congenial company.

XII

Noteworthy as these events may be there was another concern that was to occupy a central place in my thoughts for the next few years: the dissertation. As was the case for every other student returning from the field, I was confronted with Herskovits’ grave reminders that this task must be our paramount endeavor. The analysis and presentation of the data is the hallmark of the scientific enterprise. Without this demonstration of ability and drive one could not expect to enter the hallowed halls of anthropology. I, along with others, accepted this heavy burden of counsel with varying degrees of deftness. Though managing to come up with a title and synopsis of an intended thesis, other demands and the shifting sands of fate intervened. The

requirements of my role as Herskovits' assistant and an enmeshing family life consumed my time.

In the summer of 1958 we took a long-delayed trip to visit relatives in California, stopping on the way for reunion with our Washoe friends in Nevada. After a rejuvenating few weeks we returned to Northwestern where I found an astonishing letter from Theodore McCown inquiring whether I would like to come to Berkeley for a year or more appointment. This was a bit too much to deal with. Here I was, still in the pre-doctoral cocoon, being offered a position at my previous alma mater. The overture was very attractive. Kathy and the kids were delighted with the possibility, and we needed an income. But I had not made much headway on my dissertation and I knew that without a degree the chances of remaining anywhere were slim. Furthermore, I was warned by friends that it was risky to be hired by a department where you had been a student unless you had a degree from elsewhere or some years of teaching and research. And then, of course, Herskovits was incensed. How could one even consider such a move? The West! That looming adversary of all that he was working to accomplish, the wellspring of burgeoning American Indian research which had become the sole preoccupation of the discipline in the United States! And, of course, I was reminded of the unfinished dissertation. Yet for what I think was good reason we found the prospect irresistible. This was a period when academic geographic mobility was not only possible, but the name of the game.

So we packed up and went west again. It turned out to be a valuable experience. As I might have expected, I was essentially a pack-mule for the department. Apparently there was a shortage of staff. Dave Schneider and Lloyd Fallers were planning to go to Chicago. Therefore

I was an emergency fill-in. That year was a workout. Right off I was given a class in Introductory Anthropology in a large hall attended by at least a thousand students. James Downs and Richard Henderson were my teaching assistants, each of us carrying a load of grading a pile of exams and papers that none of us could have handled later in our careers. But I enjoyed the teaching and learned much in the process.

In addition I was assigned a course on Africa and a seminar on Culture change with George Foster, the latter in which I found myself facing other graduate students as lecturer alongside a senior professor. Foster and I didn't get along too well. He had a familiar acculturation approach while I was armed with cutting-edge theory from my brush with Chicago structural-functionalists. During that semester I learned a lot about getting along with older colleagues and divergent approaches, but I don't think Foster would have been among those wanting me to stay on another year.

In the midst of this demanding schedule, who should visit the area but Melville J. Herskovits! He was attending meetings in San Francisco and called to suggest that I show him about. I have often wondered whether this request was as perfunctory as it seemed, because one of the first things he suggested was that perhaps we could drop in to see Kroeber. A bit taken aback I did nevertheless get in touch with my old colleague who was now pretty much in retirement. I felt that he also was somewhat perplexed, but graciously invited us to his house in Berkeley. It turned out to be an historic meeting. Those two old savants who had been at odds with one another for so many years, each viewing the other as an apostate in the academic arena, each a student of the revered Boas, were all at once engaged in the most amicable exchange and engrossed in reminiscence. It was profoundly gratified to bear witness to this

reconciliation between two persons for whom I felt such respect and indebtedness. It was an unexpected reward for having been around at the right time.

But such moments pass rather quickly. Once again, before he left, Herskovits asked somewhat peevishly about what I was doing with my thesis. Though I had sent him reams of pages it was clear that little of it was acceptable. What about my central theme? Why so much extraneous material? This is scarcely a dissertation, etc., etc. I must admit that when I gave time to it I ranged quite helter-skelter through the luxuriant jungle of my field notes, driven more by what I found intriguing and novel than what might be required by convention or an exacting mentor. Yet I was able to produce two articles from the rejected material; one the rather overblown piece on esthetics, and the other an early introductory segment of the proposed dissertation.⁹ Both had been dismissed and returned to me with the scrawled commentary of “why this?” “Unnecessary” or “Sheer rubbish!”¹⁰ But over the next couple of years three more articles emerged out of the same residue of excess, so that I was moved to append a note to a later leaner product thanking Melville Herskovits for releasing so many earlier efforts for publication.

That year in Berkeley also allowed me to pick up the threads of earlier involvements. I wrote a short story that was broadcast by a local station and later published in a little magazine. There were some poems as well. The civil rights movement was spreading like wildfire and demonstrations were taking place throughout the area. It was an irresistible milieu and for a time I gave myself over to it. But this idyll soon gave way to a sobering reality. The teaching year at Cal was coming to an end and I had little expectation of being asked to stay on. I had no job nor a prospect of one. I did get an appointment to give a course or two at the Extension

Division which brought in minimal but much needed funds, and I felt some nostalgia about finding myself in the same niche frequently occupied by my old exemplar Paul Radin. Yet this too came to an end and, after much discussion, Kathy and I went about seeking what employment we could. Kathy, much to my everlasting admiration, was able to continue her work at a nursery school and even attended classes at U.C. San Francisco towards her degree. I, on the other hand, was able to work part-time at the old liquor store in Berkeley as well as other odd jobs. Amidst this flailing about loomed the haunting spectre of an unfinished thesis. Though I worked at it sporadically, testy notes from my mentor sharpened the edge of angst. Then, out of the blue, I received a letter from Bollingen Foundation informing me that their director Paul Radin had died and that one of his last acts had been to suggest a grant for me to carry out my work with the Washoe. If there is any meaning to the word serendipity, this was it. But while gladdened by the gift I grieved over the death of the man who had aroused my earliest affinity with the core mission of anthropology.

This small but timely grant made it possible for me to write up some of my Washoe material during the remainder of 1959. This included the peyotist narratives that Radin had been so fond of. A few short visits with our friends in Woodfords and Dresslerville also served to renew old ties, and it was for all of us a deeply restorative time. However the unfinished thesis and its disorderly overflow glutted every shelf and niche of our dwelling reminding me, along with the vexation of dwindling funds, of impending adversity.

But once again fortune smiled on us. A letter had come through the Berkeley anthropology department inquiring whether I would be interested in a position at the University of Utah. Indeed I was, and in due course we headed off to Salt Lake City where I was

privileged to work with excellent colleagues such as Jesse Jennings, Robert Anderson and Charles Dibble. It was also there that I met Don Fowler and Kay Sweeney, two of my students who later married and were to make important contributions to Great Basin research. But most consequential of all was that I was able to pull together the early attempts at a dissertation and produce a whittled-down manuscript of some 400 or more pages for Herskovits. I still have, as a trophy of the carnage that followed, the tattered carcass of that effort returned to me with scarcely a page not besmirched by emphatic marginalia or entire chapters slashed out as unacceptable.

To this day I can relive the spasms of suppressed rage that engulfed me when I read what seemed to me supercilious or dogmatic thrusts at my arduously reasoned product, much of it already revised and published to suit his whims. I was especially puzzled and incensed where at least five pages had been slashed out which presented in meticulous detail my interviewing method and the number and type of information I had used for each major category of investigation. There was no explanation, no marginalia, just slashed-out pages!¹¹ In addition, an entire concluding section analyzing the underlying role and legendary history of the secret societies was rejected as “digressive” or “repetitious.” What irritated me most was that this rejected material contained precisely the kind of probing that I had been led to assume was one of the important errands of ethnographic investigation. I felt it was time to dig in my heels and do battle with nitpicking pedagogy.

I did make a few plucky ventures into defense of my original workmanship but time and again came away daunted though unbowed. “A dissertation requires a thesis,” I learned over again, “not a soapbox for opinion. It must be economical and to the point, always firmly

supported by the data.” Such indisputable homilies only served to fuel my fury. I did have a sound thesis. I did have more than enough support for my data. But we were of different minds as to what was important. Why was he so obstinate? Didn’t I deserve more than this? He was the epitome of hidebound pedantry!

It did not occur to me at the time that I may have had too many theses, too much data, and an inadequate vehicle to convey them in. I realize now that I was fighting a belated battle of identity. Not that I would concede him a total victory, for I still retain some reservation on that score, but as I now look over my ravaged preliminary manuscripts I realize that despite a few instances of abiding import most of the marginalia are what one would expect from the dedicated and tireless teacher from whom I was continuing to learn.

At the time, however, I nurtured the smart from the assumed assault upon my dignity as a scholar and student of some years. In fact it is to this I must credit the constructive focus of my energies over the following year or two. Again, quite unforeseen, I received a very attractive invitation from the University of Pittsburgh with a substantial increase in salary. It is rather difficult in the present economic climate to account for the plethora of opportunity and accompanying mobility of that period. But the field of anthropology was expanding and it was taken for granted that one could move around until the most congenial location was found. Also the status acquired by moving upward through universities of acknowledged merit was a fact of consideration in the academic marketplace. However, my decisions had been more mundane based on the need for an adequate family income and welcome happenstance. There was also the fact that my good friend and fellow student from Northwestern, Art Tuden, was there as well as the renown George Peter Murdock. So again I uprooted the family and

migrated to a new venue. It was gratifying to have the Utah department try to meet the offer in order to keep me on, something I had not had the pleasure of experiencing before. We did worry about what such constant moving might mean for the children, but in that most of the families we knew were undergoing similar changes we tended to take it for granted. And though we all wanted to return west, we headed eastward. And this was to be another watershed year.

Just before leaving, I received from a friend a copy of an editorial from a newspaper in Richmond, Virginia.¹² I have cherished it ever since for its impact upon me at the time and for its extraordinary exposition of a feature of an era that permeated American life. As we drove eastward I read it again and again and now take the liberty of sharing it here in full:

Herskovits Rides Again

Our town played host the other day to one of the most redoubtable warriors of the integrationist horde: Melville Jean Herskovits, professor of anthropology at Northwestern, author, lecturer, collaborator with Gunnar Myrdal in preparation of *The American Dilemma*. Born in 1895, our guest in the early 1920s was a pupil and protege of Columbia's Franz Boas, the great-granddaddy of them all. He came to Virginia last week as a circuit-riding speaker for the Richmond Area University Center.

Such speakers, we glumly suppose, are like spinach, collards and exercise: they are *good* for us, and the compulsions of free speech that drive a man to listen even to Ashley Montagu make an occasional Herskovits a necessity. But

we are minded to ask why the University Center has to employ so *many* Montagu and Herskovitses? One would suffice for quite some time. They seem to come like locusts.

Dr. Herskovits, as a proper apostle for the godly Boas, believes there are no innate differences whatever between white and Negro. He sees all races (if the dirty word may be forgiven) as intellectual equals. When it is politely inquired why the Negro race has failed to produce a Beethoven, the doctor has a ready reply: "Has that person ever listened to jazz, which is probably the more important musical idiom in the art world today?" And where, pray, is the African Rembrandt? Mr. Herskovits says that when a New York museum pays 22,000 pounds sterling for an African mask "that would indicate there were at least some people who felt Africa has made some contributions." And there would be some people, we might add, who would say that the payment of 22,000 pounds sterling for an African mask indicated more about the judgment of the museum director than about the quality of the mask.

No matter. We will not shake the unshakeable Herskovits. His mind is closed. We do suggest the trustees of the University Center make a vigorous effort to obtain speakers of equal eminence to expound a contrary view. The students, whose minds presumably are still open, ought to know that old warriors are not necessarily infallibly wise. Herskovits has had his Negrophile needle

stuck in the same groove for 40 years. This does not make his doctrines right; it merely makes them repetitious.

Whatever vexation I may have retained about Mel Herskovits was routed as I absorbed the implications of this tour de force of journealese. The old boy was still at it, confronting the Goliath of ethnocentrism with the sling of his immutable faith in tolerance.¹³ He was still a rebel after all, not only in academia but in the world where he had been a dissector of myth and a celebrant of diversity. Here was the man I had admired since my early sea-going days, the man whose book had been the text of waterfront desegregation meetings and whose research had admitted Africa into the cloistered agenda of American anthropology.

These were among my thoughts as we headed across country on a new venture. The remnant acrimony about an endlessly washed-and-dried dissertation became a mere residue of self-realization. My severely pruned dissertation of some 200 pages had been accepted at last and I was to become a holder of the doctorate. The future beckoned enticingly. But Pittsburgh was not what we had expected. We will never forget the western entrance to the city as our old car rattled down the cobbled streets past rows of belching smokestacks. The kids were coughing and all of us bleary-eyed by the time we found the small apartment that was to be our home. Then there was the campus with a lonely skyscraper at the center known as The Cathedral of Learning. The Anthropology Department was lodged on the thirty-fifth floor. The whole thing was strange with little to console our first impression. I think that from this very first day we knew we could not settle there for long but must make the best of what we had done. Kathy and the kids managed once again to adapt to an unusual situation and we survived the entry as a

mutually supportive family.

The department, however, was a stimulating place, gung-ho, growing rapidly and aware of its acknowledged prestige. I was firstly assigned to introductory courses and a seminar in North American ethnology, followed by courses on Africa and Culture Theory. Though Murdock was holed up much of the time working on his World Ethnographic Sample, he could be counted on to collar anyone who might feed him information. I remember him pelting me with questions about the Washoe and the Gola, all of which I suspect found a way into his stacks of files. Another task, one which had especially attracted me to Pittsburgh, was that I had been asked by the Peace Corps to develop the first Liberian Peace Corps project scheduled for the summer of 1962. Although I had felt that this should have been held at Northwestern, the Pittsburgh department had assured strong support for it. It was to me a very important new program and the first sessions that summer were very promising. As a result I continued involvement in Peace Corps programs every year thereafter through the 1970s.

Another aspect of that year that I find interesting is that I continued to receive offers from other universities to such an extent I began to feel the world was my oyster. It was the nature of the times. Academic programs were expanding, grants and fellowships abounded. Everyone I knew was thinking about more advantageous placement and was moving here and there. But in the midst of this heady environment I began to have persistent inquiries from, of all places, the University of Nevada in Reno. I had scarcely heard of the institution and retained only dismal images of Reno. So I gave little thought to the matter. That would have seemed to be the end of it, but at every national meeting I attended I was tracked down by Carl Backman, a sociologist, who told me that he had been appointed to find someone to help build a department of

anthropology. He was a very nice guy, though he soon became something of a pest. I never gave him a flat no because I was always intrigued by offers. Often he took me to lunch and proceeded to lay out a prospectus that began to interest me. Apparently he represented the chairmen of three other departments who believed that anthropology must be included in the curriculum. The President and the Regents were approving of the idea and he had been appointed to recruit. My name had come up as a likely person for the job with strong recommendations from Jennings at Utah and McCown and Heizer at Berkeley. Would I come out for a visit?

Well this was a bit more appealing than I had expected. When I told Kathy about it she perked up immediately. Not only was the place within short driving distance of family and friends in California but she pointed out what I had already reckoned that it was in the area where we had spent so many enjoyable years of fieldwork. So I began to give the possibility serious thought. But doubts remained. When I raised the matter with friends the reaction was generally percussive: "What! Reno? The land of jackpots and whorehouses!" Here I was in Big Time, how could I drop it for the "slums of the West"? Moreover, did I know that the so-called university had been kicked out of the AAUP for the questionable firing of two professors? And did I know that minorities referred to Nevada as "the Mississippi of the West." Herskovits was more reserved but nonetheless emphatic: "You have a position at a prestigious university and a promising future, but only you can make so crucial a decision." Having dealt with his demeanor many times before, I knew that the idea had appalled him. The exchange weighed heavily over the following weeks.

Nevertheless, I did make the trip to Nevada and was put up in a hotel overlooking the

Truckee River and the blazing lights of the Biggest Little City in the world. Despite all the years I had worked in Nevada I had never really seen Reno, merely passed through it. Yet here was the town of a university I knew very little about. A sense of belated discovery enveloped me as I was driven around the campus the next morning by two very persuasive potential colleagues. Then I was taken to meet the university President, Charles Armstrong, who greeted me with “We’re very glad you are thinking of joining us.” Then there was a meeting with Wendel Mordy, director of the Desert Research Institute who I learned was to provide the major source of funds for the new venture. This was news from left field and it aroused my concerns about the development of an independent department funded by the university. It was a matter that was to arise later and resolved with some difficulty as my organizational plans developed.

At the end of these sessions a group from the sociology, psychology and economics departments took me to dinner at the old Holiday Hotel overlooking the Truckee River. They gave me a compelling pitch about the progressive outlook for the university and their departments. They felt a department of anthropology was essential among the social sciences and thought my ideas about developing a Great Basin focus of research were great. Funding was a problem at this point, but the Desert Research Institute would provide assured support at the beginning. They understood my concerns and were in full agreement with my objectives.

All during this exchange a young sociologist sitting next to me, whom I shall refer to as Alex, was whispering in my ear like some Rasputin: “Don’t believe a word they say. This place is a dung heap. Ask them where you are going to be housed!” I must say I wasn’t put off in the least by it, but rather refreshed. Every university should have one or more like him, dwellers on the seamy side, sleaze-mongers and paid satirists. Alex was one such I have known, basically a

good guy and scholar, but an irrepressible gossip and downer. We were later to become mutually advantageous associates. Nevertheless, during this meeting he had apparently discerned one of my underlying interests and whispered “Ask them about minorities around here.” Having overheard the remark, Carl Backman, one of the more honest and forthcoming men I have known, described the deplorable segregation throughout the area and that there were only four or five Native Americans on campus and as many Afro-Americans, the latter with haven on the football or basketball teams. There were no women among them as far as he knew. He and Paul Secord, chairman of the Psychology Department, were of one mind that something had to be done about it and I felt myself in congenial company.

All in all I began to be fascinated by the challenge of the place. The small land-grant institution with its brick and timber buildings and its nineteenth century facade was very appealing to me. It had all the earmarks of pioneering, of starting from scratch and building something new. The full significance of this episode, given my prevailing state of mind at the time, is a bit too copious to recount here but is expounded elsewhere.¹⁴ But I was enmeshed.

By the time I returned to the belching stacks and smog of Pittsburgh I had pretty much made up my mind. Kathy was delighted. Pittsburgh was not her cup of tea, and the kids were happy for any move westward. So I sent a letter of acceptance and we rented a trailer and began packing once again. Meanwhile we had written Frances and Mel of our plans but learned shortly thereafter that he had been hospitalized. Our concern was somewhat abated by a letter from Frances apologizing for not having sent their “congratulations” sooner and referred to my earlier letter about Nevada as “a full explanation at such a busy time for you.” Then much in her prudent manners she went on to write:

“If I may confess, Mel thinks I had written to you already, because he wanted you to know that he feels that once a decision is made it is, and must be, for the best, and then there are always reasons, expressed and unexpressed, that underlie any decision, and no outsider has the key to all the intangibles that are so important.

At any rate, he has full confidence in you, your work and your future..., whether it will be in a major department already established, or you will *build* a major department doesn't really matter.

Mel's condition is good, under the circumstances. The doctors are pleased with the pace of his recovery... The present plans are to go off somewhere come Spring. Mel has writing plans, of course... If we go to the Carribean do you think I can keep him from doing fieldwork?”

Despite the muted undertone of disapproval the sincere message of support did much to quell our anxiety as we embarked on a new adventure. That letter from Frances was written on February 3, 1963. On February 25 Melville J. Herskovits was dead.¹⁵ His death signaled the close of an era for me. The light dimmed for a time without his bright and ingenuous presence. But the memory of him remains vivid.

His presence was very much with us as we drove westward and as I went on to take part in the founding of what became a trail-blazing post of anthropology in the far-reaches of western

Nevada. The Great Basin, a vast and neglected region of western North America, was soon to be the crucible of vigorous new ethnographic and archeological research. Beginning jointly with the Department of Sociology and with additional funding from The Desert Research Institute, our initial and transitory staff included Willard Park, Wayne Suttles, Joan Davlin and Wilbur Davis servicing a mere handful of interested students. Within four years, however, we were able to recruit a more permanent group consisting of Donald Hardesty, Robert Winzeler, Gary Haynes, LaVerne Jeanne and, of course, Don Fowler and Catherine Fowler who were to be the mainstays of a new independent department's interests in Great Basin ethnological and archeological research. We also succeeded in bringing the noted linguist Sven Liljeblad and, later, William Jacobsen to the University through an inter-disciplinary program with the Department of English.

During those first few years a major stimulus to this new venture was that we accepted responsibility for a number of major projects that enhanced the perception of an anthropology program, as well as of the University itself, regionally and nationally. Through our efforts the University together with the Nevada State Museum hosted the revived Great Basin Anthropological Conference for which I was privileged to serve as chairman. We also developed a joint program with Stanford University and the University of Pittsburgh for summer field-training of graduate students at selected sites in Nevada. A summer institute for teachers was established in Problems of Indian Education and Welfare in cooperation with the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada. Of particular note was the formation of a Center for Western North American Studies providing Great Basin research resources for local and visiting scholars.

By 1967 these activities and the establishment of an independent Department of

Anthropology had generated a fruitful pioneering program at the University, attracting a growing coterie of undergraduate and graduate students as well as visiting scholars. Moreover, in keeping with the accouterments of the personal bearings I had brought with me, among my first undertakings was to participate in the formation of a Black Students' Union and an American Indian Organization on campus. Beginning with less than a dozen such students in attendance at the University in the 1960s, these groups eventually expanded into prominent and effective organizations in later years joined by contingents of concerned students, faculty and members of the surrounding communities to become the hubs of civil rights activities throughout the region. In the midst of this heady ferment I am pleased to note that I nevertheless continued my relationships and study among the Washoe people and, with grants from the National Science Foundation, the social Science Research Council, and Northwestern University, made four additional research trips to Liberia and the Gola.

When I look back over the more than fifty years since that fertile time I realize how much of what I had become was beholden to my early embroilment in waterfront unionization and to my later encounter with the ambience of Melville Herskovits. During those dockside and sea-going days I learned about the power of mutual effort and the reality of class division. And with the discovery of Mel Herskovits I was introduced to a discipline and a subject of inquiry that was to become a way of life. Though Mel might not see eye to eye with me on this score, I don't think he would be displeased. So it is to that reluctant rebel and to my own turbulent past that I inscribe this recollection.

NOTES

1. This memoir had its inception as a paper entitled "A Rebel's Destiny: Melville Herskovits, Sentinel of the

Ethnographer's Laboratory," presented at the Plenary Session Symposium on Melville Herskovits, His Work and Influence, 10th Anniversary of the Northwestern University African Studies Program at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, October 28, 1988. Another version entitled "Rebel Destinies: Remembering Herskovits" was read as a Twentieth Annual Hans Wolff Memorial Lecture at the Indiana University African Studies Program meeting, April 6, 1993. Since then it has undergone revision and expansion as I occasionally removed it from the back burner of my concerns to become a frankly autobiographical account as well.

2. James Churchward, *The Lost Continent of Mu*, New York, Ives Washburn Inc., 1932. A justly forgotten self-styled historian and archeologist's uninhibited conjectures about a vast continent in the Pacific, now submerged excepting for remnant islands.

3. Herskovits, Melville J. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1941.

4. *Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana*. New York, Whittlesey House, 1934. (Co-authored with Frances S. Herskovits.)

5. Later published with the overwrought title, A Structural Approach to Esthetics: Toward a Definition of Art in Anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 60:702-714, 1958.

6. Isaac J. Karnley, who became my assistant and unsurpassed interpreter throughout my stay. I used the spelling Kanlé here which indicates more precisely the pronunciation in Gola.

7. Klé is pronounced and written as Klay by English-speaking Liberians and others and appears with the latter spelling in all Liberian maps and documents.

8. For a signal example of the power of phobic retention see one of my discourses of later years: Art As Mirage: Reflections and Recollections of a Savage Mind. ACASA Leadership Award Address, Eighth Triennial Symposium on African Art. *African Art*: November, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1989.

9. The Setting of Gola Society and Culture: Some Implications of Variation in Time and Space. *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 21:43-125, 1959.

10. Some such epithet often referred to any employment of the "jargon" of social anthropology (e.g., "structural functional") or the suggestion of "applied anthropology."

11. In later years new insights about Herskovits' own fieldwork have led me to wonder whether his reaction to this particular material may not have been curtailed by a sense of personal deficiency in this regard. Some relevant

insights are provided by Suzanne Preston Blier in *Field Days: Melville J. Herskovits in Dahomey*, *History in Africa* 16:1-22, 1989, and by Simon Ottenberg in *The American Anthropological Background to Herskovits' Scholarship*, a paper presented at the African Studies Association Meetings, Chicago, October 27-31, 1988.

12. *Richmond Leader*, March 13, 1962.

13. Something of the problem of defending cultural relativism in public forum is illustrated by his remarkable newspaper report. Such exchanges frequently moved Herskovits beyond the bounds of his essentially practical and very worthwhile employment of the concept. Extracted from philosophic digression, it is set forth clearly in his book *Man and His Works*, 1951. See, for example, pages 77-78 and the following chapter titled "The Ethnographer's Laboratory."

14. Warren d'Azevedo by *Dead Reckoning*. Oral History Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 2005:1067-1111.

15. I am sure there are others who also cherish an apocryphal tale that circulated after his death. Melville Herskovits, a lifelong devotee of music and tyro violinist, is said to have been lying on his sick bed listening to a radio broadcast of Beethoven by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. At one point, allegedly, he pounded his bed impatiently with his fist exclaiming "They must do something about those horns. The tempo is all wrong!" I want to believe it happened just like that, and feel privileged to pass on so likely a legend.

16. By the 1980s the department had achieved recognition as a major center of anthropological research, and its chairman was selected to organize the first publication of representative current studies in the region (cf., Warren L. d'Azevedo [editor], *Great Basin*, *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution).