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Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8q732649

Journal
Anthropological Quarterly, 71(1)

ISSN
0003-5491

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Publication Date
1998

DOI
10.2307/3317600

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NAMING RESISTANCE: ETHNOGRAPHERS, DISSIDENTS, AND STATES

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Ethnographic analyses of political dissidence are deeply implicated in the political contests about which ethnographers write. A comparison of the authors' fieldwork among dissidents in Argentina, Kenya, and the United States reveals both the differing dynamics of contests over the political and the complex ways that ethnographers are situated within such contests. In Argentina during the last period of military rule it was dangerous to be defined as political; in Kenya, when multiparty elections were finally authorized, being recognized as political was a prerequisite for legitimacy; and in the United States, where protest is officially legal but unofficially suspect, being defined as political has advantages and disadvantages. We argue that ethnographic writing is inextricable from such contests, and we advocate more explicit attention to how anthropologists negotiate their positions during fieldwork and how they reposition themselves through their writing. [resistance, repression, fieldwork, reflexivity, writing]

This article grew out of conversations in which we, Susan Coutin and Susan Hirsch, discovered similarities in our experiences as ethnographers studying political movements and law. While conducting research—Coutin in Argentina and the U.S. and Hirsch in Kenya—we each witnessed or heard about shocking incidents of repression that acquainted us with the terror of overt domination. We realized that we shared the belief that our visibility as researchers and our connections to activists had subjected us to being monitored by those responsible for these incidents. We also worried that our own research and writing could in some way endanger those whose activities we had studied. Reflecting on our own experiences being "named" as dissidents while conducting research made us think more carefully about what it means for ethnographers to label people's actions as resistance, particularly when such namings can make individuals, groups, and practices politically suspect in authorities' eyes.

The question of who has the agency, authority, power, and position to designate a practice "resistance" is of critical concern in theorizing resistance and is especially germane to recent debates over the concept of "everyday resistance." Those who developed this concept argued that opposition to domination takes myriad forms and that even actions and organizations that actors do not define as political can implicitly critique the structures of power, such as capitalism and racism, in which they are embedded (see Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Scott 1985; Thompson 1975). Although we recognize that these analysts intended to give credit to apparently powerless individuals and groups for attempting to transform the conditions of their existence, we argue, based on our experiences conducting research in repressive situations, that ethnographic namings of resistance are problematic. Not only do these namings risk reducing the agency of individuals and groups attempting to define their own actions, but also, in that they address an academic audience, ethnographic namings of resistance frequently position ethnographers outside of the political contests that they describe. We are not arguing that resistance must be conscious and intentional to be named as such (see Hobsbawm 1959; Jenkins 1983), but rather that when ethnographers name actions as "resistance," they engage ideological and political structures and positionings outside the academy, whether they acknowledge these or not. By juxtaposing various namings of resistance by ethnographers, dissidents, and states, we seek to reconnect the politics of fieldwork with those of ethnographic writing. We argue that such a reconnection is critical to creating a more politically attuned and ethically responsible social science.

We view naming as a strategic and contested process, one that is simultaneously a calculated response to particular political circumstances and an expression of individuals' and groups' understandings of their own and others' positions and actions. Naming involves more than merely identifying and

then articulating instances of the political. In addition, the process of naming is constitutive of political acts and political actors, as well as of that which is "not political" (cf. Felstiner *et al.* 1980-81). Following Judith Butler's (1993) approach to the constitution of gendered subjects, we conceptualize namings as inextricable from the processes in which those who name themselves and others are constituted as subjects. Those who participate in struggles over the political are themselves defined as subjects within those struggles; that is, the actions that contest definitions of the political are constituted in part by the repressive forces that these actions challenge. Moreover, Butler's approach suggests to us that the namings that emerge in such struggles are always incomplete, contingent, and historically specific—the product of ongoing contests that affect all involved (Butler 1993: 4, 10).

Social dissidence provides a context in which the politics of ethnography are particularly visible, as doing fieldwork within such conflicts unavoidably engages the ways that dissidents and states name "the political." Such namings designate spheres of social action as "political" or "apolitical" and thus delimit the meanings and consequences of operating in one or the other. Fieldwork inevitably entails moving between these spheres, implicitly and explicitly negotiating the political implications of research with authorities, dissidents, journalists, human rights workers, and others. Such negotiations require understanding contests over the meaning of the political, including how ethnographers' actions are defined or named by others.

When ethnographers name their own and others' actions during fieldwork, they necessarily do so in relation to such contests over the political. Ethnographic writing, however, makes other namings possible, in that writing is commonly imagined as occuring in another space, outside of "the field" and distant from the contests that shape the namings that transpire during fieldwork. We question the alleged disjuncture between "the field" and "the academy," between "fieldwork" and "writing." If research is not conducted in discrete, separable spaces, if places are "always already spatially interconnected" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 17; Gupta and Ferguson 1997b), then scholarly namings of resistance cannot be isolated from the ways that ethnographers are positioned vis-a-vis the movements they analyze. The "safety" of academic writing may not extend to those who are named in that writing as resisters. Dialogic texts and other experimental forms do not necessarily address or solve the problems that result from the "field"/"academy" dichotomy (Feldman 1991). For example, including the voices of those whom ethnographers name as resisters masks ethnographic authority by "letting them speak for themselves." We assess the politics of ethnographic research and writing by exploring how, where, and when ethnographers name their own social and intellectual goals as "political."

To analyze the relationships between (1) the political struggles about which ethnographers write and (2) the politics of ethnographic research and writing, we examine the contests over naming resistance that occurred during our own fieldwork in Argentina, Kenya, and the United States. In each of the cases that we discuss, the strategic implications of being named a "resister" differ. During the last period of military rule in Argentina, the Argentine government defined political opposition as "subversion," to be eradicated by whatever means necessary—usually the abduction, torture, and clandestine execution of alleged subversives. In the 1980s the Kenyan political scene was characterized by similar repression; however, when multiparty elections were held in the 1990s, it became advantageous for opposition groups to define their actions as political if they were to be recognized as legitimate political parties. Finally, in the United States during the mid-1980s, political protest was officially deemed a constitutionally protected activity, but unofficially was regarded as suspect and worthy of clandestine investigation. Some activists were therefore ambivalent about designating their practices as political. In discussing these three cases, we contrast the conditions and discourses that informed Argentine, Kenyan, and U.S. activists' namings of their actions, while also examining how these conditions and discourses shaped our own research strategies, understandings of political protest, and decisions about locating ourselves in relation to the "political" in our research and scholarship. We write these case studies reflexively, not to correct but rather to expose the politics of ethnographic fieldwork and writing. Accordingly, our three case studies are written in the first person singular.[1] Following the case studies, we analyze what these cases imply regarding the ways that ethnographers act politically through research and writing.

Argentina: Disappearances and the Naming of Subversion (Susan Coutin)

I went to Argentina in 1985 as a graduate student to

explore Argentine women's political activism as a possible dissertation topic. At that time Argentina was just emerging from a period of military rule. From 1976 to 1983 Argentina had been governed by a series of military juntas that had conducted what junta members termed "a war against subversion and terrorism" (Argentina. Junta Militar 1983). The tactics used in this "dirty war" (Frontalini and Caiati 1984) had included clandestinely abducting, torturing, and assassinating those whom the government believed to be subversives. By 1983, when the country returned to civilian rule, some 9,000 to 12,000 Argentines had been "disappeared" by authorities.[2] In 1985, when I arrived in Argentina, a democratically elected president had held office for one year and nine former military leaders were on trial for having committed "excesses" (see Amnesty International 1987; Brysk 1994). As the return to civilian rule had reopened political space for opposition, numerous fledgling women's organizations existed; however, none of these was as active in public politics as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, a group that had formed during the military period to demand the return of sons and daughters who had been "disappeared" (Bousquet 1984; Guzman Bouvard 1994; Schirmer 1988; Timerman 1980). The Mothers held weekly marches in the central square of Buenos Aires in front of the presidential building. They were vocal leaders of the Argentine human rights movement, took public and critical stances regarding the Argentine president's handling of the trial of former military leaders, and were internationally renowned. I decided to focus my research on the Mothers, which led me into the labyrinth of suspicion, abduction, and torture that had characterized the years of military rule in Argentina.

Through human rights reports, interviews with the Mothers, publications by the military junta, and accounts of human rights abuses that emerged during the trial of former military leaders (Cox 1983), I learned the logic of political disappearances. According to military leaders, the civilian government of Isabel Peron had been too weak to counter the violence of "subversives" who, the military alleged, were seeking to topple the Argentine government and impose international marxism on the Argentine people (Republica Argentina. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto 1980). Argentine military leaders argued that it had been necessary for the Armed Forces to seize control of the nation, erradicate subversion, and restore order (Republica Argentina. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto 1980).[3] Once in power, military leaders stated, the Armed Forces had had to fight an undeclared war against "subversives," defined as internal enemies of the Argentine people who had betrayed their homeland and forfeited any legal rights to which true Argentine citizens were entitled (Viaggio 1983). The military argued that subversion was an irreversible condition (Osiel 1995), which meant that the only solution to the problem of subversion was to destroy subversives (Osiel 1986). Therefore, in hidden detention centers, "subversives" who had been clandestinely abducted were tortured, then drugged, taken aboard airplanes, and thrown into the sea (Amnesty International 1980; Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights 1979; Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights 1980). By disappearing alleged subversives, the military did more than kill these individuals; it also made them cease to exist.

During the period of military rule in Argentina, a wide range of actions were considered subversion by authorities (Gillespie 1982; Osiel 1986) and were named as "crimes" in decrees issued by the military after assuming power (Spitta 1982). These actions ranged from "terrorism, illegal possession of arms and war supplies, illegal association and other terrorist subversive crimes" (IACHR 1980: 150) to corrupting the youth, destroying the family, and undermining Catholicism (Republica Argentina. Poder Ejecutivo Nacional 1980). Military leaders assumed the authority to punish subversive *tendencies* as well as subversive *acts*.[4] For example, a Jewish Argentine boy was standing on a streetcorner waiting for a cab when a bottle of gasoline was thrown through a nearby window, along with pamphlets referring to the "Cordobazo"—an uprising that had occurred several years previously. The boy fled, along with other bystanders, and was detained by a policeman. After what a human rights commission characterized as a "summary trial" before a military tribunal, the boy was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for "alteration of the public order" (IACHR 1980: 166). Another man, who was detained in 1974, served a three-year sentence and then was kept in detention indefinitely because authorities deemed him "an element that continually attempted to subvert the domestic order and peace" (p. 161). Such namings were authoritative in that those named as "subversives" were subsequently treated as such, much as being convicted of a crime authoritatively defines one as a felon (see Coutin 1995).

Given the consequences of being defined as

"political" and therefore as "subversive" during the years of military rule, many—but not all—Argentines found it advisable to define themselves as apolitical. My 1985 interviews with Argentines who had lived through this period revealed that, unsure of what might be considered "subversion," many individuals had avoided potentially suspicious acts, such as wearing beards, discussing politics, gathering publicly in large groups, and going out without their identity documents. A popular Argentine saying while the military was in power was "*no se mete*"—"don't get involved." Despite the arbitrary nature of many detentions, people who had not been detained sought to distinguish themselves from those who had, suggesting that the latter were "mixed up in something" ("*andaban en algo*"), most likely, something political. Those who were abducted sometimes sought to escape torture or assassination by insisting that they were apolitical. For example, one woman who had been abducted and later released recalled that when one of her torturers threatened to give her electric shock, "I cried and said I was telling the truth; I knew nothing; I was not a militant; and since I did not like such things I consciously knew nothing about them" (IACHR 1980: 77). Some detainees adopted the opposite strategy. Individuals who had been active in opposition groups sometimes emphasized their political knowledge in order to convince their captors that they would be more useful alive than dead (Gillespie 1982).

While many Argentines sought to distance themselves from those who could be defined as subversives,[5] activists who demanded the return of the disappeared redefined "subversives" as relatives, as daughters, sons, spouses, and siblings, and thus reinvested the disappeared with Argentine-ness, humanity, and rights. Most vocal among these activists were the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, who formed in 1977 after encountering each other in government offices, searching for their disappeared sons and daughters. To protest the disappearances, the Mothers marched in the Plaza de Mayo, wearing white scarves embroidered with the names of disappeared family members, and carrying these relatives' photographs. From the inception of their movement, the Mothers were accused of being political, terrorist, and subversive women who had allowed their children to become subversives and who were therefore responsible for their childrens' fates. Along with other human rights groups, the Mothers were also accused of being part of a leftist plot to defame Argentina.[6] In response to such charges the Mothers adopted an officially apolitical stance, forbidding members to represent political parties within the Mothers organization, or to act as a Mother of Plaza de Mayo within a political group. Though the Mothers were quite critical of Argentine policies regarding human rights, the foreign debt, and so forth, as an organization the Mothers did not officially subscribe to a particular political ideology (Brysk 1994), but instead used familial, and in the early years of their movement, Catholic imagery to define themselves and their cause (Bousquet 1984; Schirmer 1988). By 1985, a year when the Mothers held numerous mass demonstrations denouncing what they viewed as the civilian government's leniency toward those responsible for the disappearances, the Mothers had begun to distinguish between being partisan and political. An influential Mother told me, "We are political but non-partisan. No mother has any tie with a [political] party." The mothers also redefined their disappeared sons and daughters. At a convocation held in August of 1985 and attended by 30,000 to 80,000 people, the President of the Mothers complained that trying military leaders for "excesses in the war against subversion" defined their children as terrorists. She proclaimed, "They [Our children] are neither innocent children who never did anything, nor are they terrorists. They are men and women of the people, who gave their life, who gave their blood." This statement implied that the disappeared were indeed "involved in something," but something that served, rather than harmed, the Argentine people.

As I discovered in 1985 when I began to attend the Mothers' marches, interview individual Mothers in their "house" (they called their meeting place a "house" rather than an "office"), and investigate the nature of human rights abuses in Argentina, the Mothers' efforts to define themselves as non-partisan failed to dispell the widespread notion that the Mothers in particular and the theme of human rights in general were political and therefore dangerous. During private interviews and public speeches, the Mothers frequently proclaimed that the repressive apparatus remained intact, speculated that disappearances and abuses were still occurring, and suggested that another coup could occur at any time. Argentine friends warned me that my actions were most likely being observed, and reminded me, "Do you realize what happened here?" Middle and upper-class Argentines described the Mothers as "too politicized" and too emotionally distraught over their children's disappearances to accept their loss

and move on. Argentines who were not human rights activists were reluctant to discuss human rights, particularly in public. Members of a socialist party with whom I spent several days warned me that within the human rights movement, there were extreme leftists (*ultraizquierdistas*) who were capable of taking up arms. One of the socialist party members accompanied me to an interview with a Mother at a public cafe, and then later told me how nervous she had felt at being seen publicly with one of the Mothers, though she was extremely sympathetic to their cause. This socialist party member worried that human rights groups were infiltrated, and that associating with them could subject one to reprisals in the event of a future coup. Another U.S. student who was also gathering information about the Mothers was asked to leave by the family she was staying with, as the family feared her activities would endanger them. Argentine professors and government human rights officials assured me that the human rights situation in Argentina had changed, but as one Argentine friend pointed out, "Before, when all this was happening they hid it, they could be hiding it again. We can't know what's happening."

Given the complexity and ambiguity of Argentine political reality, I found it difficult to negotiate my position vis-a-vis the human rights movement. Fearing that associating with the Mothers would define me as a subversive in authorities' eyes, I tried to define myself as something other than a supporter of the Mothers. When I visited the Mothers' house, I would wander along the street, casually browse in a kiosk, and then quickly duck into the building. Aware that human rights was a controversial and depressing subject, I began to avoid raising the topic of the Mothers during conversations with non-activists who were merely acquaintances. I nonetheless expressed my sympathy with the Mothers' cause to the Mothers during interviews, and I openly walked with the Mothers during their weekly marches. During interviews and conversations, the Mothers defined me as a member of the youth (*la juventud*) on whose behalf they were struggling, as a sympathizer, as a member of the international community, as someone whose writing could in some way aid their cause, and as someone who might have disappeared if I had been in Argentina during the years of military rule. For instance, one Mother told me, "The disappearances touched all social classes and all groups of people. Anthropologists and psychologists were particularly persecuted. Lots of anthropologists disappeared, about 100 altogether." Youth groups that supported the Mothers challenged me to denounce the human rights policies of the civilian president, policies that some other Argentine human rights groups supported (see Leis 1989). As a non-Argentine I felt uncomfortable trying to influence Argentine politics, though, by my very presence at activities sponsored by human rights organizations, I was doing just that. My fieldnotes at the time read:

> They [the Mothers] are very extreme: you're either with them or against them. People that you think they would be somewhat in favor of—e.g., CONADEP [Comisión Nacional sobre la Desapareción de Personas, National Commision regarding the Disappearance of Persons], the movie "La Historia Oficial" ["The Official Story"], the trials [of military officials], certain goverment officials concerned with human rights, etc., come off as their enemies. It's an all or nothing political stance, which condemns any partial effort as impeding fulfillment of the entire goal. The result of this is that the madres [Mothers] are in a very difficult position. Commitment to their cause ... implies certain actions, political stances.

My discomfort with potentially being defined as a subversive by Argentine authorities, and thus perhaps putting those around me at risk, as well as my uncertainty regarding my own political enfranchisement in Argentina, led me to abandon the Mothers as a dissertation topic and to write instead about a human rights movement in the United States. In my case, difficulties negotiating the meaning of "politics," the consequences of acting politically, and my political position within the Mothers and their supporters led me to forego naming the Mothers, and thus being named within Argentine politics, and instead to enter a research context where there seemed to be less distance between "the field" and "academia." Before turning to that context, however, a discussion of Hirsch's experiences naming resistance in Kenya is in order. Like mine, Hirsch's research goals were influenced by the political context in which she did fieldwork. In contrast to my experiences, however, Hirsch was able to witness a political moment in which formerly hidden resistance was unmasked as a means of claiming political legitimacy.

Kenya: Masking and Unmasking Resistance (Susan Hirsch)

When I began research on law in Kenya in 1985—the same year that Coutin went to Argentina—the state's campaigns against political dissent resembled those in Argentina. Throughout the 1980s the

Kenyan government and the KANU (Kenya African National Union) party used numerous tactics to identify and eliminate resistance to the system of one-party rule that had been in place since the 1960s. Having criminalized most acts of political opposition, the Kenyan state used overt repression, including intimidation, imprisonment, torture, and murder of political opponents, to create a climate of fear in which political opposition became clandestine (see, for example, Africa Watch 1991; Ngugi 1992). Public political discussion was highly constrained, and most Kenyans not only refused to identify themselves openly as opponents of the government but also avoided political involvement.

The state's interest in controlling political opposition affected the research of all scholars, Kenyan and non-Kenyan, and even those who, like me, were not expressly interested in studying politics or resistance. Many non-Kenyan researchers were denied permission to conduct research in Kenya, and several who were caught delving into controversial issues were asked by the government to leave the country. Some researchers changed their project proposals in order to pass the scrutiny of the Kenyan state and to obtain, or retain, research permission. Although my plan had been to conduct a wide-ranging project on courts in several areas of the country, including the capital, I heeded the advice of colleagues at the University of Nairobi who urged me to conduct research in a region that was politically marginal at the time (the Swahili coast) and about a topic that would not address political issues directly (Islamic family courts). This decision was made partly in response to the Kenyan government's appraisal of what constituted political opposition and politicized communities, both of which were best avoided by researchers.

Studying Islamic family law allowed me to focus my research outside the realm of the secular state's criminal courts where a good deal of the process of naming resistance was taking place. Yet, as my research progressed, I became increasingly attentive to the role of courts and law in political repression, topics that I explored informally through the media and more rarely, through conversations with Kenyans.[7] I learned that sedition and treason laws were instrumental in naming "enemies of the state." Numerous people were prosecuted under these laws or were detained without charges under the Protection of Public Security Act. Everyday activities, such as gathering with friends in the back room of a bar or giving the victory salute (assumed to be a call for multiple parties) were constituted as threats to the state, and violators were arrested. While seemingly "apolitical" activities were, through law, designated as political, criminal, and subject to state control, police investigators became quite skilled in literally constructing evidence of subversion—such as phony pamphlets and fabricated confessions—which they used to carefully control the creation, naming, and punishment of resisters. The existence of these enemies of the state—though of the state's own making--further justified acts of state repression. I was continually struck by the ways in which the state constituted resistance against itself through namings that were authoritative and consequential and yet seemed to bear little relation to the practices of individuals and groups who opposed the state.

The coastal Swahili communities in which I conducted research were indeed removed from Kenyan politics in the mid-1980s. At the time coastal Swahili Muslims joked about their political apathy. As one remarked, "All Swahili people want is to eat rice every day for lunch. And even if they don't get that, they won't complain." In part, their apathy stemmed from the position of Muslims as a minority population in Kenya and the history of the Swahili, a group that had ruled the coast in the last century and yet had not become a major factor in independent Kenya's political economy (see, for example, Hirsch n.d.; Middleton 1992; Mazrui and Shariff 1994; Willis 1993). Many Swahili people were more interested in pursuing ties with wealthy Middle Eastern governments than in courting Nairobi politicians who still resented coastal collaboration in the East African slave trade and the benefits that Swahili had derived from colonial policies. As a result, Swahili people rarely challenged the state's efforts to promote secularism and to appropriate coastal wealth from tourism and shipping interests (for exceptions, see Hirsch 1994; Salim 1970).

Despite the apparent political apathy of Swahili people, I found that my research uncovered what I considered to be acts of resistance that involved the state. I found that, by exposing oppressive domestic relations, individual Muslim women used the Islamic courts to resist their husbands and ex-husbands (Hirsch n.d.). I also found that through the same courts, the Muslim community as a whole covertly resisted the secular state's marginalization of religious law and Islam more generally (Hirsch 1994). Similarly, several other anthropologists conducting research at about the same time in towns and villages along the coast uncovered subtle resistances to

the state in activities such as schooling, dance competitions, literature, and Swahili spiritual medicine (Franken 1986; Giles 1987; Mazrui and Shariff 1994; Porter 1992). No doubt my research on resistance with respect to gender and ethnicity was influenced by my desire to locate agentive opposition in the midst of such a repressive situation.

While conducting research, I conceptualized Kenya's "political landscape" geographically, and intentionally located my project far from the risks and dangers of the intensely politicized capital. However, I consciously moved back and forth between the research site and more political contexts, including the university. Even when at my research site I moved between my project, defined overtly as "apolitical" in the sense of Kenyan state politics, and my informal observations of repression, defined as "political." With hindsight I realize that my ability to assume this split is evidence of the difference between my position and that of Kenyan scholars, who as targets of repression, had little possibility of naming themselves as apolitical in any context. Even though I was not conducting research on the political situation, or on direct acts of resistance, I found that the longer I lived under a repressive regime, the more necessary it became for me to understand both the national political situation and the consequences of my own actions, including my seemingly apolitical investigation of Islamic courts.

The balance I tried to strike between informal observation of the political and formal research on the apolitical was exploded with the political detention of my closest friend at the university. This act, which has had an impact on my life well beyond what I am able to say about it here, made it all the more crucial for me to comprehend the political situation and my position within it as an academic.[8] Though the detention made me yearn to condemn this act of unjust imprisonment, my connection to a state-identified resister made it unwise for me to speak out politically within the country, limited my ability to obtain information about this and other detentions, and circumscribed my relations with others. Once again splitting and repositioning my research self and my political self—and masking the latter—I quietly directed my political efforts outward to international human rights institutions, a strategy that I continued to pursue after I left Kenya. Through this frightening and tragic experience I became more aware of the multiple ways in which I was positioned politically during my research and the limited degree to which I could control the naming of my own status as a political actor. To my knowledge, the state addressed the possibility that I was a participant in resistance in only a very limited way, by monitoring my actions when in the capital. In turn, I defined myself as pursuing a broad politics against repression, rather than against the particular regime. Human rights organizations treated me as an observer and expected me to use international standards of what counts as appropriate political protest rather than definitions more relevant to those of us on the ground. My discomfort with all of these designations has compelled me to make my commitments and my writing more overtly engaged with the political. For example, in this article and others, I will try to name myself politically, even though I understand that act as partial and contingent.

My ability to act in more overtly political ways has been facilitated by changes in Kenyan politics which began several years after my initial research and the startling events described above. In the early 1990s widespread internal opposition to one-party rule, a failing economy, and international calls for democracy and human rights forced the KANU government to legalize opposition parties and to hold multiparty elections (Haugerud 1995; Widner 1992). As parties formed, there was extensive political discussion, much of it highly critical of the ruling party, which contrasted with the silencing of opposing views in the 1980s. At the coast despair over a falling standard of living led some to object to government control more overtly than in the past and to condemn local apologists for the ruling party (Mazrui and Shariff 1994). During brief visits to Kenya I observed that even the historically apolitical Swahili people were drawn into new political debate.

My observation of increasingly overt resistance in the Swahili community in the past few years made me realize that the counterpart of fabricating enemies of the state is denying a political opponent legitimate standing. In defining practices as oppositional, states also influence dissidents' namings of their actions by refusing to recognize certain acts and states as oppositional. Refusal to recognize political resistance was precisely the Kenyan government's response to the formation of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK). The IPK was founded in 1992 by a few coastal Muslims who were opposed to the ruling party's control of the coast and finally decided that multiparty politics provided the context in which to express those beliefs. The IPK's message was similar to that of other populist Kenyan parties: share the wealth, fight corruption, and elect

new leaders who will respect all Kenyans. Though IPK leaders offered a multireligious and multiethnic message that welcomed non-Muslims into the party, they sometimes justified IPK positions with references to Islamic ideals and goals. When the IPK sought political recognition, it was refused party registration by the Kenyan government on the grounds that it was a religious, and not a political organization. Continued agitation for recognition by IPK members was closely monitored as the state speculated that there were ties between the IPK and militant Islamic movements in other nations.

It is important to note that the government did not justify its ban of the IPK by defining IPK supporters as enemies of the state. That is, they were not identified as resisters who were engaging in treasonous or seditious activities. Rather, the state characterized the party as a religious movement with designs on the souls of the largely Christian Kenyan population rather than on state power. The press assisted in constructing the IPK as a religous movement by repeatedly describing IPK supporters as "women in ***buibuis***" (black veils worn by Swahili Muslim women) and men in "*kanzu* and *kofia*" (long white shirts and small caps worn by Swahili Muslim men), thus playing on the exotic distinctiveness of the Muslim minority population. In addition to constructing the IPK as a religious party and party leaders as religious fanatics, the state insisted that the majority of party supporters—young, unemployed men—were violent delinquents and named their activities, such as gathering to hear speeches and calling for strikes, as hooliganism. Thus, the state constructed the IPK through discourses of religion and petty criminality and not through those of party politics or resistance to state hegemony.

As the IPK sought political recognition, I was conscious of witnessing an extraordinary moment, what Scott (1990) calls a "saturnalia of power," when political challenge to the state emerges in a community that had previously hidden its resistance. Such moments offer the possibility for exploring how, as the discourse of political opposition becomes more overt, subtle acts of resistance are transformed and reinterpreted by both the state and those who perform them. For example, before the rise of the IPK, Islamic phrases such as "*Takbir*" (Proclaim God's Greatness) and its response "*Allah Akbar*" (God is great), commonly heard among Muslims, might have been interpreted as subtle resistance against the state through the discourse of religion. Yet in the midst of the IPK upsurge these terms became explicit markers of the movement, that is, members deployed them in many contexts to mark their connection to the unregistered party and to thereby declare publicly their opposition to the state. Although local people did not all support the party, the belief that the IPK was a radical political movement was widespread among Muslims.

Although I followed transformations in the resistance practices of people with varying degrees of connection to the IPK, I was most intrigued by its fiery leader, Sheikh Khalid Balala, whose brilliant oratory was evidence of this extraordinary moment. Like the press, the Kenyan government, and most Kenyans, I was amazed and captivated by Balala's controversial speeches and his fearless political charges against the state, which, in their vehemence, were unlike anything previously articulated at the coast.[9] After the state's refusal to register the IPK as a political party in mid-1992, Balala's mission became to "register" the presence of the IPK as a political challenge to the Kenyan state. Balala made many controversial speeches in which he proclaimed his opposition to the government, and several in which he uttered arguably seditious phrases such as, "God will kill the President," "The President will die," and "IPK will vanquish all opponents." Balala not only made these controversial statements but also called attention to them through statements such as "I am saying this openly" and "I am not afraid to say this in front of the government" (Hirsch 1993). These operated metalinguistically—as comments on speech—to unmask or name his resistance. In addition, he translated his most contentious statements into English from Kiswahili, to be sure, as he put it, that "government spies" understood him. In these speeches Balala invited the charge of sedition in order to gain recognition for the oppositional nature of his speech and his political movement. He achieved his goal of being recognized as a threat to the state when he was arrested in July 1992 after one of these speeches. Balala's movement lost momentum for a variety of reasons, including the state's refusal to recognize the IPK as a valid political party and the end of the election campaign. Although by that time Balala's imprisonment had made him a political and religious martyr in the eyes of the community, his influence dissipated as attention turned to other matters, such as the failing coastal economy.

When I expressed my interest in the IPK to the people with whom I had been conducting research on Islamic law, some were pleased to acquaint me

with the movement's goals. It soon became apparent that IPK members informed me about party activities in part because they viewed me as an avenue through which to publicize the movement. Knowing my sympathy for critiques of injustice generally, they wanted me to record and re-present their defiance of the Kenyan state. This presented me with the task of clarifying (to them and to myself) my own limitations in terms of affording the IPK a platform for political legitimacy. I found it difficult to convey my intentions to analyze the IPK's ideologies and practices rather than to present them unquestioned. It was hard to make clear that I was willing to act politically, outside Kenya, if Balala or any other political actor was jailed unjustly, and yet was not willing to promote the IPK politically.

While conducting research in Argentina and in Kenya, Coutin and I were analyzing struggles that seemed both geographically and politically distant from our institutional bases in the United States. This distance, which was simultaneously comforting and the source of ethical dilemmas, turned out to be based on a false notion of discrete boundaries between places, positions, identities, and political realities, as well as on the illusion that we could move back and forth across these boundaries in the course of conducting research. These illusions were dispelled when we found that we confronted political issues everywhere, that our research defined us as "political" in ways that we could not control, and that our actions, including our writing, had the potential to implicate others, or, conversely, to advance their causes. It might seem that doing research in the United States, a nation with a better domestic human rights record than either Kenya or Argentina, would be easier, that the dilemmas regarding "naming" the political would be resolved, and that ethnographers' authority to define the political significance of their own actions would be greater. Coutin's research in the United States demonstrates, however, that this is not the case.

The United States: "Rethinking Protest" (Susan Coutin)

Reluctant to continue research about the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, I returned to the United States in the fall of 1985, and began casting about for another dissertation topic. At the time, eleven sanctuary activists were on trial for conspiracy and alien-smuggling in Tucson, Arizona, and articles about the trial and the movement made the front page almost daily. The movement was made up of congregations who had declared themselves "sanctuaries" for Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees in the early 1980s. Congregations had taken this step because, despite civil war and widespread human rights abuses in both El Salvador and Guatemala, the Reagan administration had deemed the Central Americans who began pouring into the United States in the early 1980s "economic immigrants" rather than political refugees, and favored deporting them rather than granting them asylum (Churgin 1996; Ferris 1987). To counter this policy, sanctuary congregations had formed what the press termed an "underground railroad" (see also Golden and McConnell 1986) to transport Salvadorans and Guatemalans from Central America through Mexico and into the United States. Congregations also publicly sheltered undocumented Salvadorans and Guatemalans in defiance of the U.S. government's contention that these Central Americans were illegal aliens and that transporting and housing them violated immigration statutes that made it a felony to "conceal, harbor or shield from detection ... any alien not duly admitted by an immigration officer or not lawfully entitled to enter or reside within the United States" (Immigration and Nationality Act, Section 274(a)).

I found the sanctuary movement a compelling research topic for a variety of reasons. I was interested in the ways that culture was reproduced and redefined in the process of protest, and just as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo manipulated notions of gender and family as they opposed human rights abuses in Argentina, sanctuary activists invoked and reinterpreted their ideologies as they sought to change U.S. foreign and refugee policy. I sympathized with the movement's critique of U.S. policy, and therefore was willing to undertake fieldwork that would not only be research, but also political action. Writing about the movement would allow me to continue the human rights focus that I had begun in Argentina. Finally, at a time when anthropology was under heavy criticism for practicing intellectual colonialism (Asad 1973; Deloria 1969; Said 1979), I would be conducting research about middle-class, Anglo religious activists, a group that was, in many ways, my own.[10]

My research about sanctuary examined the political implications of movement culture, what I termed "the culture of protest" (Coutin 1993). Like Hirsch's informal study of hidden acts of resistance, I was interested in ways that movement practices and discourse implicitly or explicitly drew on and

critiqued authoritative religious, legal, and social discourses. These research interests led me to focus on the least overtly political aspects of sanctuary work, such as the jokes and stories told by volunteers, the rituals devised by participants, the conversions that some individuals experienced upon becoming involved in the movement, and so forth. Though I sought thus to broaden the concept of protest beyond the notion of strategic action that has dominated social movement theory, colleagues who were annoyed at the way that the term resistance is bandied about sometimes complimented me for studying "real resistance," that is, people who were taking risky actions in order to achieve particular political ends. In response I argued that the distinction between organized protest and everyday resistance is exaggerated.

Though I was confident in characterizing sanctuary work as political, movement members were more ambivalent. For example, when I described my research goals to a group of Tucson activists in 1987, one sanctuary worker commented, "It sounds interesting, but you'd best rethink that 'protest' part. It wasn't 'protest' until the government started indicting us." This activist's comment not only challenged my naming of the sanctuary movement, but also noted a key source of the movement's ambivalence. In the U.S. protest is officially legal, therefore, the U.S. government could not indict activists simply for being protestors, as could the Kenyan state in the mid-1980s. To issue indictments it was necessary for authorities to define movement practices as crimes. Authorities did so by sending undercover agents to infiltrate the movement, indicting movement members in 1985, and winning convictions against eight sanctuary workers in 1986. Though the verdicts defined sanctuary work rather than activists' political statements as criminal, the government also acted in ways that suggested that protest itself was a crime. Beginning in 1981 the Terrorism Section of the Federal Bureau of Investigation placed a number of groups that were critical of U.S. Central America policy under surveillance. Some sanctuary congregations were among the groups being observed (Gelbspan 1991; United States Senate. Select Committee on Intelligence 1989). In contrast to the court actions taken against movement members, this covert observation *did* imply that protest was suspect, possibly illegal, and perhaps a form of terrorism. The government thus positioned political protest ambiguously, as simultaneously constitutionally protected and legally suspect.

Given the ambiguous legality of political protest, it was both advantageous and disadvantageous for sanctuary activists to define their work as political. Sanctuary workers who were indicted in Tucson in 1985 sought to do both. Noting that the government usually did not prosecute agricultural employers or other individuals who transported illegal aliens without charge, defendants argued that they had been singled out for prosecution due to their criticisms of the government (U.S. *v.* Aguilar 1986). This selective prosecution argument depicted sanctuary work as political. At the same time, defendants deemphasized the political implications of their work in order to argue that sanctuary was a religious practice and therefore could not be curtailed by the federal government. For example, one defense attorney told the court, "It is very easy for the government to say that this isn't religious at all, this is a political exercise and it is subversive and anti-government and that is why we have the right to go in with bugs" (U.S. *v.* Aguilar 1986: 1038). The religious vs. political distinction that had enabled the Kenyan government to delegitimize the IPK party forced sanctuary workers to downplay their politics in order to claim the protection that the first amendment accords to religious practice.

Sanctuary workers named their activities not only with an eye to the U.S. government, but also in relation to internal debates over the practice and meaning of sanctuary work. To some participants, defining sanctuary work as political increased, rather than detracted from, the movement's legitimacy (Coutin 1993). Such individuals argued that the movement's advocacy distinguished it from "charity" in that the latter did nothing to alter the conditions that produced oppression. These individuals also rejected the opposition between politics and religion, arguing that such a dichotomy watered down the gospel. Other participants distinguished sanctuary from political action on the grounds that movement members were motivated by a faith-based commitment to social justice rather than by a political ideology. Participants who stressed the apolitical nature of the movement sometimes argued that the problem with U.S. refugee policy was that it had become biased against the victims of right-wing repression. Such individuals suggested that it would be a mistake for the sanctuary movement to replace a right-wing bias with a left-wing bias, and that it was important to aid refugees on the basis of need rather than politics. Defining the movement as religious rather than political refuted the government's sugges-

tion that movement members were "terrorists" who merited government surveillance, and some movement members believed that countering the government's claim that the movement was mainly political was critical to attracting public support, particularly from congregations that might consider joining the movement.

I negotiated these varying definitions of the political as I sought to define the significance of my presence within the movement. As a researcher, I avoided actions that I felt would position me fully as a movement insider. For example, though I intepreted for Central Americans during public testimonials about their lives, I did not speak publicly on behalf of the movement. To do so, I believed, would be to produce the discourse that I was analyzing. Similarly, I sometimes worried about doing volunteer work as a research method, particularly when I worked alone—was I studying myself? At the same time, negotiating my relationship with sanctuary activists required demonstrating a commitment to the movement and its goals. Regardless of my own intentions or motivations, my presence or absence at particular events was interpreted by movement members as a measure of my solidarity with their work. Like Hirsch in Kenya, I discovered that I could not control the namings of my actions. Aware that movement members were probably under surveillance, I assumed that hidden microphones and informants recorded my actions as well as theirs. As my fieldwork coincided with the trial of Demetria Martinez, a New Mexico journalist who had accompanied a movement member during a border crossing in order to write a news story, I realized that my knowledge could incriminate not only me, but others. I was cautious about the meetings I attended, the questions I asked, the notes I took, and the interviews that I taped. Despite these precautions, I found that others viewed me as capable of transmitting illegality. For example, once, before I began an interview with a Tucson activist, the activist's roommate left, fearing that overhearing the interview could define her legally as a co-conspirator.

These complex namings and renamings coalesced on the day that I took my leave of Tucson sanctuary activists. Standing outside of Southside Presbyterian Church, where undercover informants had worshipped with sanctuary activists in 1983 and 1984, a border worker who had been named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1985 indictments embraced me, saying, "Don't get arrested in L.A.!" Her words positioned me as a fellow conspirator, which surprised me as I had not been as involved as she and other borderworkers had been and I therefore did not feel worthy of being regarded as having shared in their risks. At the same time, I realized that, technically, I probably *had* done enough to be indicted, in the unlikely event that the government chose to make an example of me. Yet, far from getting arrested, when I arrived in Los Angeles, I holed up in my apartment and began to write my doctoral dissertation. Despite my commitment to the issues that the sanctuary movement addressed—a commitment that I have continued to act on over the years—I felt that leaving Tucson repositioned me. During fieldwork I had been named as a participant in the sanctuary movement; as I wrote, I defined myself more unambiguously as an academic.

Naming and Positioning

The case studies explicated above demonstrate that ethnographers of resistance are deeply implicated in the political contests about which they write. As our discussion of conducting fieldwork in politically sensitive situations reveals, naming acts as political has serious consequences. Negotiating the politics of our fieldwork made us aware of the constraints on our ability to name our own actions and informed our interpretations of the struggles about which we wrote or chose not to write. Nonetheless, when we began to write, we, like many anthropologists, situated our most public namings of the political within academic debates rather than within the contests over the political that we participated in during fieldwork. It is this repositioning and the assumptions that underlie it that we now question. For, if anthropologists cannot fully extricate themselves from political contests, that is, if "the field" and "the academy" are not even clearly demarcated let alone distant, then our writing, like our fieldwork, will unavoidably name both us and others within political contests that are not confined to the academy. Attempts to position ourselves outside "the field" and the struggles located "there" minimize the dimensions of anthropological writing as a political act. Below, we draw on our accounts of the political contests that we sought to negotiate during fieldwork in order to suggest new ways of thinking about the positioning and repositioning of anthropologists with respect to anthropological writing and praxis.

As our case studies show, neither states, dissidents, journalists, activists, nor ethnographers can unambiguously or irrevocably name the political.

The state, however, has more power to enforce its definitions than do most other participants in such struggles. In the Argentine and Kenyan cases state authorities criminalized the political through legal and paramilitary repression of alleged subversion, sedition, or treason. In such circumstances overtly political actions were dangerous, and opposition groups such as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo adopted officially apolitical stances. In the Kenyan case the change to multiparty rule created conditions in which being political was a prerequisite for participating in the electoral process. In response, the IPK characterized its own activities as political through the speeches of its leaders, while the Kenyan government sought to delegitimize the IPK by naming it as religious. Finally, in the U.S. political action is both constitutionally protected and legally suspect, which contributed to sanctuary activists' ambivalence about defining sanctuary as a political movement. Like the IPK, sanctuary activists encountered a dichotomy between religion and politics that made it difficult for them simultaneously to name their actions as political and claim their constitutional right to freedom from government interference with religious practice. Though these cases differ, the similarities are also striking. In each of the three cases we discuss, the state conducted clandestine surveillance, dissidents were repressed, and cultures of fear were created. Our experiences of believing we were under surveillance and, at times, named as resisters led us to conclude that the differences between the U.S. and the "more repressive" countries in which we have conducted research are not as extreme as we once thought.

While doing fieldwork in these contexts, both of us faced difficult choices regarding whether or not to undertake particular projects and how to name both our actions and the actions of others. We had to consider whether labelling something "resistance" encouraged states to repress the activity so named, precluded other characterizations of the activity, or otherwise did violence—a term we do not use lightly—to the projects of subordinate people. These considerations influenced how we conducted research and assessed the consequences of our actions as well as how and to whom we revealed our data, purposes, and sources. For example, when Hirsch was given some IPK documents and a few cassette tapes of Balala's speeches in the early 1990s, she treated the material as highly sensitive, believing herself to be in possession of potentially seditious speech. Soon, the new openness with which people talked publicly about the IPK reassured her that such material no longer endangered either herself or others. Similarly, when Coutin crossed the U.S.-Mexico border with a study group, she and other participants were warned to leave behind any material that referred to "sanctuary" in order to avoid problems with Mexican or U.S. authorities. Though we were uncomfortably aware that such actions as removing identifying information, or concealing sensitive tape-recordings, resembled the methods employed by infiltrators and state investigators, we found that negotiating the political significance of our research required such actions. We do not mean to suggest that the choices that we made were the right choices, or the only possible choices. Indeed, other researchers in the same contexts have done things differently. Our point is rather that these choices and the analyses they eventually produced were themselves shaped by the political contexts in which they were made.

As ethnographers of resistance, we found it impossible to control the multiple ways that we were named by others in the course of fieldwork (see also Feldman 1991; Nordstrom and Robben 1991). For instance, simply choosing to study movements that are, in some sense, dissident, can define a researcher as a dissident, a subversive, or a criminal. Fieldwork creates competing pressures to accept and reject such definitions and to redefine the categories in which the research and those who are targets of state repression are being positioned. Accordingly, while doing research, anthropologists are always at least potentially involved as political actors whether they are studying politics, whether they have inadvertently become involved in a struggle over the political, or whether they have defined their project as explicitly political or (a)political. Anthropologists' proximity to violence and to the political varies in accordance with how they present their work, their presences or absences at events, or simply the company they keep. Some situations warrant the extreme concern expressed by Mary Margaret Steedly with respect to research conducted in the wake of political purges in Karoland, Indonesia, that "even with the best of intentions it is possible to become a transfer-point in the circuitry of international violence" (1993: 227). Merely being an academic is considered suspect in many of the contexts in which ethnographers do research, including the U.S. Defining the significance of one's own research requires confronting how academicians—especially anthropologists—are named as political actors in that con-

text's particular political terrain.

It would seem that outside of the imagined construct we call "the field," when extricated from the political controversies that are the topics of their investigations, ethnographers would be at liberty to name resistance in accordance with their theoretical perspectives and ethnographic observations. This supposition rests on a flawed but deeply ingrained dichotomy between "the field" and the "academy" (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997a). The assumption behind this dichotomy is that anthropologists leave "the academy," travel to "the field," and then return to "the academy" after a period of research. The spatial focus of this metaphor shapes other senses in which anthropologists imagine themselves to be repositioned when conducting fieldwork. For example, even without travel, anthropologists imagine that they undergo a contextual repositioning when they conduct research. For instance, in her initial research Hirsch assumed a clear separation between formal and informal research projects, which she quickly learned was unfounded. There was simply no place in Kenya where research and researchers were not political in some ways. Similarly, when leaving "the field," anthropologists imagine that they are writing for an academic audience whose needs and politics differ from those confronted during research. Coutin had this experience when she completed her sanctuary fieldwork and began to write her doctoral dissertation. Our point is not that no "field/academy" border exists, but rather that failing to investigate the nature and permeability of this border disengages anthropological research from writing. Although our positioning as American women conducting research in Argentina, Kenya, and the U.S. leads us to sort through these issues in particular ways, scholars writing from and about countries that were previously the targets of colonial and neocolonial anthropological study confront their own sets of political issues. Wazir Jahan Karim (1996), a Malaysian anthropologist writing in and about his country, argues that "local anthropologists" like himself are often viewed by their governments as opposed to the goals of the "modernizing state" and are forced to engage in political battles in which they must distinguish their political commitments from often erroneous assumptions about the politics of anthropology.[11]

The limits that we encountered on our ability to define ourselves during *fieldwork* compel us to question ethnographers' abilities to define themselves when they *write*. If "the field" and "the academy" are not separate, unconnected spaces (Appadurai 1991; Kearney 1991), then ethnographers can neither completely extricate themselves from the politics "over there" nor entirely control the political implications of their written work. Efforts in the 1980s to devise writing styles that address the politics of ethnographic research have made intriguing and important contributions to ethnographic representation (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986), but rarely engage the sort of political struggles that we negotiated during fieldwork (cf. Lavie 1990). Regardless of its style, academic writing often provides precisely the context in which at least some academics assume that they can make claims about resistance without facing repercussions. But, some experiments in forms of writing are neither safe nor relevant for those activists represented. Including individual voices in anthropological texts does avoid earlier tendencies to objectify informants and does amplify the agency of individual political actors, however this textual strategy also masks ethnographers' authority and individualizes resisters at a moment when they find strength in collectivity. Analyzing the politics of ethnographic research and writing requires assessing the relationships between particular rhetorical forms, broader anthropological goals, and the political webs in which ethnographers are embedded. Attending to the political embeddedness of ethnography may require more than the standard reflexivity of the postmodern moment in anthropology (see, for example, Haraway 1991). We are persuaded by Gupta and Ferguson's contention that anthropologists must address more concretely the politics of their writing:

> Taking ethnographic practice as a form of political practice means recognizing a variety of different ways in which anthropological representations may be engaged with questions of culture and power, place-making and people-making, resistance and subjectivity. Such considerations do not mean that discussions of reflexivity and anthropological positioning are unnecessary but on the contrary that they must be pursued much more seriously and less abstractly, in relation to concrete anthropological practices and specific forms of political engagement (1997b: 24-25).

One way to address Gupta and Ferguson's challenge is to focus not on the text as the end product of representation but on the move ethnographers make as they turn their research into written text. Reconnecting ethnographers' political and intellectual goals requires identifying the multiple ways that ethnographers are positioned in relation to movements—as chroniclers, anthropologists, members, op-

ponents, etc. This process may demand taking written positions that reflect ethnographers' positioning during fieldwork.[12] For example, Starn (1994) situates himself in multiple ways by concluding one of his academic articles with the mailing address of a human rights organization in Peru and a request for donations. Nancy Scheper-Hughes' (1995) notion of the anthropologist acting as a *companheira*, a comrade who accompanies people in their struggles, represents an important effort to conceptualize the research *and writing* processes in ways that take into account political struggles. She writes, "Witnessing, the anthropologist as *companheira*, is in the active voice, and it positions the anthropologist inside human events as a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being" (p. 419).[13] By repositioning anthropologists, such commitments clarify how ethnography is related to the development of social movements and political dissidence. The members of these movements may want their stories told in sites and forms that will generate legimitacy or material assistance. For instance, Coutin is aware that the work of immigrant advocates among whom she has conducted research in Los Angeles would be furthered if her publications explicitly counter anti-immigrant representations in the press and elsewhere. The complexity of ethnographers' positioning may make it difficult to satisfy both movement demands and personal political commitments. For example, one aspect of Hirsch's intention to analyze the IPK movement sympathetically though critically engages the question of naming everyday resistance. Since the Kenyan election in December of 1992, some IPK members including Balala, although primarily focused on political activity against the Kenyan state, have repeatedly decried the moral laxity of coastal Muslims, particularly women. These messages, embedded in a much broader discourse of political struggle, were largely ignored by IPK members and the public. Hirsch faces dilemmas about how, where, and to whom she writes about and thereby exposes gendered resistance to the IPK.

Paradoxically, the project of rethinking the politics of anthropology is made more necessary and more difficult by the fact that no distance in space or time guarantees protection to those who are named as resisters, including anthropologists (see Pieke 1995). Assessing the risks involved in more explicit discussions of the political means that at times, ethnographers will have to be silent, however much writing about a particular subject might advance anthropological understandings or careers. Being politically committed may require biding one's time, allowing others to expose their own politics, or writing in vague and roundabout ways. Though we prefer clarity and openness, serious politics can require masking.

NOTES

Acknowledgments Previous versions of this article were presented in 1994 at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in Atlanta GA and at the Law and Society Association meeting in Phoenix AZ. The authors are grateful to fellow panelists, audience members, and discussants for their comments. We would also like to thank Bill Maurer for his helpful criticisms of an earlier draft. Coutin's trip to Argentina was funded by the Organization of American States and the Stanford Center for Latin American Studies, and her sanctuary research was funded by an American Association of University Women doctoral fellowship. Hirsch's research in Kenya was funded by a Shell-Duke Graduate Research Fellowship and the American Bar Foundation and was conducted with permission granted by the Office of the President of the Kenyan Government.

[1]Given the possible confusion caused by pronouns in a coauthored paper, we use the first person plural only to refer to the two of us, and not to include the reader or all anthropologists. Though we recognize that our comments about ethnographers apply to us as well as to other anthropologists, we use the third person plural when referring to ethnographers.

[2]CONADEP (1985) received 8,960 denunciations of disappearances. Since not all disappearances have been officially denounced, Argentine human rights groups estimate the total number of disappearances to have been 12,000 (Osiel 1986: 145). Some groups place the total even higher, at 30,000 (Madres de Plaza de Mayo 1985).

[3]In 1980, Argentine military leaders explained the rationale for the coup as follows:

> All representative social sectors, including those that internally made up the party in power, proved impotent at creating solutions that would save the Nation from the anarchy that inexorably approached. The most famous political figures in the country publicly admitted their incapacity to contribute to sustaining the faltering institutional order. Faced with the tremendous danger that the above situation presented ... the Argentine armed forces, supported by the general consensus, were forced to assume responsibility for governing the State (Republica Argentina. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto 1980: 15, translation mine).

[4]Here, I draw on Asad (1984) who distinguishes between a sinful act and a sinful condition.

[5]Similarly, Feldman (1991) notes that in Northern Ireland, people distance themselves from those who have been targeted by the military for probable execution.

[6]In fact, there were alliances between human rights organizations and leftist groups, as both were likely targets of state repression and each stood to benefit from improvements in the human rights situation.

[7]Kenya's daily national distribution newspapers in English (*The Daily Nation*, *The Standard*) and Kiswahili (*Taifa Leo*) and weekly magazines (*The Weekly Review*, *Finances*, and *The Nairobi Law Monthly*) covered the political developments in Kenya

in the 1980s. My discussion draws from many articles in these publications, all of which were restricted by the state in their discussion of political events. Several editors of these publications were detained or arrested in the 1980s for publishing allegedly seditious material.

[8]Although, as described later in the text of this article, the Kenyan political situation has opened enough to include voices of the opposition, the possibility of repression and political detention still exists for many politicians, academics, and lawyers. I therefore leave my discussion of some past events intentionally vague.

[9]My discussion of the IPK and Balala is based on literature distributed by IPK supporters, taped versions of Balala's speeches, and numerous media reports (see note 7).

[10]For further discussion of the complex ways that she was situated vis a vis the sanctuary movement, see Coutin (1993).

[11]Karim (1996: 120-121) writes:

> The political leaders of my nation-state of Malaysia have an opinion of anthropologists like me. We emulate the western tradition of using our subjects as our playing fields and in this neo-colonial encounter of so-called objective enquiry supposedly reject all development efforts at mainstreaming minorities, to enjoy the benefits of modernity and industrialization.

[12]Clearly, ethnographers' politics are diverse. We are not advocating a particular or unified political stance on the part of ethnographers, but rather a more explicit discussion of the ways that ethnographers are positioned politically by themselves and others.

[13]Scheper-Hughes uses the female term *companheira* as part of advocating what she calls a "womanly hearted anthropology." We do not necessarily want to universalize this term, as we prefer to dismantle rather than reproduce stereotypic images of male and female ethnographers.

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