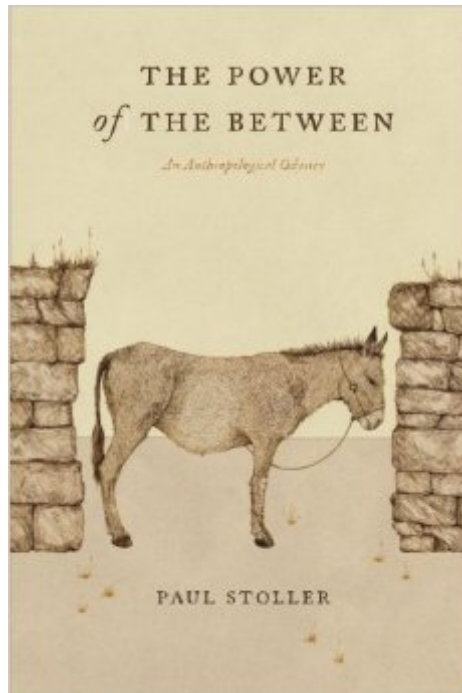


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# The Power Of The Between: An Anthropological Odyssey



## Synopsis

It is the anthropologist's fate to always be between things: countries, languages, cultures, even realities. But rather than lament this, anthropologist Paul Stoller here celebrates the creative power of the between, showing how it can transform us, changing our conceptions of who we are, what we know, and how we live in the world. Beginning with his early days with the Peace Corps in Africa and culminating with a recent bout with cancer, *The Power of the Between* is an evocative account of the circuitous path Stoller's life has taken, offering a fascinating depiction of how a career is shaped over decades of reading and research. Stoller imparts his accumulated wisdom not through grandiose pronouncements but by drawing on his gift for storytelling. Tales of his apprenticeship to a sorcerer in Niger, his studies with Claude Lévi-Strauss in Paris, and his friendships with West African street vendors in New York City accompany philosophical reflections on love, memory, power, courage, health, and illness. Graced with Stoller's trademark humor and narrative elegance, *The Power of the Between* is both the story of a distinguished career and a profound meditation on coming to terms with the impermanence of all things.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am hesitant to criticize this book. The author, Paul Stoller, is a very likable person. He has a gift for storytelling, and writes in an easy-to-read, accessible style, while addressing complex issues that have been debated in the discipline for decades. His life story is quite unusual, and his accumulated experience clearly deserves sharing. He applies high ethical standards to his work, and is obviously

concerned about the lives of peoples about whom he writes. He has a good sense of humor, and doesn't take himself too seriously. His tale is full of interesting details, unexpected twists and turns, and life lessons that convey a deep sensitivity to the human condition. He isn't the first anthropologist to offer a personal memoir mixing the intimate with the professional. Compared to Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* for instance, he is both more modest and more humane, and eschews parisian intellectualism in favor of an earthly commonsense. At a time when anthropology has clearly fallen out of fashion, he reconnects the wider public with the plight of a discipline that has a direct relevance for our multicultural and cosmopolitan present. But let's face it: as far as social science is concerned, this book has severe limitations. It paints a mythical picture of Africa, reinforcing stereotypes about the dark continent and the distant Other. It samples theories and approaches, without a firm commitment to a methodological tradition. It is self-centered on the person of the author, and it treats anthropology as a means of individual fulfillment as opposed to useful social knowledge. It remains politically ambiguous, whereas the issues Stoller addresses demand a political treatment.

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