

# *Introduction*

## AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF AFFINITIES

### **af·fin·i·ty**, *noun*

**I.** (a) sympathy marked by community of interest: kinship; (b) **i.** an attraction to or liking for something; **ii.** an attractive force between substances or particles that causes them to enter into and remain in chemical combination

**II.** (a) likeness based on relationship or causal connection, analogy; (b) a relation between biological groups involving resemblance in structural plan and indicating a common origin<sup>1</sup>

## PARTIAL RELATIONS

On a sunny Sunday morning in August, Ricardo Carvalho, a thirty-five-year-old shipping clerk from a nondescript northern Portuguese suburb, checks his watch and quickly drinks the last of his espresso. Gesturing for me to follow, he walks briskly across the café esplanade to the sidewalk and pauses for me to catch up, then resumes his story as we hurry to meet the tour bus. He is telling me about having dinner with an American rabbi a few months ago, another in a string of stories he's shared about encounters with Jews visiting from abroad. They come to him through word of mouth, or via his website, or by happenstance, in person, when he and they both happen to attend Shabbat (Sabbath) services at the grand twentieth-century synagogue in Porto, Portugal's second-largest city. He takes visitors on walking tours of Porto's medieval Jewish quarter and recounts eight centuries of Portuguese Jewish history, asking nothing in exchange but their time; for Ricardo, the opportunity to meet and perhaps befriend these foreigners is an end in itself. Whether an independent tourist couple, a Jewish heritage tour group, a rabbi, a historian passing through, or outreach activists seeking "lost" or

“hidden” Jews of Portuguese origin, the specifics are less important to him than the simple fact that they are Jews—and that they invariably seem as interested in him as he is in them.

On this particular morning it is a group of twenty Italians, all retirees, midway through a package tour of “Jewish Portugal.” He has agreed to meet them at the synagogue and lead a short walking tour. As with previous visitors, he will not volunteer that he works as a shipping clerk, nor will they ask his profession; with his wire-rimmed glasses, intellectual bearing, and facility in several languages, tourists invariably take him for an academic or a white-collar professional. In fact he easily could be an academic, given the many years he’s spent studying Jewish and European history, linguistics, and religion on his own. But in the Portugal of his youth, a working-class child like Ricardo had few opportunities to become a scholar, just as today, on this sunny morning in 2004, there are few avenues for him to join Portugal’s tiny, tight-knit Jewish community. Despite his public activism to raise awareness of Portugal’s medieval Jewish heritage, his explanation that he has Jewish ancestry, and his attendance at the Porto synagogue off and on for nearly a decade, most Portuguese Jews do not consider him a Jew at all.

When we arrive at the synagogue’s austere iron gates the tour bus has not yet arrived. Waiting, I turn to take in the imposing four-story building. Even after seeing it so many times, I am struck anew by its vast facade and still more by its remarkable history. The largest synagogue in the Iberian Peninsula, it contains not only a spacious, intricately tiled Moorish-style sanctuary, but also classrooms, a library, meeting hall, full kitchen, dining room, ritual bath (Heb., *mikvah*), and lodgings for a rabbi and a caretaker. For most of its existence, however, the opulent building has stood empty; the *mikvah* lay in disrepair for decades, and until quite recently no religious leader had ever lived in the rabbi’s quarters. Five hundred years have passed since Porto’s Jewish population was large enough to warrant such a building. Instead, as Ricardo explains during his walking tours, it is the physical expression of a dream: that one day the descendants of Portugal’s “lost” Jews would return en masse to their ancestral faith, a Jewish community rising phoenix-like from the Inquisition’s long cold ashes.

When the synagogue was first being built, in the 1920s, that hope had a certain logic. In 1910 a Jewish traveler stumbled upon a village of *marranos* (Pt.; secret Jews) in the country’s mountainous interior. These were the remnant of Portugal’s once-substantial Jewish population, forcibly converted en

masse to Catholicism in the fifteenth century and hounded continuously by the Inquisition for more than two hundred years thereafter. Over the centuries they developed a clandestine Judaism, living outwardly as Catholics while transmitting fragmentary rituals from one generation to the next. The great synagogue, its construction underwritten with donations from Jews abroad, was intended as a beacon to the thousands of *marranos* rumored still to be hiding throughout Portugal's northern provinces (Mea and Steinhardt 1997). But the hoped-for return never came. For years the doors opened only rarely, primarily for cultural events, the key held in private hands. In the 1980s a small group of expatriates from Israel, the United States, England, and France restored and rededicated the building in collaboration with a few Portuguese citizens whose Jewish grandparents had immigrated from Eastern Europe early in the century.

Today tourists are surprised to learn that the synagogue's leadership consists largely of foreigners like themselves. In fact, Ricardo emphasizes, few who attend Shabbat services have roots deeper than one or two generations in Portuguese soil, if that. Beyond the two or three Catholic-born Portuguese women who converted to Judaism when they married congregants, the only ethnic Portuguese to be found within the synagogue's walls are Ricardo and others who, like him, describe themselves as *marranos* or *b'nei anussins* (Heb.-Pt.; children of the coerced)—descendants of the forced converts of long ago.<sup>2</sup>

Both in Porto and in Lisbon, the nation's capital, over the past few decades dozens of people have come forward and identified themselves as ancestral Jews. Reaction from the Portuguese Jewish community has been at best indifferent: they dismiss the newcomers as non-Jews, not least because neither distant ancestry nor a desire to be Jewish automatically makes one a Jew according to Jewish law. In accompanying several Jewish heritage tour groups through Portugal, on the other hand, I have noted that Jews from abroad tend to view self-titled Marranos in a far more sympathetic light. This August morning marks the first Jewish tour group I will experience from the Marranos' perspective. Standing next to Ricardo, I wonder what the tourists will make of my being there.

Before I can ask what I should do when they arrive, we are joined by Miguel Santos, Ricardo's good friend and fellow Marrano. Just then the bus rounds the corner and pulls to the curb, stopping directly in front of us. The doors open. Italian retirees spill down the steps, one after another. They await no formal introduction, reaching out to clasp hands with each of us in turn, moving

briskly as if along a receiving line. “Shalom!” they cry, using the universally recognized Hebrew greeting and looking directly into our eyes. “Shalom! Shalom!” Pointing to the chest, they offer their names: “Giuseppe! Shalom!” Ricardo and Miguel readily answer in kind, having done this before: “Shalom! Ricardo!” “Shalom! Miguel!” I try to follow suit, but with so many outstretched hands and exuberant faces coming at me at once I have difficulty focusing. “Shalom! Naomi!” I announce heartily to no one in particular, shaking hands with one tourist while smiling at another. “Shalom!”

The Italian guide leads his charges into the synagogue for a presentation and tour by a Jewish community representative, this time a Canadian expatriate. Next will come Ricardo’s walking tour through the old Jewish quarter. Catching my breath, I realize that I have not retained a single name: I recall a blur of eager faces, broad smiles, clasped hands, effusive goodwill, and no real communication at all. In an earlier stage of my research I arrived at these same gates alongside similar package tourists, accompanying them through Portugal from site to site, community to community. Then, as today, participants were clearly as excited to meet local people as they were to tour the synagogue, and it had been relatively easy to remember the names and faces of the one or two people greeting us at each stop. But from the other side, the encounter is nothing short of overwhelming and, truth be told, a bit disconcerting. I am uncomfortably aware that our visitors have no way of knowing that I am neither Portuguese nor a member of Porto’s Jewish community. All they’ve learned is my name.

Inside, we listen as the community representative outlines the synagogue’s history. As soon as he mentions the early twentieth-century discovery of surviving Marranos and their significance to the building, the tourists are visibly more attentive. A clamor of questions: they want to know how many Marranos there were, how they found safe harbor, what their rituals were like, where they’ve gone, whether their descendants still identify as Jews. At this, Ricardo steps forward and clears his throat. “There are still Marranos in Portugal,” he says. “But we’re not all rural villagers.” Their guide translates and the tourists look at Ricardo in wonder. A Marrano, a secret Jew, the Inquisition’s surviving remnant, here, in front of them! But the community representative ignores the interruption and continues his presentation. As soon as we are back outside, the tourists bombard Ricardo with questions, crowding around to hear him. An elegantly dressed woman takes his hand and holds it tightly, listening intently; an elderly man claps him on the back, grinning. They ask his family surnames. Several announce that their own

ancestors escaped from Portugal centuries earlier, fleeing the Inquisition. They are thrilled to meet someone here who might be kin.

For Ricardo and Miguel, the tourists offer an encounter with kinship of a different order. For most of their visitors, the word *Marrano* conjures images of families: families practicing secret rituals together, marrying only among other Marrano families, passing their identity and practices from mother to daughter across the centuries. But at the turn of the twenty-first century, those who identify as Marranos in urban Portugal are typically the only ones in their natal family to pursue a connection with Judaism, and most began to do so only in young adulthood. Though many heard as children that they had Jewish ancestors on one side or the other, they were taught no secret prayers growing up, nor was there an emphasis on socializing with other families of the same background. They do not know their Jewish ancestors' names, nor even the approximate location of the last practicing Jew on the family tree. Nonetheless, most associate their Jewishness with kinship: at this moment in history, August 2004, they understand descent—genealogical lineage—to be the primary element binding them to the Jewish people, for whom they feel a great affinity in the abstract but with whom they have few opportunities for direct interaction. Thus to be greeted warmly by visiting Jews is, for Portugal's urban Marranos, to reconnect by proxy with their broken lineage and to experience belonging—however fleetingly—among their own lost tribe.

. . .

This is a book about the desire for belonging, about identifying with a particular social category and having that claim to affiliation denied. It is about the ways that cultural logics of kinship inform imaginings of self in relation to others, individually and collectively, both back in time and across vast distances, and the ways those same logics work in practice to render some people strangers and others, kin. I open with the encounter between Ricardo, a would-be Jew-by-descent denied Jewish belonging in his local context, and the Italian Jewish tourists, who readily embraced him as a Marrano and potential kinsman, because it highlights how fleeting interactions in distinct social spaces allow different expressions of self, and hence different experiences of belonging or exclusion, to come to the fore. These expressions of self are not random. As I show in the chapters that follow, understandings of oneself and of one's place in different social worlds are culturally patterned

and contextually contingent. The defining criteria of Jewishness have always varied widely across cultural contexts, over time, and from one social sphere to another (Cohen 1999; Herskovits 1927); small wonder, then, that “marginal” groups like Ricardo and his counterparts, who understand themselves to be Jewish according to criteria that are to them entirely reasonable, often find that recognition as Jews by others is far from guaranteed.

The warmth and fascination the Italian tourists showed Ricardo and Miguel did not arise from nowhere. They, like so many other Jewish visitors, arrived fully aware of Portugal’s dramatic history of secret Judaism, and that history engendered feelings of affinity for all Marranos they encountered during their tour, rural and urban. Indeed, *affinity* was a term I heard over and over throughout my research, in conversations both in English and in Portuguese. As we will see, in Portugal and around the world people from a wide range of backgrounds articulated feelings of connection, resonance, likeness, sympathy, shared essence, and even direct ancestral linkage with the hidden Jews of Portugal’s past and their descendants in the present. In Portugal, those who called themselves Marranos also expressed such affinities for Jews in the abstract, for the ancestral population from whom they felt their connection had been severed, and, ultimately, for a small number of individual visitors who returned repeatedly to teach and guide them. The assumption, nature, and consequence of these diverse forms of affinity comprise my central theme.

Ricardo and Miguel, like a great many other participants in my research, were members of organizations created by and for people who believed they had “lost” Portuguese Jewish roots, as well as individuals merely interested in learning about the country’s Jewish history. Dismissed by the mainstream Jewish communities and lacking access to educational materials, communal support, and even basic knowledge of Judaism, members of these organizations turned to each other, the internet, and foreign Jewish travelers for information and encouragement. By the early 2000s they were regularly hosting tour groups and international Jewish outreach workers, who traveled to Portugal in hopes of bringing the country’s storied Marranos back to the Jewish world at large. My own work in Portugal began in 2002, just as interaction with foreign Jews was rapidly increasing, and continued during eighteen months of intensive fieldwork in Lisbon and Porto (from 2004 to 2006), followed by return visits in 2007 and 2008.

The events recounted in this book took place largely within Portugal, but their imaginative and interpersonal context often reached far beyond its

borders. This is a study of global interconnection, not only to the degree that the infrastructure and cultural flows of globalization enable the kinds of imaginings and interactions I explore in the pages that follow, but equally in subjective perceptions of *being connected* to others, both far back in time and widely around the globe. The question of identity, too, is woven throughout this work. From an anthropological perspective, identities are neither fixed nor inherent, but are created and reproduced continuously through social practice and in interaction with others (Holland et al. 1998; Pieterse 2007). While urban Marranos understood themselves to descend from hidden Jews and consciously adopted a set of practices and attitudes they felt were appropriate to that self-designation, their overt exclusion from Portuguese Jewish life, knowledge, and religious practice continuously challenged it. As Ricardo's story shows us, however, Jewish visitors from abroad provided an alternative social space in which to express their evolving sense of self. Viewed simultaneously against the backdrop of Portuguese understandings of identity and ancestry and in light of models of Jewish peoplehood invoked by tourists and other foreign interlocutors, the urban Marranos' constructions of self reveal the dense entanglement of kinship categories with the dynamics of identification and belonging across local, national, and global spheres of encounter.

My analysis proceeds through a series of turning points in the Portuguese Marrano movement, each providing a context for considering a distinct set of theoretical issues regarding identity, the self, social practice, tourism and cross-cultural communication, and (global) kinship. Taken together, they offer a narrative account of the movement itself, beginning with the earliest history of Portuguese hidden Jews through to the consolidation of urban Marrano identity in the 1990s and 2000s, proceeding to analysis of the continual influence of visitors from abroad, and concluding with discussion of the formal "return" of a group of Marranos to their ancestral faith before a London rabbinic court in 2006. Throughout, Jews from other countries—in the abstract, in imaginings sourced from popular media, in face-to-face interaction, and in direct communication online or by telephone—will prove central to Marranos' shifting understanding of themselves ancestrally and in relation to the Jewish world and, above all, to their experiences of kinship or estrangement.

This, then, is a book for anyone interested in the nature of identity and belonging in an era of globalization; in the malleability of social categories, whether chosen or ascribed; in the ways that cultural logics of kinship, prior

imaginings, and expressions of emotion inevitably color face-to-face interactions; and in the processes and practices through which individuals come to know themselves and to recognize others as comrades, compatriots, and kin. While the story at the book's heart is that of Portugal's urban Marranos, this is also a larger story of how diverse forms of kinship, relatedness, and belonging evolve across scales of human sociality, from the global to the interpersonal and back again. I offer an ethnography of affinities felt and affirmed or denied, a fine-grained analysis of the mechanisms through which perceptions of likeness, mutuality, and interconnection—in the expansive, implicitly global sense of Jewish peoplehood—are concretized and tested “on the ground,” in the resolutely local context of face-to-face interaction.

As with any form of identity, ethnic, religious, or otherwise, the Marranos' experience of *identification*—the process through which one comes to think of oneself as belonging to or essentially connected with a particular social category—occurred within webs of interconnection, both imaginative and intersubjective. These interconnections were everywhere shot through with ideas and expressions of affinity, encompassing not only essential relatedness but also, as the definition that opens this chapter suggests, experiential echoes, analogical resonance, and feelings of attraction, sympathy, and common interest. When grounded in repeated face-to-face encounters, such diffuse feelings of affinity can give rise to family-like bonds, based on mutual expressions of love, care, nurturance, and investment of time and energy. Hence my analysis makes particular note of *affect*, the communicative register in which emotions, feelings, and subjectivities take shape and gather force in relations between individuals (Richard and Rudnyckj 2009), for it proved a critical factor in the outcome of interactions between Marranos, their foreign visitors, and members of the Portuguese Jewish communities. Ultimately, their story reveals that close physical proximity and face-to-face expressions of affect remain the productive sphere for identification and belonging—even as heightened global interconnectivity generates ever more opportunities for encounter.

#### PORTUGUESE MARRANOS, RURAL AND URBAN

To identify as a Marrano in contemporary Portugal is to tie oneself to intersecting histories of descent and rupture, both Portuguese and Jewish. In the Middle Ages, Portugal was home to a thriving, centuries-old Jewish community, one of the world's largest, that was abruptly obliterated by mass



forced conversion in 1497. Many of the unwilling converts attempted to continue practicing Judaism in secret, but 250 years of Inquisitorial scrutiny rooted out all but the most stalwart. The rest assimilated into the Catholic mainstream. Those few who were able to escape from Portugal joined existing Iberian-origin Jewish communities abroad (Benbassa and Rodrigue 2000).<sup>3</sup> By the eighteenth century, Portugal seemed a country entirely without Jews (Martins 2006). Their absence constituted a profound shift for both the Portuguese nation and world Jewry, a rupture in the historical trajectory of two peoples, remembered by both even today. Among Jews, it is part of the story of the Sephardic diaspora, the branch of the Jewish people made up of descendants of those who fled persecution in Spain and Portugal, and of the heroic Inquisition-era Marranos, who persisted in their faith even at risk of death and survived in small, hidden communities until well into the twentieth century. For the Portuguese, it is a piece of their long and complex ethnic and religious history, according to which the forced converts contributed one more ancestral stream—joining the Celtic, Germanic, Mediterranean, and “Moorish”—said to run in the nation’s veins (Bastos 2000).

For those who consider themselves Marranos in urban Portugal today, both that descent and its rupture are deeply personal, often painfully so. Unlike the “rural villagers” from whom Ricardo differentiated himself, who maintained a collective sense of themselves as Jews over centuries by raising each new generation in an isolated, closed community (Garcia 1993), the self-titled Marranos of Portugal’s major metropolitan areas came to an ancestral Jewish identity on their own, usually in adulthood, through an extended period of study and introspection. In their solitary quest to become Jews in the present, many described themselves as first discovering and then recovering something brutally wrenched from their ancestors by the Inquisition. Because the distinction between the two groups of “Marranos” is critical to understanding the city-dwellers at the heart of this book, throughout I distinguish the latter as *urban* Marranos. Nonetheless, the rural Marranos—that is, intact communities of secret Jews—will remain visible in the margins throughout, for to this day their fame fuels ancestral imaginings among urban Marranos and shapes the expectations of Jewish visitors from afar.

### *Marrano Associations*

Rather than the family or the village, it was the institution of the *associação* (Pt.; association, society, federation) that brought Portugal’s urban Marranos

together and cemented their collective identity. *Associações*—voluntary, affinity-based membership organizations—are a common feature of the Portuguese social landscape. Often focused on recreational and cultural interests like sports, film, or the arts, associations also form around regional, national, ethnic, or religious origins (Costa 2002; Sardinha 2009). Immigrant *associações*, for example, typically serve their members both as mutual aid societies and as spaces of familiarity and solidarity. Long-term foreign residents or postcolonial citizens and their descendants create associations to preserve linguistic and cultural heritage, whether in private community celebrations or public folkloric displays, and religious communities typically have ancillary associations as well. As a social institution, then, the Portuguese *associação* encompasses anything from a literary circle of five members to an immigrant-based cultural association of five hundred, from a denominational youth group for Angolan-Portuguese teenagers to a professionally run, nongovernmental organization (NGO) serving the deaf nationwide. Whatever the focus, *associações* have certain features in common: by-laws, membership rolls, regular dues, nonprofit status, and recognition from the state as legal entities advancing shared objectives.

In the early 2000s, each of Portugal's two largest cities had a “Marrano” association: in Lisbon, HaShalom Jewish Association, and in Porto, Menorá Jewish Cultural Association.<sup>4</sup> In the spectrum of *associações*, they occupied a murky niche. Not exactly religious, nor solely cultural, they were created neither as ethnic minority associations nor as identity-based support groups. Their interstitial character became especially apparent in 2005, when the City of Porto inaugurated its Municipal Council of Communities (*Conselho Municipal das Comunidades*). Intended to provide a voice for the city's diverse resident minority populations, the council comprised representatives from twelve different *associações*. The local Jewish community association, Associação Comunidade Israelita do Porto,<sup>5</sup> had a seat alongside groups like the Porto Hindu Association and the Luso-African Methodist Association. Porto's Marrano association, on the other hand, did not. Menorá members explained to me that this was because they were not an immigrant group—on the contrary, by definition their ancestors had lived on Portuguese soil hundreds of years earlier—nor, they said, could they be recognized as an ethnic minority because their physical appearance, cultural practices, and family names were all those of ordinary Portuguese. Moreover, as (ancestral) Jews they were already represented by the Jewish community association, even if the latter did not recognize them among its constituents,

and so they could not claim a “community” seat as an association representing a minority religion. Nonetheless, Menorá’s president attended the inaugural meeting, inviting me along and chatting comfortably afterward with the council’s official members. However different the social niche held by their respective *associações*, council members had collaborated with Menorá on joint events in the past and understood it to be engaged in a similar enterprise: a struggle for recognition, identity, and solidarity.

Menorá and HaShalom were founded within a few years of each other, in 2002 and 1999, respectively. The two groups’ leaders communicated frequently about common concerns by text and email, sometimes daily, and collaborated on strategic planning, occasionally making the three-hour train journey between cities to meet face-to-face. At weekly meetings, participants gathered to plan activities and to discuss Jewish history and religious practice, as well as to commiserate over their difficulty joining the local Jewish community. Each association had approximately forty dues-paying members, most of whom knew one another despite the more than two hundred miles separating them. If not already acquainted through personal networks or social media, they met when the associations held joint holiday events or at their annual national meeting, which also attracted participants from other parts of the country. Thus at the beginning of the 2000s it could be said that there was a single urban, ancestrally Jewish community forming in Portugal, a coherent social space distributed across two distinct geographical regions and centered primarily in local associations.

### *Association Members*

Initially, the members of HaShalom and Menorá seemed to me a fairly homogeneous group. Of the thirty most active participants, most were relatively young—in 2005 the average age was forty—and only four had children. The majority were single, either divorced or never married, with roughly equal numbers of men and women. By Portuguese standards they were well educated, having completed at least a year of postsecondary education at a time when just 60 percent of working adults nationwide had attended school past age fifteen.<sup>6</sup> Several were graduate students or professional academics. Regardless of educational attainment, all were avid, proficient researchers. They shared a fascination with anything Jewish—history, culture, politics, religious practice—and were articulate, well read, and passionate about their involvement.

From their dress, demeanor, and communication style, I interpreted them to be upper-middle-class white-collar workers and professionals. Because the Portuguese consider it impolite to ask a relative stranger's occupation and work was rarely discussed at meetings, weeks or months passed before I learned through casual conversation what each person did. In fact they ran the gamut from gardener to filmmaker, trucking dispatcher to translator, psychiatrist to secretary. There were several lawyers, a hairdresser, two poets, a preschool teacher, a bookstore cashier—in short, a mix of professionals and hourly employees in a wide range of sectors, from diverse working- and middle-class backgrounds. Within the context of the Marrano associations, however, these differences were unremarked and evidently unimportant. The only explicit invocations of social identity within the group highlighted what they—the Marranos (*os marranos*) or B'nai Anusim (*os b'nei anusim*)—had in common: a conviction that they had Jewish ancestors; a fundamental sense of themselves as Jewish but no directly transmitted familial legacy of Jewish practice; a desire for acknowledgment of their Jewishness by others; and a shared experience of being individually and collectively marginalized and even openly spurned at the synagogues in Lisbon and Porto.

During my time with the Marrano associations, I became increasingly aware of an additional, more muted commonality: most participants expressed feeling somehow different from the societal mainstream. The subject generally arose indirectly, as an analogy for their marginalization from Portugal's normative Jewish communities, but their sense of being "other" reflects a central aspect of Portuguese social life that is important for understanding their experience. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century Portugal was a profoundly class-stratified society, with a small ruling elite and a vast population of farmers, unskilled laborers, and urban poor. Today the underlying class consciousness, now expanded to a growing middle class, is crosscut by numerous other forms of affiliation and differentiation, a matrix continuously if intuitively used to ascertain who is or is not "one of us" and hence who will have access to one's restricted social networks. These range from regional distinctions—rural/urban, north/south, mainland/island, and, above all, Lisbon versus the rest of Portugal—to hierarchies based on education, pedigree, accent, and employment, among many others. Determinations of who is outside or inside one's group, different from or similar to oneself, are continuously if implicitly negotiated and reproduced in everyday interaction.

There are also numerous forms of social distinction stemming from Portugal's long history as both a colonial power and a country of emigration.

More than a quarter of the core participants in HaShalom and Menorá were *retornados* (returnees), the Portuguese term for the roughly five hundred thousand colonial-settler descendants who arrived en masse in Lisbon from the African colonies in late 1975, fleeing the violent decolonization process. Just as they had been legally classified *brancos de segunda classe* (second-class whites) during the colonial era, because their families had lived and died on African soil for generations (Errante 2003), upon arriving in Portugal the near-destitute refugees found they would be equally “second-class Portuguese”—stigmatized by custom, if not by law, and widely viewed as a burden on the nation. Other members of the *associações* were raised elsewhere, their parents having participated in a massive wave of low-wage labor migration that carried over 1.5 million Portuguese to France, Germany, and Brazil between 1960 and 1990 (Gonçalves 1996). Having returned to Portugal as teens or young adults, they were keenly aware of bearing the stigmatized accent and mannerisms of the countries where they were raised—a telltale sign of impoverished origins, despite their own upward social mobility (Koven 2007). And there were still more forms of social difference: individuals who were gay but closeted; self-made intellectuals from working-class families; middle-class Brazilians who were naturalized Portuguese citizens but felt they would never be socially accepted as fully Portuguese; and more. This is not to say that everyone in the Marrano *associações* felt outside the mainstream, but it was one of the few things this disparate group articulated in common besides a powerful commitment to being Jewish in the present.

But if a sense of marginality or existential difference was a frequent trait among urban Marranos, it was paradoxically not because they were ancestrally Jewish. For reasons discussed in the next chapter, in Portugal it is considered a truism that most Portuguese have some degree of distant Jewish ancestry. Consequently, to trace one’s origins to the fifteenth-century forced converts is to articulate a direct and ancient tie to the nation, locating oneself squarely in one of its oldest social categories.<sup>7</sup> It is to do so, moreover, in the idiom of genealogical descent—a potent logic in a society where ancestry and familial identities are key factors in the social constitution of persons (Bouquet 1993; Pina-Cabral 1997). For urban Marranos, ancestral Jewishness was a core aspect of their sense of self: rather than merely carrying “Jewish blood” (*sangue judeu*) as one among many components in the ethnic makeup of the Portuguese people, they understood themselves *to be Jews* by descent—in body and in spirit—and hence felt an essential kinship with the ancestral Jewish population they had rediscovered and, above all, with the Jewish

people as a whole. Nonetheless, because their understanding of what makes one “Jewish” differed fundamentally from that of the members of the Jewish communities of Lisbon and Porto, that sense of kinship was not reciprocated within the social space of the local synagogues, or indeed anywhere among Portugal’s “mainstream” Jews.

#### KINSHIP AS CATEGORY, CLASSIFICATION, AND FEELING

For anthropologists, *kinship* is a technical term. It refers to culturally variable systems of social classification according to which some people are more closely related than others, as well as the roles, rights, and obligations that inhere in different types of relationships (Holy 1996: 9). As an analytical category, kinship subsumes both “the family” as a domestic unit and “descent groups” defined by lineage of a common ancestor; both have long been central to anthropological understandings of how societies are organized. While the criteria used to determine kin vary cross-culturally—including, for example, procreation, nurturance, coresidence, and shared substances like blood or food—for most of the twentieth century scholars assumed that these were merely different means of describing the familiar Western genealogical grid of biological descent and marriage (Schneider 1984; Holy 1996).

In recent decades, anthropologists have increasingly used the concept of *relatedness* as an alternative to kinship, marking a shift away from the long-held presumption that biological reproduction is everywhere a constitutive element in reckoning kin (Carsten 2000; Franklin and McKinnon 2001). Instead, by examining culturally particular processes by which people *become* kin—from practices transforming international adoptees into the children of their adoptive parents in contemporary Norway (Howell 2006) to the creation of “chosen” gay and lesbian families in 1980s America (Weston 1991)—we have become aware of the powerful role of sentiments, solidarities, acts of nurturance and care, religious beliefs about the nature of personhood, predestination, and family, resemblance and recognition, and even conscious choice in determining the content and bounds of the category “kin,” as locally defined, for those involved.<sup>8</sup> This move to capture how people act upon and feel kinship with specified others in practice, rather than simply noting the “natural facts” of kin ties or stated norms, has, perhaps predictably, been met with protests that “relatedness” is far too vague a concept, so indis-

tinguishable from other forms of social relations that it “cannot be separated in any precise way from the general notion of the social and thus endowed with a meaning which would prevent it from becoming intellectually vacuous” (Holy 1996: 168). But this objection misses a fundamental ethnographic truth: people tell us that they feel connected to others in an essential sense that they articulate in the language of family and concretize in expressions of nurturance and care. Relatedness—whether imagined or lived out face-to-face—is a social fact, and it is not limited to “kinship” as mapped in the traditional genealogical chart. It is precisely the term’s flexibility that makes it so analytically useful.

Attending to relatedness rather than the presuppositions of twentieth-century kinship theory also permits us to follow people’s feelings and commitments when they lead us across cultural domains and scales of social organization (Franklin and McKinnon 2001; McKinnon and Cannell 2013). In European and European-settler societies, relatedness is typically understood to inhere in shared ancestry, articulated in terms of blood or, increasingly, DNA. But if that were the sole criterion, how would one draw the line between kin and non-kin? After all, if we go back far enough in time all human beings share common ancestors, as do all mammals, even all vertebrates; and there is consequently no necessary limit to which we could count cousins (collateral kin), not even by species. As there is a Western cultural model of “the family of man,” defined by common descent, so, too, could we entertain the thought of a “family of hominids.” The point at which relatives give way to non-relatives is ultimately a matter of cultural systems of classification (Zerubavel 2012). Rather than presuming definitive distinctions between cultural domains like the nuclear family, descent group, nation, or ethnicity, if we follow this trajectory of thought and view relatedness as equally “real” for those who recognize it at larger scales, the use of kinship terminology for broad collectivities emerges as something other than mere metaphor (Carsten 2004; Nash 2005). Indeed, I suggest that relatedness operates at different scales not distinctly, but as an experiential continuum; and its kinship character is recognizable not only in our research participants’ words but also in their reasoning, affect, and actions.

To illustrate the interpenetration of reasoning about different scales of relation, consider the symbolic significance of shared blood (Carsten 2011). In Portugal, blood is a defining symbol of “family” (Pina-Cabral 1991: 128–33), but it is also a key symbol of ethnonational belonging: the discourse of “Portuguese blood” is alive and well in everyday conversation. Is the

“blood” of one’s family the same “blood” that connects one to the nation? In the case of Jewishness, the two are explicitly one and the same (Schneider 1977: 70): according to Jewish law, Jewishness is carried through the maternal “bloodline,” and in many countries—including both the United States and Portugal—Jews and non-Jews make casual reference to “Jewish blood” (Glenn 2002; Boyarin 2013: 107–10). Thus “blood” grounds a continuum of relatedness running from the Jewish nuclear family to the Jewish people at large, “a kinship that is, to be sure, not merely biological or ‘racial,’ but is nevertheless inherited” (Boyarin 2013: 124). While the relatedness one feels to one’s immediate family and the relatedness one feels to the ethnic group or the nation are not necessarily the same, in this case they exist along a spectrum. Again, the quality or subjective feeling of relatedness is a matter of degree, not of kind.

In articulating their Jewishness in terms of descent, urban Marranos relied upon a discourse of lineage that was equally—if differently—intelligible to both Portuguese and Jewish listeners. While their logic did not always mesh with that of their interlocutors, it was nonetheless familiar, and for many foreign visitors it sufficed to render them part of “the Jewish family.” And yet here the time-honored anthropological question of how descent groups are reckoned, and especially how individuals are socially emplaced by them—that is, how the person is classified as belonging to a particular social category based on ancestral lineage (Holy 1996)—is turned on its head. Rather than being ascribed to a predetermined descent group by the social facts of their birth and the birth of relevant ancestors before them, urban Marranos in effect decided for themselves the group to which they would belong and pointed to ancestry as the reason. Writing of similarly multi-scalar, deep-time “kinship narratives” used by white-settler descendants to support their claims to Kenyan national belonging, anthropologist Janet McIntosh (2015: 264) notes that they too emphasize “one lineage as the focal point of their rights [to belong] . . . while disregarding other ancestors who came more recently from elsewhere.” Nonetheless, she cautions, “the perception of relatedness always involves selective and culturally-based storytelling about which relationships are important to our claims, which are not, and why” (2015: 255). Even when voiced in direct response to challenges to the speaker’s identity, such “simplifications of complex lineages” may reflect deeply felt, even mystical beliefs about linkages between ancestral ties, the self, and feelings or emotions (McIntosh 2015: 259–61; Basu 2007; Sturm 2010).



Voluntary claims of ancestral belonging do not always convince, however sincerely they may be offered. During the tourist visit with which this chapter began, we watched as a local Jewish community representative impassively ignored Ricardo's statement of Marrano origins. Moments later, the Italian tourists reacted to the same statement with a shower of attention and interpersonal warmth, demonstrated by close physical proximity, smiles, words, and touch. Why the difference? In part, it is a matter of whether these individuals came to the interaction interested primarily in personhood or in peoplehood, in determining whether one particular individual was legitimately "a Jew" or in welcoming back an entire lost branch of the Jewish family tree.

This is an important illustration of how, as a classificatory system, the logic of kinship can give rise to disconnection and exclusion as much as to recognition and inclusion (Franklin and McKinnon 2001: 15–20). The description of the Jewish people as a "family" is commonplace among Jews worldwide, likely stemming from centuries of liturgical emphasis on collective descent from the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs and the many holidays memorializing trials and triumphs of earlier generations. Not only are prayers directed to "our God, God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,"<sup>9</sup> but home-based holidays like Hanukkah and Passover, typically observed by even the most secular of Jews, commemorate events of the past as if they happened directly and collectively to those assembled: "*We* were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord . . . took us out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm," recounts the Passover Haggadah, read aloud each year. Such regular rehearsal of "sociobiographical memory" (Zerubavel 1996) inculcates a sense of shared ancestral experience with all Jews, everywhere, over generations and across oceans.

Nonetheless, the defining criteria of "the Jewish family" vary sharply from one community to the next. Nowhere is this more apparent than in debates over the authenticity of groups seeking recognition as Jews on the basis of collective lineage. Over the past fifty years, not only Iberian Marranos but populations in southern Africa, Central and East Asia, India, South America, and other far-flung locales have claimed to have, or have been identified as having, distant Jewish ancestry (Charmé 2012; Parfitt and Semi 2002).<sup>10</sup> In some cases their kinship narratives specify direct descent from the Ten Lost Tribes, separated from the rest of the Jewish people nearly three thousand

years ago (Ben-Dor Benite 2009). But whether traced over thousands of years or merely hundreds, such ancestral claims provoke uncomfortable reflection among Jews on how far out the “branches” of the Jewish family tree can be traced, and on what basis. Ensuing debates make the terms of Jewish identification and belonging explicit, as framed both by those seeking recognition and by those who would accept or deny them (Egorova and Perwez 2013; Seeman 2009); hence they help us tease apart the many strands forming such social identities and the complex processes through which groups recognize others as alien or kin.

What makes a population Jewish? What makes an individual a Jew? Ethnographic studies of *Jewishness*—the qualities and content of being Jewish, whether in one’s own eyes or in the eyes of others (Cohen 1999)—in diverse parts of the world have revealed that answers to these questions vary widely, emphasizing everything from religious adherence to fractional ancestry to cultural or linguistic practices (Brink-Danan 2008; Klein 2014; Lehrer 2013: 176–96). Yet whether understood locally in terms of religion, race, ethnicity, tribe, culture, genetic inheritance, or soul (Herskovits 1927; Markowitz 2006), there remains a consistently articulated belief that “the Jews” are a distinct people with a shared history. Indeed, one of the few characteristics people who identify as Jews everywhere seem to share is an awareness that there are people in other lands who are also called “Jews,” whose customs may be different but whose destinies are in some sense linked to their own. It is precisely their claim to peoplehood despite the lack of any other consistently unifying feature that makes Jews so “good to think with” about such longstanding anthropological concerns as identity, ethnicity, relatedness, and belonging (Klein 2012; Dominguez 1989). That different individuals may draw upon entirely different domains to explain their sense of identification with Jews from other parts of the world—from ritual observance to ethnicity, shared culture to common descent—reminds us of the extent to which all expressions of social solidarity are, like the identities from which they stem, both socially produced and culturally inflected.

Identifying with the entirety of the Jewish people is one thing; recognizing a given individual as a Jew is another. As anthropologist Daniel Segal (1999: 236) reminds us, understandings of how individuals might know a Jew when they see one—including in their own family tree or even their own soul—are based on *typifications*, received and widely shared perceptions of what defines a particular population. While they do not necessarily reflect empirical reality, typifications reveal underlying cultural assumptions about

the nature of identity, difference, descent, and belonging that extend far beyond the particularities of the Jewish case. How a given population distinguishes between Jews and non-Jews indicates a great deal about how they conceive of and ascribe other forms of social identity, too (Hoffman 2001; Klein 2012). In the Portuguese case, constructions of Jewishness draw simultaneously on two distinct systems of social identification, giving rise to two quite different typifications—ancestral (innate) and religious (practiced)—and making the determination of who is or is not “a Jew” a complicated matter indeed.

According to Jewish law, or *halakhah*, there is a straightforward answer to the question of who is a Jew: only the biological offspring of a Jewish mother, herself the biological daughter of a Jewish mother, and so on back in time. For Jews-by-birth, halakhah does not distinguish between those who practice the rituals of Judaism and those who do not. Belief, too, is irrelevant, as is the Jewish status of the father. Only matrilineal descent or, absent a Jewish mother, voluntary conversion under rabbinic supervision will suffice. But in practice, things are decidedly less clear. Conversion is not always an option, however fervent the desire, as a proselyte cannot begin the process without a community willing to accept him or her and, at the very least, a supervising rabbi—not an insignificant hurdle in regions with very small Jewish populations and few if any rabbis. Consequently, a would-be convert may be a long-time adherent to Jewish religious practice and even an accepted participant in a Jewish community without being considered “a Jew.” Moreover, a convert to some branches of Judaism, such as the liberal Reform movement or middle-road Masorti movement (known in the United States as Conservative), will not be accepted as a Jew by the rigorously observant Orthodox. And while the Reform movement accepts as Jews individuals with a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, Masorti/Conservative and Orthodox Judaism follow halakhah in deeming such individuals categorically non-Jewish (Klein 1996).

Yet there is a marked tendency among observant and secular Jews alike to view individuals with only paternal Jewish ancestry—or even just one great- or great-great-grandparent—as somehow more *Jewish* than those with none at all (Klein 1996: 201–23; cf. Boyarin 2013: 118–28). Just as in the case of African, Asian, and South American groups claiming collective Jewish lineage, those who follow halakhah may consider individuals with partial ancestry to be “lost” members of the Jewish family, but not Jews, per se. Those with a more expansive, secular definition of Jewishness may see

them at once as “lost” kin and as Jews—though not necessarily for the reasons Marranos and other “returning” populations understand themselves in those terms. I return to this point in subsequent chapters, for divergences in social classification proved a crucial aspect of the urban Marranos’ dilemma. It was also an important factor in the diverse attitudes and expressions of affect among the two primary groups visiting the Marrano associations: tourists and Jewish outreach workers.

## TOURING KIN

Foreign visitors, actual or anticipated, were a continual presence for members of the Marrano *associações* throughout the 2000s. In this sense, as a category of actors they constituted a fixed component of the local organizational dynamic. Termed *peessoas de fora* (Pt.; people from outside [the country]) by urban Marranos, those who made the journey came from diverse points around the globe, in groups, as couples, or alone. Most hailed from the United States, Canada, Brazil, England, France, Italy, Spain, and Israel, but during my fieldwork Jewish visitors also came from South Africa, Australia, Mexico, and even Venezuela and Jamaica. They represented a broad socioeconomic spectrum: schoolteachers, an airline baggage handler, professors, a boutique wine importer, lawyers, real estate agents, and a great many others. Ultimately, toward the end of my research, members of Menorá and HaShalom came to depend on a limited network of middle-class American, Canadian, English, and Israeli individuals for multiple forms of support *as kin*, a dynamic I explore in the book’s final chapter.

### Pessoas de Fora: *Tourists and Outreach Workers*

While the urban Marranos generally did not distinguish between types of *peessoas de fora*, their visitors tended to see themselves either as leisure travelers (here termed *tourists*) or as Jewish outreach workers. I take *tourists* to be a neutral term, meaning simply “discretionary leisure travelers whose trips begin and end in the same place” (McCabe 2009: 40; cf. Smith 1989: 1). *Jewish outreach workers* (encompassing *outreach activists* and *educators*), on the other hand, are goal-oriented travelers, often emissaries from organizations that focus on finding isolated or “lost” Jewish communities, forging person-to-person contacts, and providing educational and logistical support

to facilitate their (re)integration into the Jewish world. In the 1920s two such organizations, one Dutch and one British, formed expressly to reach Marranos throughout the north of Portugal. In addition to underwriting emissaries' travels, these early outreach organizations publicized their efforts throughout Europe and the English-speaking world, generating a stream of curious tourists that has not abated a century later (Mea and Steinhart 1997). In recent decades, the Israeli Orthodox NGOs Amishav (Heb.; My People Return) and Shavei Israel (Heb.; Returners of Israel), as well as the American-based, multiculturalist and nondenominational Kulanu (Heb.; All of Us), have played a similar role, sending rabbis or volunteers to reach the descendants of forced converts in Belmonte, Lisbon, and Porto—among many such “lost” Jewish groups worldwide—and disseminating news of their efforts via international media outlets (Charmé 2012; Cooper 2006). Independent Jewish educators, too, make the journey, volunteering to teach for a period of days or weeks in isolated Jewish communities. During my time in Portugal, over a dozen foreign visitors came to offer courses representing everything from entirely secular, “ethnic” forms of Judaism to ultra-Orthodox observance, covering topics from basic Jewish history and introductory Hebrew to detailed analysis of ethical principles in the Torah. Independent educators' visits often lasted longer than those of tourists and institutional outreach workers, who typically stayed only a few hours.

### *Tourism and the Desire for Connection*

Why were Jewish tourists so interested in meeting Marranos? In an analysis of travelers' narratives of searching for the Ten Lost Tribes, Alanna Cooper (2006) argues that seeking Jews in other lands is a means of making sense of the condition of diaspora. While her argument is specific to Ten Tribes tales and in particular the tension between images of diaspora as either a utopic state or a profoundly undesirable condition, it captures a broader truth. The Jewish people are by definition globally dispersed, and, as noted above, the presumption of essential connection with fellow Jews everywhere is a common feature of most Jewish identities, whatever their specific cultural or religious flavor. To seek contact with far-flung Jewish populations is thus to affirm one's bond with the tribe at large, and perhaps also to experience their experiences as one's own (Kugelmass 1994: 181). As one American tourist commented to me, “Jews really care about connecting with other Jews. We want to know what's going on with Jews in other countries. It just feels

important.” This may explain the long-standing practice that journalist Ruth Gay (1971) dubbed “counting Jews”: for centuries, Jewish travelers to distant lands have made a point of meeting local Jews (cf. Loeb 1989). They note their number, occupations, foreign customs, and religious practices and then publish an article or travelogue upon their return.<sup>11</sup> The tantalizing tension between familiar and exotic is surely at least partly responsible for their interest: if all Jews are kin by virtue of belonging to a common descent group, literally or metaphorically, then meeting long-lost “cousins” adds both an exciting, distinctive new dimension to “the family” and a reassuring sense of connection across difference.

Anthropologists of tourism have shown, however, that Jews are not unique in this regard. Although it takes a different form in each context, seeking contact with local coethnics while vacationing is a widespread practice, whether the traveler is undertaking genealogical tourism, traveling to an ancestral homeland to explore ethnocultural roots, or, as in the case of African American tourists to Brazil, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa, “crisscross[ing] the Atlantic hoping to find the ‘same’ represented by their ‘black brothers and sisters’ . . . [and thus] reconnecting a fragmented transnational African affiliation” (Pinho 2008: 72). In fact, recent scholarship reveals that the desire for connection is a powerful motivator of many forms of leisure travel, whether connection to local people, to fellow travelers, or to a truer version of one’s self (e.g., Basu 2007). In her study of middle-class Canadian travel enthusiasts, for example, anthropologist Julia Harrison (2003: 46) notes a pervasive impulse “to either affirm or renew some kind of human connection across time, space, or cultural difference” (see, e.g., Conran 2006; Simoni 2014). Small wonder, then, that when fulfilled this desire finds expression not only in verbal effusiveness but also in gesture, physical touch, and broad expressions of positive affect—particularly when a language barrier intervenes.

While Harrison suggests it is a desire for sociability and intimacy lacking in everyday life that drives tourists to seek direct encounters and deeper engagements away from home, so too do individuals living in tourist destinations seek encounters and engagements with tourists, and for similar reasons. The urban Marranos’ desire to meet foreign Jewish travelers, socialize with them, and thus find avenues to the belonging denied them locally exemplifies a much larger phenomenon: in diverse contexts around the world, anthropologists note that local populations see in tourist interactions a means to a different life—to local respect, to economic stability, to love and marriage, to

overseas migration, to expressing a true inner self, or simply to being better understood (e.g., Cohen 1971; Brennan 2004; Simoni 2016). As in Ricardo's case, spending time with people entirely outside one's workaday milieu offers the possibility for different, more "authentic" aspects of the self to gain expression. Hence just as many tourists seek a deeper connection with themselves through leisure travel (Wang 1999), in their encounters with tourists many urban Marranos found a deeper connection—again, however fleetingly—with the (re)discovered Jewish self within.

### *Imaginaries and Affinities*

There would be little reason for travelers and local people to seek contact with one another if they did not carry some preconception of what they would find. While imagination is a faculty of the individual, *imaginaries*—"shared, socially transmitted representational assemblages" of people, places, and events (Salazar and Graburn 2014: 1)—are a collective resource, the sum total of available imagery and ideas circulating in media, advertising, literature, word of mouth, and the like. As a cultural phenomenon, imaginaries give substance and meaning to individual imaginings, providing an interpretive context potentially shared by a great many people but visible only as they surface in specific images and interactions (Leite 2014). The hopes and expectations of urban Marranos were shaped largely by Portuguese imaginaries of the Jewish people at large and of the Jews of the Portuguese past; their foreign visitors, on the other hand, were motivated by imaginaries of *klal yisrael* (Heb.; all Israel, the Jewish people as a whole), or *peoplehood*, with its accompanying imagery of mutual responsibility and interconnection, and of the historical Marranos, understood as stalwart defenders of Jewish identity and faith in the face of torture and even death.

Many tourists described feeling a powerful affinity or "kinship" with Marranos, based on imaginaries drawn from Jewish legend, literature, song, and film. Some found resonance between the Marranos' perilous survival in hiding and events or feelings in their own lives; for others, an interest in Marranos emerged out of a broader identification with "the Jewish people," collectively. One elderly tourist, a Montreal native who grew up in a Yiddish-speaking community in the 1930s, explained his lifelong interest in Marranos and his impetus for traveling to Portugal by commenting that he had always had a strong feeling for *klal yisrael* and then quoting the opening lyrics of a song learned in childhood: "Tell me, Marrano, brother mine . . ." That song,

“Zog, Maran” (Yid.; Tell Me, Marrano), remains popular today, still sung in Yiddish at Passover dinners in Jewish community centers, schools, and synagogues and featured on dozens of commercial recordings. Unsurprisingly, numerous other visitors also mentioned it to me. It is an imagined dialogue, the haunting melody underscoring its tragic lines:

Tell me, Marrano, brother mine,  
Where have you prepared your seder?  
In a cave, our hidden meeting place,  
There I have prepared my seder.

Tell me, Marrano, where, from whom,  
Will you get the white matzo?  
In a cave, a dark cavern,  
My wife already kneaded the dough.

...  
Tell me, Marrano, how will you live  
When your voice is heard out-ringing?  
When the enemy finds me there,  
I will die singing.<sup>12</sup>

The lyric is an early twentieth-century poem, written during a time of brutal anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish settlements across Eastern Europe. Today the song’s use of Yiddish—the language of Eastern European (Ashkenazi) Jews—implicitly invokes an analogy between the suffering of Portugal’s Marranos and that of the twentieth-century Ashkenazim. The analogy is familiar to Jewish audiences, based on what historian Yosef Yerushalmi (1982: 5) calls “phenomenological affinities” between the Iberian Inquisitions and European anti-Semitism of the later nineteenth and twentieth century, culminating in the Holocaust. In each case, following a prolonged period of oppression and increasing violence the ruling regime implemented a brutal, methodical process to eliminate the Jewish people, and some survived by hiding their identity. This analogy leads in turn to celebration of the Marrano as a heroic figure, the surviving spark that still burns amidst the Inquisition’s ashes, a metaphor of hope for the post-Holocaust generation.

Folded into the Jewish metanarrative of destruction and survival, the Marrano experience has become part of Jewish heritage, indeed of all Jews’ potential “symbolic estate,” that which “is drawn from the ‘heritage’ available, and is worked into the actual experience of the persons involved” (Graburn 1982: 3). One can even reenact being a Marrano, attempting to feel what they felt, using items ordered from Jewish gift catalogs—a beautifully



produced cookbook of “crypto-Jewish” recipes culled from Inquisition trial records,<sup>13</sup> for example, or a novelty “crypto-Jewish” Hanukkah menorah that when rotated 180 degrees masquerades as a flowerpot—for their story is “our” story. Hence “Zog, Maran,” the song commemorating the heroic Marrano and embracing him as a close member of the Jewish family—“brother mine”—across great distances of time and space.

Individuals throughout the Portuguese and Jewish diasporas also discover Marrano history within the self, via genealogical research, familial lore, or pure intuition, as descendants of Inquisition-era Portuguese Jews are now scattered across the globe. They may internalize that history of suffering and survival as their own, a personal heritage carried, as it were, in their veins. This is an ancestral affinity—a sense of connection and sympathy across many generations—shared by the urban Marranos in Portugal. And, of course, both urban Marranos and their counterparts throughout the Portuguese diaspora professed a feeling of affinity for the present-day Jewish people in the abstract, an ineffable sense of connection that was by definition distanced but no less heartfelt for that. The perception of essential connectedness went both ways.

As “lost” Jews, Portugal’s Marranos are frequently the object of outreach efforts by organizations seeking to hasten the prophesied “Ingathering of the Exiles”—the return of all Jews to the land of Israel, a prerequisite for the Messiah’s arrival—or simply to encourage them to identify openly as Jews and connect with Jews in other countries. While they are sometimes invoked rhetorically as a metaphor for the perils of Jewish assimilation, they are more frequently imagined to have steadfastly maintained their faith. When descendants of Marranos come forward to embrace a Jewish identity, they are often celebrated and even revered as a symbol of Jewish survival despite generations of identity loss.

There are diverse forms of affinity—experiential resonance, mutual connection, biogenetic relatedness, shared history, and shared destiny—at work here, and at the turn of the twenty-first century each of these ways of marking connection with the figure of the Marrano was surrounded by a remarkable degree of cultural production. In an effort to grasp the imaginative context shaping foreign Jews’ hopes for and expectations from their encounters in Portugal, I tracked expressions of affinity as they arose in social media, movies, radio programs, novels, folklore, the work of Jewish outreach organizations, Jewish heritage tour marketing, and ultimately conversational emphases among tourists and outreach workers. I found that imaginaries

colored every encounter, not to mention the self-image of urban Marranos themselves. For the international production of imagery, text, practice, and metaphor invoking the Marranos as a symbolically charged social category made its way across the Portuguese border, just as it circulated the rest of the globe: on the internet, in film, in literature, in the words and actions of those who made the journey, urban Marranos found themselves mirrored in the eyes of the world.

For their part, urban Marranos, too, imagined the lives and cultures of Jews abroad based on globally circulating media and encounters with tourists and other Jewish visitors in Portuguese cities, as well as during their own travels. They also found resonance in aspects of Jewish theology and practice, Portuguese Jewish history, even the tribulations of the ancient Israelites. Whether expressed by foreign Jews or urban Marranos, these ancestrally, spiritually, and globally mapped forms of affinity—embraced as identity, lived in practice, materialized through travel, and tested in face-to-face interaction—form the warp and woof of the events and arguments conveyed in this book.

#### CONNECTIVITY AND PROXIMITY IN A GLOBAL ERA

Although they understood themselves to be fundamentally Jewish by birth, urban Marranos faced a daunting obstacle in their efforts to live as Jews: there were virtually no locally available resources for them to learn how to do so. Lacking all but the most superficial access to the local Jewish communities, they turned instead to the internet, ordering materials from abroad, participating in social media, and corresponding directly with Jews in other countries. Combined with information gathered during their own travels and via their conversations with Jewish tourists and outreach workers, the internet provided a first glimpse of how they might bring their external reality into alignment with their internal sense of self.

Their engagement with foreign Jews, not to mention their utilization of electronic media as a resource for self-making, was made possible by the rapid increase in connectivity and dramatic expansion of social relations brought about by globalization. In considering the implications of global interconnectivity, however, we must proceed with caution. It is all too easy to make assumptions about how the urban Marranos experienced their participation in it. To be connected to international networks of people and far-flung

sources of knowledge does not necessarily mean that one *feels* connection. The circulation of information online, the rapid rise of social media, and the movement of tourists and other visitors in and out of their social sphere did not provide urban Marranos with a sense of Jewish belonging, nor of being part of “the Jewish people.” As one man in Porto said when I asked why he didn’t feel personally connected to Jews abroad, given how often he and the others seemed to be communicating with them online, “We don’t live on the internet. We live in the real world.”

Sociologist John Tomlinson makes a distinction between *connectivity* and *proximity* that helps to elucidate this subjective differentiation between communicating online and living in “the real world.” If connectivity refers to the “stretching” of real-time social relations across vast distances, Tomlinson (1999: 4) writes, this must not be mistaken for being equivalent to physical proximity. Even as rhetoric of a “shrinking world” creates the perception of closer contact, “the experience of proximity afforded by these connections coexists with an undeniable, stubbornly *physical distance* between places and people in the world, which the technological and social transformations of globalization have not conjured away.”<sup>14</sup> The more carefully we examine the subjective experience of going about daily life in actual geographic places, the clearer it becomes that we need to probe “how far connectivity establishes ‘proximity’ beyond the technological modality of increasing access” (Tomlinson 1999: 9). Put another way, simply knowing that one has access to and can communicate with particular far-off people does not guarantee the *feeling* of proximity; and globalization’s “increasing access,” even if brought to fruition in direct interaction, does not necessarily produce experiences of interpersonal engagement, communicative transparency, or intimacy.

In fact, it was everyday proximity, face-to-face relations with other people in their own cities, that initially had the greatest impact on the urban Marranos’ feelings regarding the Jewish world. For reasons explored later in this book, Portugal’s tiny organized Jewish community was at best unwelcoming and at worst openly and even harshly dismissive. Despite the support, acceptance, and expressions of affection they received online and in fleeting encounters with Jewish tourists and outreach workers from abroad, it was not enough to counterbalance the negative impact of interactions in the immediate social space of the synagogues and other venues where they encountered local Jews. At the same time, their positive sense of themselves as Jews and as Marranos was also profoundly local, based largely on Portuguese cultural logics of ancestry and identity and on the particularities

of the Portuguese Jewish past and present. It was only when certain foreign visitors returned again and again, creating lasting, transnational emotional ties based on concrete personal relations, that their lived relationship to the Jewish world began to change, the idiom in which they articulated their Jewishness shifted from ancestry to affiliation, and they came to feel globally connected in a lasting way.

Thus, my intention in this ethnography of Portugal's urban Marrano movement is to offer a broader commentary on the nature of connectivity and social relations under conditions of globalization. In essence, my point is that technological connectivity does not always produce the experience of proximity, and proximity does not necessarily give rise to social intimacy. These are distinct modalities of interaction, and they operate at different registers, with different effects. For all the imagining of one another that people do, I suggest, it is still face-to-face social relations, personal interactions when present in the same physical location, that take primacy. Local encounters remain the productive sphere, at least where identification, relatedness, and belonging are concerned. Yet this should not be mistaken for a simple opposition between the global and the local, for the two constitute each other: global interconnectivity continuously produces new localities, new orders of face-to-face interaction, that in turn inform and shape global processes. The difference between "global" and "local" is not one of kind but, like "relatedness," a matter of scale (Tsing 2000). Nonetheless, we will see that it is often in one's immediate physical setting that experiences of belonging or exclusion carry the greatest and most lasting force.

#### A SENSE OF THE WHOLE

In 1977 Theron Nuñez, one of the earliest anthropologists to write on tourism, sagely remarked, "Any attempt to study an indigenous population and a tourist population in interaction will probably require talents similar to that of the Roman rider, with a foot on each horse. To make complete, accurate, and empathetic observations of both populations will necessitate a delicate balancing act" (1977: 212). He was right. To explore the relationship between mutual imaginings and face-to-face interactions, I needed to experience the encounter from both sides—from the perspective of the urban Marranos and from the perspective of Jewish heritage tourists and outreach workers who traveled to meet them. As I became aware of the myriad actors, activities,

institutions, and images that impinged upon urban Marranos' sense of self, my task became more complicated still. There was a complex but coherent constellation of factors, emanating from physical locations around the world. Such multipartite systems, especially those manifested on a global scale, are inherently challenging for anthropologists (Marcus 1998; Hannerz 2003). We seek a form of "insider" knowledge that can be gained only through close proximity and regular interaction: our hallmark method, participant observation, requires that we quite literally participate in the phenomena we study, ideally as any "native" would, while observing ourselves and others doing the same. Hence I expected that by occupying multiple subject positions in diverse locations over time, I would be better situated to grasp the whole. What follows is an overview of those "locations," both physical and virtual, and the angles of vision they afforded.

### *Locations*

My primary position in the field, over the longest period (from 2004 to 2006), was that of a member of Menorá and HaShalom. For eighteen months I divided my time between them, participating fully as a dues-paying member. In addition to attending each group's weekly meetings, I accompanied members to Introduction to Judaism classes, Jewish-related events, and synagogue services; attended a jointly planned national meeting; and participated alongside them whenever visitors arrived from abroad. When outreach workers offered classes, I too was a student, as most of the material was equally new to me. I was frequently asked to translate orally and in writing, an intermediary role that was both illuminating and ethically complex, particularly during members' emotion-charged, family reunion-style interactions with organized tour groups.

The urban Marranos were educated, often cosmopolitan individuals, all of them avid readers, who understood the idea of anthropological research. They gamely participated in my continuous informal interviewing, joking about when the little notebook in my bag would make its next appearance. Many went out of their way to connect me with others who might be helpful for my work, offering references on Marrano history and actively including me in their organizational planning and activities. I soon learned that my initial impression of homogeneity in the two associations was an artifact of the way I originally encountered them: as a collectivity. I met most members in 2002 and 2004 as a participant observer on package tours of "Jewish

Portugal,” in prearranged meetings listed on the itinerary simply as a visit with “local Anusim” or “crypto-Jews.” When I subsequently returned as a lone ethnographer, I initially continued to interact with them as a unified group, at meetings, the synagogue, and post-event dinners.

After a few months I began to socialize with them as individuals in cafés, over restaurant dinners with one or two others, and eventually in their homes. Over time I became a confidante, the insider-outsider who could be trusted to listen, even as members knew I was studying them; some became my dear friends. After returning home in early 2006, I stayed in regular contact with members of HaShalom, as several were preparing to go before a London rabbinic court for a ritual process that would result in their formal recognition as Jews. Three months later, I flew to London to accompany them through that process as participant observer, translator, and friend. The nature and duration of this intensive fieldwork, combined with lengthy individual interviews at the conclusion of my research, gave me a deep appreciation for the internal journey participants made over the course of my time with them.

Were it not for the internet, neither I nor the urban Marranos would have been aware of the extraordinarily diverse, international network of people engaged in thinking about Portugal’s “lost” Jews and their descendants. Nor, I imagine, would the other participants in my research, many of whom met online and corresponded regularly over vast geographical distances. One crucial nexus was the Nostálgia network.<sup>15</sup> Created and moderated by a South Africa–born descendant of Portuguese hidden Jews, it served from its inception in 1997 as an online information hub and contact point for individuals throughout the Portuguese diaspora who were exploring possible Jewish ancestry. Many urban Marranos joined its discussion forum, a listserv. Also among the more than one thousand subscribers were past and future tourists, genealogists, academics, and staff and supporters of outreach organizations like Kulanu and Shavei Israel. English, Portuguese, French, and Spanish were all accepted languages, with traffic peaking in 2004 at 820 posts emailed to members in a single month.

Although I joined the forum in 2000 and remained a subscriber until 2006, at the turn of the century fieldwork online was quite unusual and I did not treat Nostálgia as a field site *per se*. Instead, it became a means for me to engage online and, in many cases, face-to-face with a global network of people for whom any and all Portuguese Jews, past or present (and whether referred to as Marranos, crypto-Jews, Jews, or B’nai Anusim), were of great

interest. Remarkably, seemingly everywhere I went—Marrano associations, Jewish heritage tours, Marrano-related conferences and lectures, meetings of Jewish outreach organizations, even among tourists attending services at one of Portugal’s three synagogues—I encountered *Nostálgia* subscribers. It was the international nexus for people invested in the memory of Portugal’s Inquisition-era Jews and/or their present-day descendants. Through this early social media hub, participants formed friendships from afar that subsequently blossomed face-to-face—in a Portuguese café, on a heritage tour, at a conference, in purposeful travel to visit one another. Indeed, it was through *Nostálgia* that several urban Marranos—and I—first became aware that *HaShalom* and *Menorá* existed. It was also how I initially met outreach activists and Jewish educators who would later visit Portugal and play an important part in my research. More than a hobbyist website, *Nostálgia* was the sole portal to a kaleidoscopic network of relationships and perspectives.

One of the most fruitful of those perspectives came through a tour bus window. Early in my preparations for fieldwork, *Nostálgia* founder Graciana Mayer and a handful of subscribers organized two ten-day package tours, held in 2002 and 2004, in conjunction with a secular Jewish outreach organization. These were advertised as “Conference-Tours,” emphasizing their scholarly and goal-oriented character as a hybrid of education and outreach, targeting descendants of hidden Jews both on and off the bus. Each tour was designed for a combined audience of people of “lost” Portuguese Jewish ancestry, Jewish outreach workers, and scholars specializing in crypto-Jewish studies, with more of the former participating in the first tour and more of the latter two in the second. In all, the tours attracted fifty-two participants from ten countries on five continents, the overwhelming majority already *Nostálgia* members. Once living in Portugal, in 2005 I participated in five more tours: a ten-day bus tour titled “On the Trail of Jewish Portugal,” designed for European members of a Jewish women’s organization and their spouses, and four trips in private cars, where couples found their way to me beforehand via word of mouth, wrote to me for advice planning their itinerary, and consented to have me join them. I also informally interviewed tourists whom I encountered at Jewish heritage sites or following services at the mainstream synagogues, sometimes joining them for part of their journey as well.

Occupying the methodological position of “a tourist among tourists” (Graburn 2002: 25) and thus continuously on the move throughout “Jewish Portugal,” my interactions with the Marrano associations and local Jewish

communities were brief, framed within a touristic encounter that lasted no more than an hour or two. The long hours on the road, on the other hand, provided ample opportunity for informal but in-depth interviews with participants who were already discussing their observations and reactions with one another (Bruner 2005; Graburn 2002). Afterward, I conducted follow-up interviews whenever and however the opportunity arose—by phone, face-to-face in restaurants and homes in several countries, even over coffee at my own kitchen table. In all, I traveled with and/or interviewed well over one hundred tourists and more than twenty outreach workers.

Finally, in order to situate the urban Marrano movement in its national context I lived as would any middle-class young academic in Porto or Lisbon, participating in each city's social and cultural life. I lived in several different apartments, each in a different neighborhood, sharing lodging with Portuguese friends or fellow foreign students and researchers. To understand the place of religious and ethnic minorities in Portugal, past and present, I attended academic conferences, public lectures, municipal and regional "heritage days," and book launches. I also participated in events hosted by the normative Jewish communities and interviewed staff at the Israeli embassy, interactions that offered unexpected insights into the politics of Jewish belonging both locally and internationally.<sup>16</sup> Even socializing and vacationing with Portuguese friends and my own long-lost kin, third cousins in Lisbon, deepened my understanding. And, of course, I chatted with neighbors, drove, grocery shopped, ate, slept, read, and simply lived there, sharing the pleasures and frustrations of Portuguese urban life.

### *Multisited Ethnography, Multifaceted Self*

Intervening in an interconnected world, one is always, to varying degrees, "inauthentic": caught between cultures, implicated in others.

JAMES CLIFFORD  
*The Predicament of Culture*

Mine was a peripatetic style of ethnographic research, in the tradition of what has come to be called "multisited ethnography" but has a much longer history as an unnamed but widely practiced field method. Anthropologists have always moved from place to place in the course of their research, participating in the daily activities of the people(s) under study. What has changed



is not the method, but the scale on which such mobile research is conducted, just as the scale on which our research subjects' lives are lived—physically or imaginatively—has expanded as well (Appadurai 1996). Where Margaret Mead's (1928) fieldwork in Samoa took her from the beach to thatched houses to inland food-gathering sites to the weaving house, in my case the "site" spanned half the northern hemisphere. I conducted fieldwork not only in Porto, Lisbon, and elsewhere throughout Portugal, but in classrooms, cafés, synagogues, conference rooms, and private homes in California, Texas, Antwerp, and London. Some sites were more conceptual or virtual than physical; the touristic destination called "Jewish Portugal," for example, to which I returned again and again, is overlaid on the geographical landscape of Portugal, an asynchronous space mapped through tourists' imaginative engagement (Leite 2007). Fieldwork online was another form of mobility, as events unfolded simultaneously across physical and virtual domains. Even continents away, their location "in the field" was as close as the laptop on my desk or the phone in my pocket.

Ultimately I came to think of my research not as multisited, but as taking place within what Ghassan Hage (2005: 466) calls a "globally spread, geographically non-contiguous site," a "phenomenal landscape" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003: 169) that existed not only in my own mind but also, and far more importantly, in the imagination and lived experience of many participants in my research. A single example demonstrates the point. One afternoon a year or so after I returned from Portugal, the phone rang in my Berkeley apartment. It was Anshel, an elderly Canadian outreach activist and longtime *Nostalgia* subscriber whom I had met repeatedly over the years, calling from New York. We had been communicating via email since our first conversation at a Texas conference in 2003 and especially after traveling together during his several visits to Portugal in 2004 and 2005, when I was his translator and driver. He called occasionally just to chat; recently our discussions had centered on a (short-lived) new outreach NGO he was creating with a group of urban Marranos. But that afternoon he had a specific favor to ask.

"I've been talking with a rabbi in Texas," he said. "He's going to northern Portugal soon. He'd like to talk to someone in the Marrano community. Which of our friends do you think I should send him to? I would put him in touch with Octávio, in Porto, but I've been having trouble tracking him down lately, and I'm not sure who would be better." I immediately thought of Paula, who also lived in Porto, and told him I would find out whether she was willing.

“So, how do you know this rabbi?” I asked, thinking it would be helpful to give Paula some background. She was fluent in four languages and always managed to find Jews on her own trips abroad—New York, Jerusalem, even Germany—and regularly met with foreign tourists and visiting rabbis in Portugal.

“Oh!” Anshel exclaimed. “It’s so complicated! The rabbi, who’s in Texas, wanted a contact in the north, since he’s going to Porto. He wrote to Kulanu, in Washington. They told him to write to Graciana, in South Africa, since she knows everyone, right? Well, you know she’s not so involved in the north anymore. She passed him on to Carlos, in Lisbon; you know how he’s been really involved in the Porto group since he moved back from Canada. Carlos told the rabbi, ‘If you want to meet people, you should talk to Anshel in New York. He’s really in touch on a personal level.’ So he called me, and now I’m calling you! Can you help?”

I did help. From my desk in Berkeley, I emailed Paula in Porto, who replied within a few hours that she would be happy to meet the rabbi and sent her greetings to Anshel; I gave her email address to Anshel, who shared it with the rabbi in Texas, who in turn emailed me with questions. When Anshel called back later that evening, I told him the rabbi and I were in touch. “Oh, how wonderful,” he replied. “I’m so glad the family’s expanding!” This multinational chain of personal contacts among far-flung people, all of whom had met face-to-face multiple times—except for the Texas rabbi, whose addition “expanded the family”—brought into sharp relief the globally interconnected and yet unexpectedly intimate nature of “the field” in my work.

Conducting fieldwork of this kind was surprisingly easy from a logistical perspective, though continually moving between sites was often physically exhausting. What proved more difficult was maintaining a stable sense of self, inwardly and outwardly, across the disparate physical locations in which I landed. Undertaking field research in a cultural or national context in which one is a partial participant, a descendant, a “halfie” (Abu-Lughod 1991), or even a “native” anthropologist can open doors otherwise invisible, but also brings destabilizing moments of blurring between self and other, researcher and subject (Halstead 2001; Kondo 1986; Visweswaran 1994). Such moments raise difficult ethical and epistemological questions. This is especially the case in fieldwork involving participant observation from multiple angles within a coherent system, particularly if the researcher can reasonably be read as a “native” or “halfie” in *every* subject position she occupies (Tsuda 2003).

Movement between field settings required that I make continual shifts in positionality in order to maintain focus on “the native’s point of view,” in the famous phrase of Bronislaw Malinowski, founder of the ethnographic method. My fieldwork began on a tour bus, descending at various sites alongside my fellow travelers to interact with local people. I first met the urban Marranos in the context of the Nostálgia Conference-Tours, both of which included Jewish outreach workers and scholars. Although *on* the bus I was interpreted primarily as Portuguese American (due to my Portuguese surname and command of the language), *off* the bus urban Marranos took me for “a mainstream Ashkenazi Jew,” as one Menorá member put it. I was uncertain how to respond to either attribution. My one Portuguese great-grandparent immigrated over a century ago, and I do not identify as culturally Portuguese American. On the other hand, although I am of entirely Ashkenazi descent on my mother’s side, I was not raised in a Jewish community, had no Jewish religious education, and grew up aware of only two Jewish holidays, Hanukkah and Passover, both of which were easily made secular. And while I certainly knew that my maternal family was ethnically Jewish, I have no memory of ever entering a synagogue as a child.

While my hybrid, fragmented background, once explained, was perfectly intelligible to many on the bus, particularly the Americans and Brazilians, it made little sense in the Portuguese context. When I returned to do long-term fieldwork, most local people initially continued to interact with me as a Jewish researcher, interpreting me to be like other Jewish researchers and educators who had visited them in the past. Seeing me as a potential resource, they would ask complex questions about Judaism that I was wholly unprepared to answer. Over time, they realized that I too had gained most of my knowledge of Jewish history, religion, and culture in adulthood, and that I was in many ways as estranged from my Jewish background as they were, though mine was of course many generations closer. My mother’s decision not to have a Jewish wedding, which meant that my parents had no Jewish wedding contract, or *ketubah*—without which, several urban Marranos (incorrectly) informed me, my own Jewishness could not be established according to Jewish law—rendered me “in the shit, just like us,” as one member of HaShalom put it early on.

But this new “insider” position was no more comfortable than being read as a “mainstream” Jew had been, for unlike the urban Marranos I was not seeking to engage in Jewish religious practice. Having seen me first as comfortably Jewish and then as a would-be Jew like themselves, they were understandably misled by my regular attendance at synagogue services and Judaism

courses alongside them; although they understood the nature of my research, they had difficulty comprehending my subject position relative to it. As a result, unlike my predecessors who have done fieldwork in Catholic countries and felt the need to downplay their Jewish background (Behar 1996; Brandes 2003; Orlove 1997), in Portugal I often felt compelled to be *more* religiously Jewish than I actually was.<sup>17</sup>

As my fieldwork continued and first tourists and then Jewish educators came to meet with the associations in which I had become an integral member, my shape shifted once again: in the eyes of some tourists, *I* became a “Marrano,” because when they asked how I had chosen this research topic I truthfully mentioned that my Portuguese-descendant father had been raised with familial oral history of Portuguese Jewish ancestry. From then on, no matter how I tried to clarify my position, foreign visitors would ask about secret rituals, unexplained practices, or special prayers I might remember from childhood, and were visibly disappointed to hear that there were none. In the eyes of outreach workers and Jewish educators, on the other hand, I was both a fellow Jew working with the Marranos and a student of Judaism like the people among whom I was doing research, both of which were in some senses correct. And expatriate Jews at the synagogues in Lisbon and Porto, some of them academics, often took me to be one of their own.

Everywhere, people seemed not only to want to find a “native” location for me within the system I was studying, but to connect with me because they saw me as being in some way fundamentally like themselves: as they sought connection with one another, so they sought it with me. Over time I came to see that we were all “natives” in a global network of people engaged in thinking about and finding belonging through Portuguese Jewishness—even myself. There seemed to be no outside position I could occupy, no safe ground to which I could retreat. At any given moment someone seemed always to be reading me in a way that felt partial, not quite correct, even inauthentic—an unanticipated outcome of taking on a multisited project that intersected with my own world and so neatly matched the sometimes uncomfortably coexisting facets of my social and internal self.

## THE SEARCH FOR BELONGING

On a warm October evening in 2004, twelve Menorá members and I arrived at the Porto synagogue for the annual catered community dinner for Sukkot,

the Jewish harvest festival. The rabbi, a Shavei Israel emissary whom the synagogue board grudgingly allowed to work with Marranos on-site, had encouraged us all to attend and asked that we book a spot in advance. The dinner, he said, would be 30€ (US\$42) apiece. But on arriving we discovered that the board had increased the price to 40€ (US\$50)—cash only. Several Menorá members grumbled (correctly, I later learned) that it was done to reduce their numbers, since only they were charged the fee; dinner was free for dues-paying synagogue members and their families. Although a few left in a huff, there were still almost as many urban Marranos present that evening as there were members of the local Jewish community, nearly all of the latter synagogue board members and their families.

While there was palpable tension from the outset, given the unhappy surprise of the increased ticket price, the situation worsened over the course of the evening. Seated together at the far end of the dining room and unfamiliar with the Orthodox sequence of ritual hand-washing, blessings over bread and wine, and silence before eating, several Menorá members made the faux pas of eating bread too early, talking at the wrong time, and not participating in blessings, prompting the community leaders' wives to shake their heads in dismay. Their children, teenagers all, sat together at an adjacent table and shot furtive, curious glances in our direction. Soon marinated chicken, rice, and vegetables were served “family style,” the catering staff bringing each of the eight tables large serving dishes to be passed.

As we were seated at separate tables, community members and Marranos did not share food. For over an hour no one spoke to us—until my dining companions nominated me to ask one of the catering staff for more rice for the table. To my dismay, she walked not to the kitchen, as I had expected, but to the head table, where a still-heaping platter sat directly in front of the community president. Wordlessly, she picked it up and handed it to me as I cringed in embarrassment. Moments later I was up again, this time to the kitchen to ask if there was more chicken. I spoke quietly, hoping some remained on the stove that I could take to my table undetected. But the wife of one of the community leaders, who was helping the catering staff wash dishes, overheard. She whirled around and exclaimed, “Don’t ask the caterers to bring you food! Get it from another table. You people have to learn how to live in a community! What’s wrong with you? This isn’t some country club you can just join!” At that, she marched over to the teenagers’ table, picked up their partly emptied platter of chicken, and set it with a thud on our table. Everyone turned to stare. It seemed we had needed only to ask

the neighboring table to pass the platter. Our failure to speak had given offense.

It was in that moment that I felt most keenly how urban Marranos were marked as outsiders among the Jews of Portugal, and unwelcome ones, at that. That evening I was shamed for my lack of knowledge, just as they were: I knew as little about Orthodox Jewish observance as they did, if not less; I had no more understanding of the community's behavioral norms than they did, and despite my best efforts seemed to blunder at every turn. The sense of being watched, appraised, and found wanting was overwhelming and, I later learned upon conferring with Menorá members, commonly felt. "You get used to it," shrugged one young woman, her dangling Star of David earrings trembling as she wryly shook her head. "You get used to it." But did they, really?

As I pondered the angry imperative to "learn to live in a community," it struck me that joining a collectivity spread over such a vast scale—here, the Jewish people—is a far more complicated proposition than simply finding a representative group and situating oneself among them. At issue is a question common to all "imagined communities," nations and other social groupings so large that members "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion . . . as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991: 6–7). Under what conditions do newcomers come to feel personally connected to the whole? If there are rituals to foster integration, to what extent do they bridge the difference between categorical inclusion or relatedness, on a rhetorical level, and emotional experiences of interpersonal belonging? These are questions of identity and identification, of imagination and encounter, of the resolutely local (the person) and the abstractly global (a people), and their answer requires close scrutiny of each of those terms. Belonging, after all, is a particular kind of relation, one that arises amidst subjective experiences of mutual connection (May 2013: 79; cf. Candea 2010). Back in my Porto flat that October night, reflecting on the dinner's painful conclusion, I wondered: if the Jewish people are a globally dispersed family, united by common ancestry or by "adoption" via conversion, how could this small group of self-designated "born" Jews—so roundly rejected in their out-of-the-way corner of the world—possibly find belonging among them?