

# Lamaleraland : archetypal tales of whales and whale hunters /

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# *LAMALLERAland*

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*Archetypal Tales of Whales and Whale Hunters*

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B.A. (SA), M.A. Hons (Woll.)

*Thesis submitted to the  
University of New South Wales  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

July 2000

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17 MAY 2001

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*For the Ancestors.*

*Including my father, Stein Lundberg*



**Behind a story read, a tale told, something else is said as well, like a nagging voice half heard amid a conversation. We have the certainty that this voice is important, a necessity, and yet we cannot exactly make it out.**

Alberto Manguel *Black Water*

**I promise nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete must for that very reason infallibly be faulty.**

Herman Melville *Moby Dick*

Lamalera, a village located on the island of Lembata in Eastern Indonesia, is renowned both locally and internationally for its subsistence whale hunting practice. This ethnography explores experiences of everyday life in Lamalera emphasising recurring themes that surface in both academic and popular stories about the village: the sea, islands, journeying, disappearing, whales and whale hunting, *Moby Dick*, traditional wooden boats, origins, and exchange.

Contrary to many orthodox notions of anthropology grounded in an Hegelian philosophy of desire, experiences of fieldwork in Lamalera suggest, instead, a philosophy of interrelation. Particular relations involving Lamalerans, myself, ancestors, tourists, other researchers, boats and whales, as well as anthropological texts, myths and archetypes, adventure stories, fairytales, and everyday ritual indicate that the desire to be separate, whole and original is untenable.

Through reflexive engagement, this dissertation contributes to current social theories that explore the possibility of different desires and therefore different – relational – ways of being and knowing. The notion of relationality is not, of course, limited to contemporary practices; rather, this concept is inherent in many of the discipline's canonical writings. Thus classical anthropological texts, especially those of Lévi-Strauss on mythology, Turner on liminality, Eliade on origins, Mauss on gift exchange, and Durkheim on effervescence, are reread through theories which engage with notions of journeying, stories, Romanticism, mimesis, lack and excess. These anthropological theories are, in turn, considered in conjunction with: psychoanalytic notions of archetypes, the collective unconscious, and synchronicity; feminist critiques of the philosophy of desire; theories of post-colonialism and post-humanism; the phenomenological philosophies of material poetics and intertwining; as well as Buddhist notions of nothing.

Ultimately, however, it remains the minutiae of experiences of fieldwork in Lamalera that continue to inspire this ethnography and its thesis of the inherent relationality of anthropological ways of knowing and being.

# Ventures

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Opportunities to present aspects of this project to both public and academic audiences have helped shape my thinking about the presentation of ethnographic work. Exhibitions about Lamalera have appeared at *SOHO Galleries* Sydney, 1998, and the *Australian National Maritime Museum*, 1998-1999. In connection with the museum, I would particularly like to thank Jeffrey Mellefont whom we first approached with the idea of the exhibition, and Patricia Miles who curated it. His Excellency S. Wiryono, the former Indonesian Ambassador to Australia, opened the exhibition and expressed encouragement for this ethnography. Theresa Waryanti and Ratri Kumudawati, the editors of *Gamelan* magazine, have been most generous and enthusiastic.

Speaking invitations have provided the opportunity to present this project to varied audiences. These include: the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, 1998; the Indonesian Heritage Society, Jakarta, 1996; as well as, the Department of Indonesian 1993-1998, the Schools of Sociology 1998, and Science and Technology Studies, 1995, at the University of New South Wales. Work in progress papers were also presented at numerous conferences throughout Australasia from 1995 to 1999.

Aspects of several chapters were first published in the following journals and proceedings: *Discourse* Spring Vol.1 No.2 2000; *TAJA The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, April, Vol.11 No.1 2000; Lundberg and Owler (eds) *Food for Thought: New Directions in Sociology 5* Conference Proceedings, UNSW, Sydney 1999; and Greenhill, Fletcher and de la Fuente (eds) *Rethinking the Social* Conference Proceedings, Griffith University, Brisbane 1997.

Special thanks to the Alex Sharp Collection for permission to reproduce the Journey of the Ancestors map; to my mother-in-law Thérèse Weiner who organised the developing of the slides which we sent back to Australia and who offered excellent feedback on our photographic work; to Sonia Nitchell for undertaking library research while I was in the field; and to my PhD colleagues who have encouraged me to think: Kathryn Owler, Carmen Quinteros, Anna Bennett, Margaret Gibson, Maddie Oliver, and especially Ian Lennie who generously gave of his time to read and comment on this manuscript. So many friends have patiently listened to stories of Lamalera and viewed thousands of slides – I thank them for their continued interest.

A few people have remained particularly influential. Firstly, I hope I have been able to express some of the difficulty, intricacy and fruitfulness of my relationship with the

writings of Professor Robert Barnes.

Andrew Metcalfe supervised the writing of this ethnography. I remain immensely grateful for his patience, theoretical bravery and his tight criticisms of work in progress. Of all the things I have received from Andrew, his major gift has been the encouragement to sit with an idea and allow it to begin to speak. This remains both the most difficult and most rewarding experience of writing this dissertation.

Jean Weiner accompanied me to Lamalera in an official capacity as artist and research assistant, but he has also travelled with me intellectually and emotionally throughout this ethnography. Jean not only produced all the maps, illustrations, painting, and many of the photographs for this thesis, but has also tirelessly edited reports, papers, publications – and this dissertation. As always, he has both my gratitude and my admiration.

Lastly, I would like to thank the muses, one of whom is my father Stein Lundberg who, in death, has become more influential in my life.

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## Language Note

My first impulse was to tidy up the different spellings of Lamaleran words to make them conform throughout this ethnography. However, on reconsideration, I have felt it more satisfying to leave some of the mess. One of the things about spelling in Lamaleran is that it is fluid, with differences – even in place names and personal names – occurring frequently. Furthermore, as people are influenced by the rules of the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, spelling in Lamaleran also changes.

One of the distinguishing features of the Lamaleran dialect of the regional language of Lamaholot is the employment of the letter *f* instead of *w*, as used in the surrounding districts. Thus, the market village known throughout the island as Wulandoni becomes Fulandoni in Lamaleran. I have also chosen to leave extracts from written texts in their original form, not because of a desire for truth, but because people of Lamalera are not one person. Although education is highly regarded in the village and many people have achieved exceptionally high educational standing, it is also the case that not everyone speaks or writes Indonesian or Lamaleran as prescribed by linguists. In fact, not everyone can write, and a few people do not speak Indonesian. However, a combination of Lamaleran and Indonesian is most commonly spoken in daily situations. I mean no disrespect to people for using texts that are sometimes not written in 'proper' Indonesian, or for using the local spelling of Lamaleran Lamaholot. For me, this is part of Lamalera and is something I came to particularly enjoy. Similarly, the local practice of strongly accentuating the second last syllable of both Lamaholot and Indonesian words produces a distinctive and very beautiful singsong rhythm.

My use of only two diacritical marks conforms with usage in the village rather than as prescribed by linguistics. The acute accent above an *e* (*é*) indicates a stress and the full pronunciation of the letter. An *e* without an accent (*e*) is fully pronounced but without stress. As the rules of modern Indonesian require a vowel between all consonants, an *e* is inserted between consonants where previously none existed. However, this *e* is barely pronounced; for instance, the Indonesian term *prahu* (boat) becomes *perahu*. This Indonesian system of spelling is increasingly adopted in Lamalera. Thus the boat named Klulus is also spelt Kelulus, but the *e* is not pronounced. Similarly the boat Mnula Blolo is also spelt Menula Belolo, amongst other

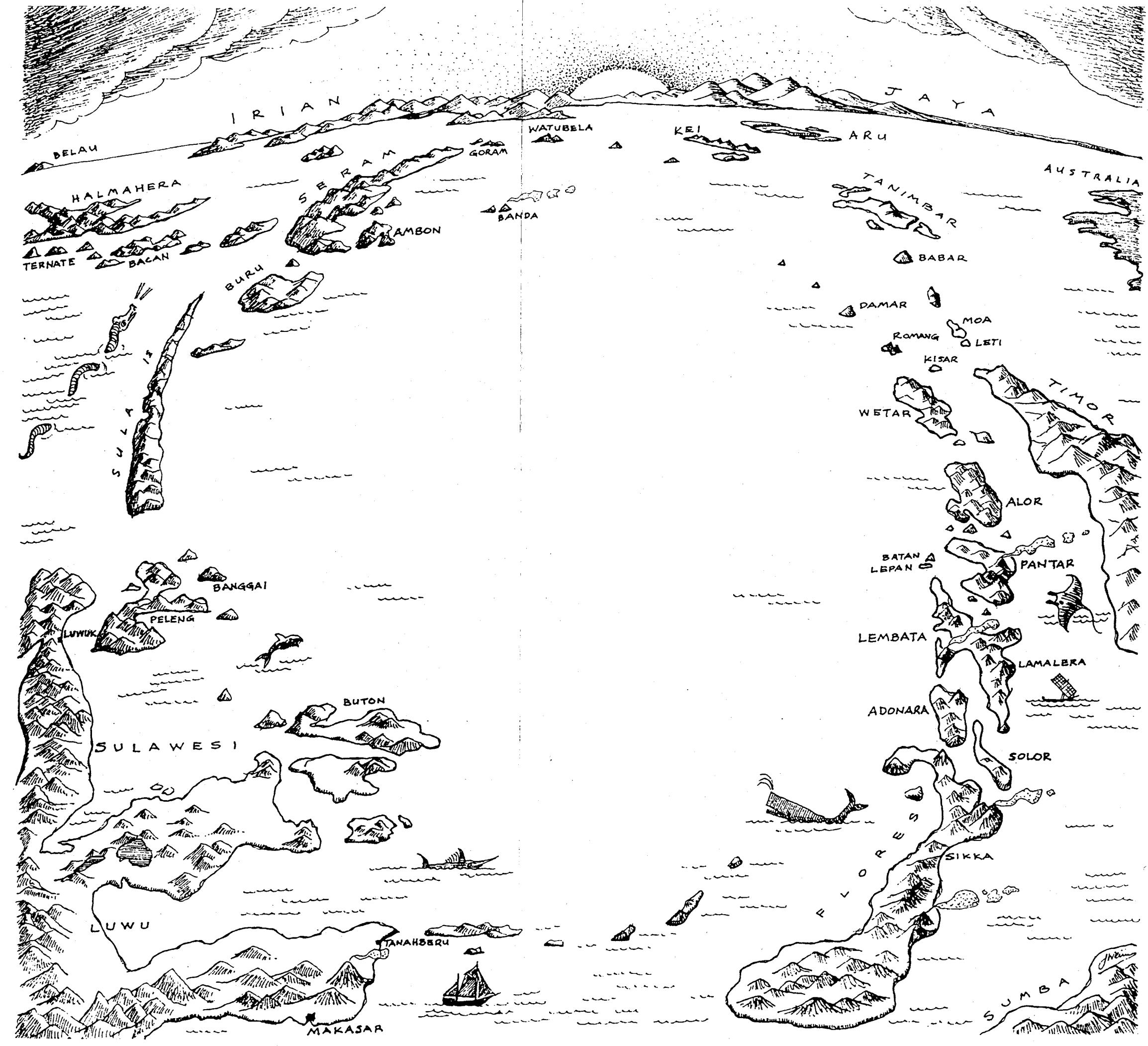
variations. Kelulus and Mnula Blolo are the spellings inscribed on the boats, so I use these spellings. Mnula Blolo means 'high stem post'. However, when I refer to stem posts I use the common spelling *menula*.

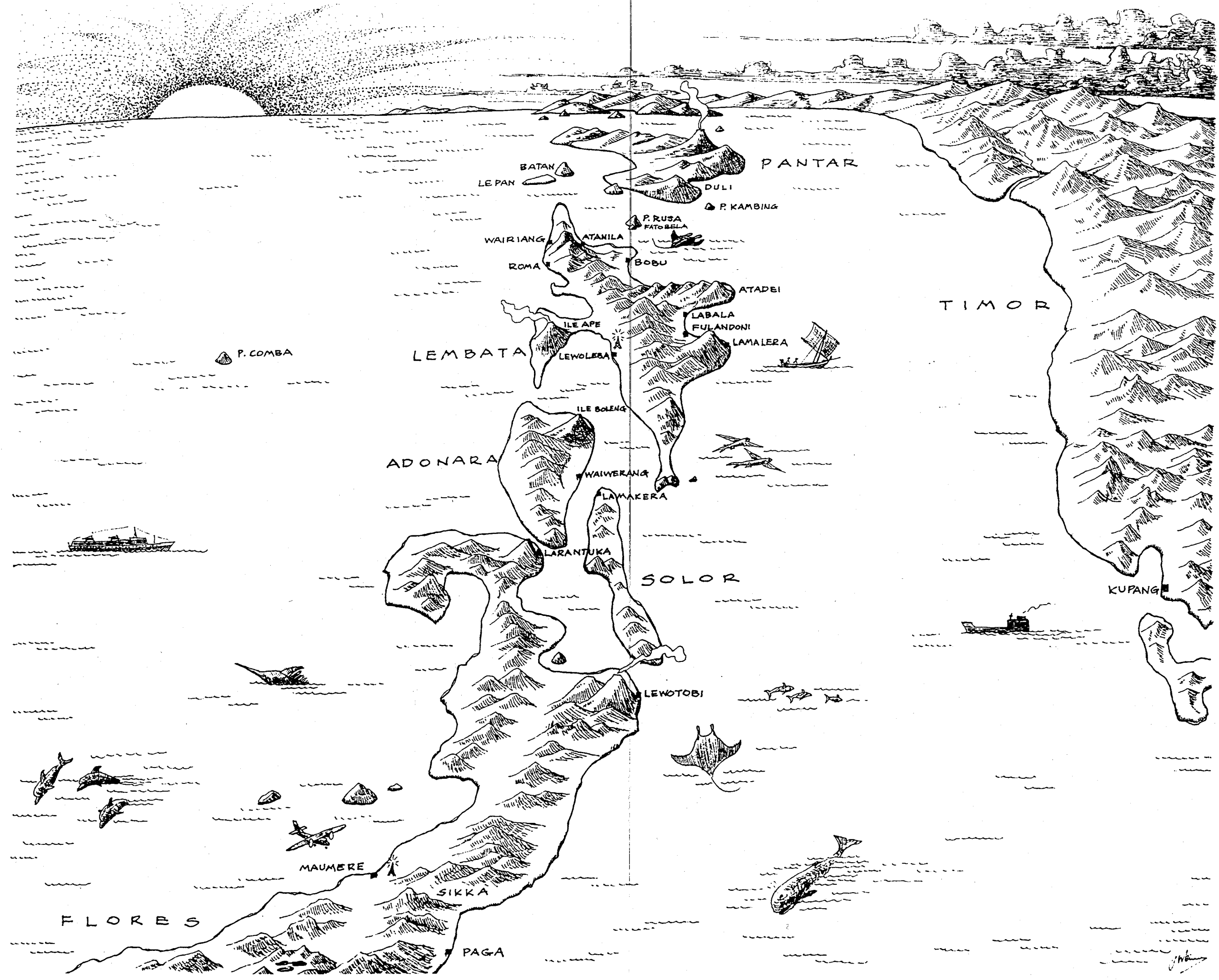
The second diacritical mark is the circumflex above the *a* (*â*), indicating a nasal sound comparable to the French *un* (one). Another pronunciation in Lamaleran is the *n* or *ng* sound following vowels at the end of certain words. Thus, the market place Fulâ Doni (market at Doni) becomes Fulandoni, the clan name Blikolollo becomes the family name Blikololong, and the section of the village Futu Lolo (point on high) becomes Futunlolo or Futunglolo.

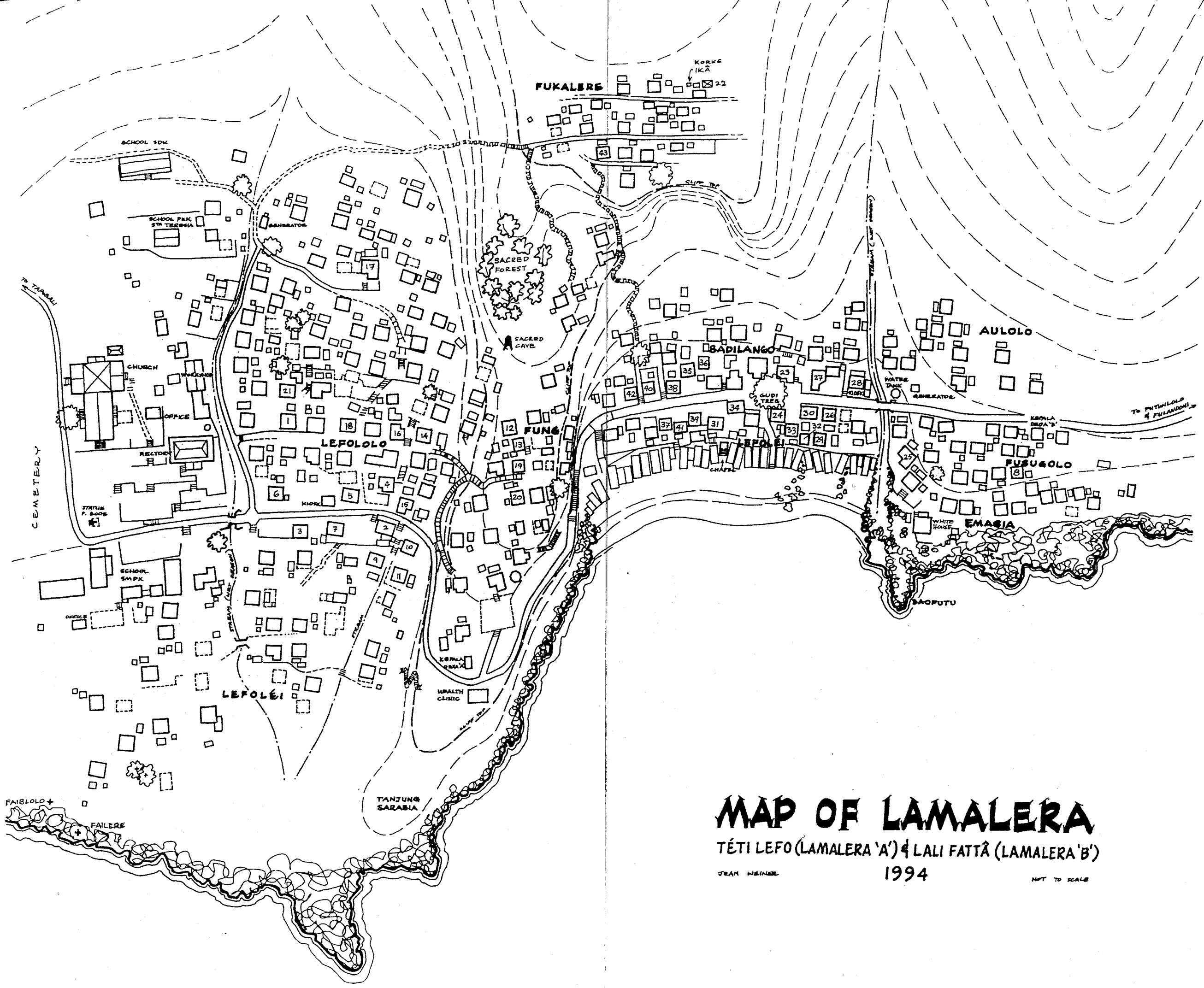
Lengths of vowel sounds in words are important. The differences in pronunciation and meaning are often, but not always nor consistently, indicated by the doubling of the following consonant which has the function of adding length to the sound of the preceding vowel. I have tried to follow this practice where the word has been spelt for me in this way; however, due to the Indonesian rule of only single consonants, doubling of consonants is becoming less common. Nevertheless, the variation is evident in pronunciation of words and therefore the different meaning of the word is understood. For example, the word *fattâ* (shore) is pronounced with a long *a* in the middle of the word and a nasal *â* at the end, while the term *fata* (maize) has a short pronunciation of the middle *a*, and no nasalisation of the final *a*. Similarly the word *olle* (yard or fence) has a long *o* at the front and a stressed *e* at the end, while the term *olé* (east current) has a short *o* at the beginning and an emphasised *e* at the end of the word. Thus, the clan name Oléonâ is derived from the words *olé* and *onâ* (inside, both physically or emotionally), and refers to the origin story of this clan when their ancestor was found by the boat Nara Ténâ floating in the Savu sea.

Lamaleran words regularly had to be spelt out or laboriously written down for me; thus I feel the use of the local spelling embodies some of the time and effort various people put towards the production of this ethnography. However, this spelling should not be read as the proper or original spelling – rather just one of a couple of variations. The late Professor Gregorius Keraf (clan Lamakera), of the University of Indonesia, carried out an extensive study of the Lamaleran dialect of the Lamaholot language for his doctoral dissertation. See Keraf (1978).









# MAP OF LAMALERA

TÉTI LEFO (LAMALERA 'A') & LALI FATTÂ (LAMALERA 'B')

JEAN WEINER

1994

NOT TO SCALE

Juliana

JAFÁ TÊNÂ

Pises

TÊNÂ ÂNÂ

KEBAKO PUKÂ

KELULUS

KENA PUKÂ

SILI TÊNÂ

DOLU TÊNÂ

HORO TÊNÂ

SOGÉ TÊNÂ

HOLO SAPANG

TETI HERI

KOPPO PAKER

NARA TÊNÂ

FELMIAA

KAPELA SANTU PETRUS

BUI PUKÂ

SIKA TÊNÂ

DEMO SAPANG

BOLI SAPANG

KEBÉLA TÊNÂ

lao

MUKO TÊNÂ

MNULA BLOLO

NOTA TÊNÂ

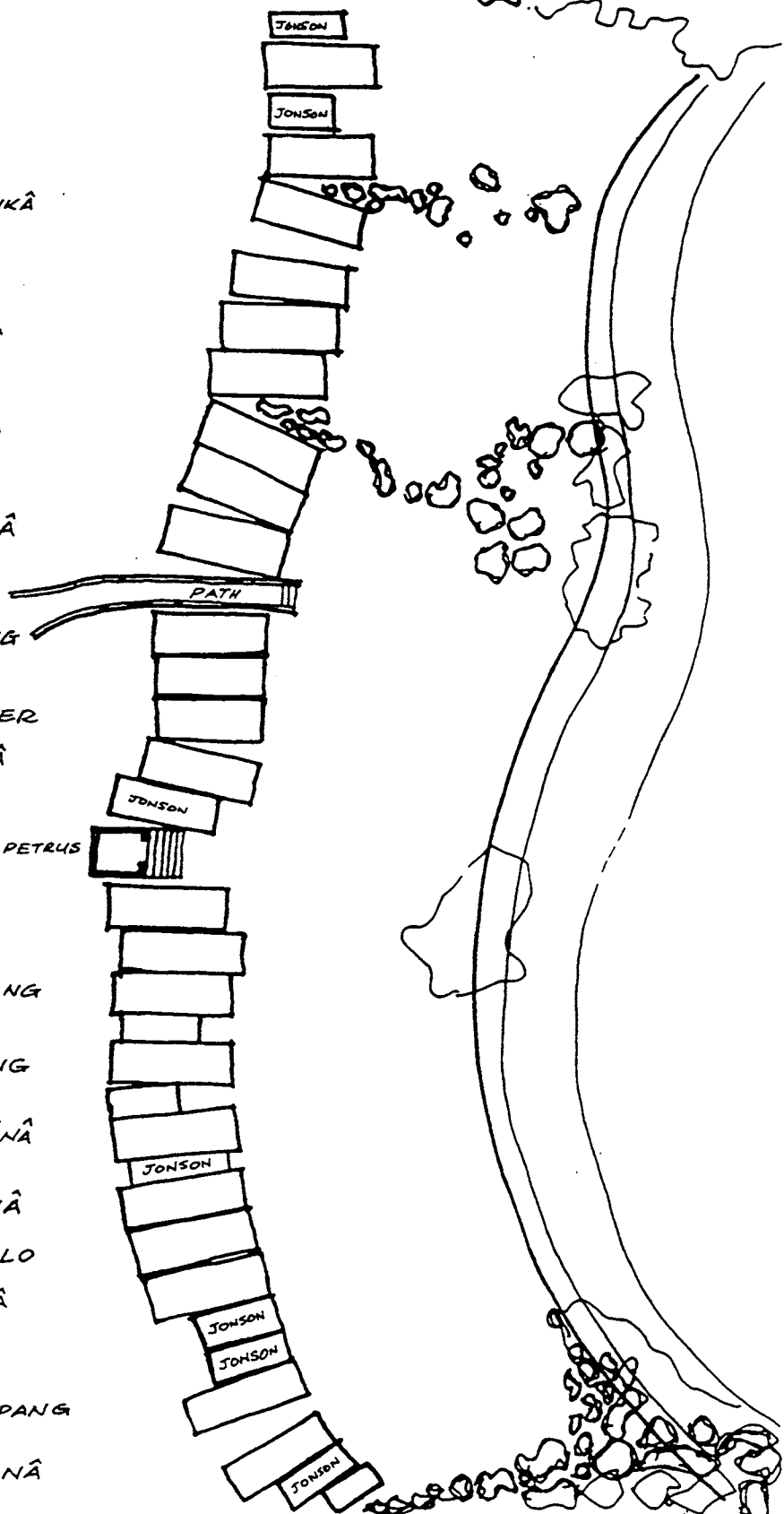
Arnoldus

Filana

PRASO SAPANG

BAKA TÊNÂ

Roni



## Téti Lefo

Clan	Lango Belâ	Téna
Tufaonâ		
1	Arakié Langu (Libu Langu)	Baka Ténâ
Blikolollo		
2	Korohama Langu <i>Téti Nama Papâ</i>	Bui Pukâ (Bluâ Lolo, Ténâ Gelé)
3	Lera Langu <i>Lali Nama Papâ</i>	Demo Sapang (Boko Lollo)
Lefotukâ		
4	Dasi Langu	Kebéla Ténâ (Ténâ Blâ)
5	Kedâ Langu	
6	Lima Langu	
7	Langu Béra Onâ	
8	Ata Gorâ	
Lamanudek		
9	Lamanudek Langu (Juâ Langu)	Notâ Ténâ (Dato Ténâ) (Muri Ténâ, Juâ Ténâ)
Tanakrofa		
10	Haga Langu (called Langu Raé)	
11	Labé Langu (called Langu Lau)	
Lélaonâ		
12	Sinu Langu	Praso Sapang (Olé Mao, Léla Sapang, Durâ Ténâ)
13	Blaké Langu	
Lamakera (A)		
14	Sinu Langu	(Blida Ténâ, Kora Kora)
15	Badi Langu	Menula Biolo (previously called Sollé Ténâ)
16	Lafâ Langu	
17	Belafa Langu (c.1971)	
Atakéi		
18	Tero Langu	Muko Ténâ (Mola Sapang)
Ebâonâ		
19	Dâé Langu	
20	Guma Langu (Sita Langu)	
Atafolo		
21	Dato Langu	

*Lali Fattâ*

Clan	Lango Bélâ	Téna
Langofujjo		
	22 Langofujjo	
Bataonâ		
	23 Kelaké Langu	Ténâ Ânâ (Napa Ténâ)
	24 Kifa Langu	Sili Ténâ (Hena Ténâ)
		Holo Sapang (léo stored in a house)
		Horo Ténâ (léo stored in house 'Basa')
	25 Jafa Langu	Jafa Ténâ
	26 Ola Langu (Lamanudek)	Kebako Pukâ
Bedionâ		
	27 Mikku Langu	Kena Pukâ
	28 Muri Langu	Kelulus
Batafo		
	29 Kéda Langu	(Fuka Pukâ)
	30 Kaja Langu	Teti Heri
Sulaonâ		
	31 Langu Sulaonâ	Sika Ténâ
	32 Langu Kikoonâ	Dolu Ténâ
Lefolêi		(Ténâ Lefolêi)
	33 Lefolêi Langu	
Lamakera (B)		
	34 Prafi Langu	Nara Ténâ (Prafi Ténâ)
		(Blida Ténâ) (léo stored in house 'Sukahama')
Lamaniffa		
	35 Fengi Langu	(Boli Paker, Kefaka Futu)
	36 Pai Langu	(Sia Apu, previously called, Ténâ Tapoonâ)
Oléonâ		
	37 Oléonâ Langu	Koppo Paker
Tapoonâ		
	38 Musi Langu	Sogé Ténâ
	39 Guna Langu	(Geléko Ténâ, previously called Mana Ténâ)
	40 Solo Langu	
	41 Manâ Langu	
Harionâ		
	42 Harionâ Langu	Boli Sapang
	43 Kepupo Langu (c.1993)	

## Position of Téná along the Beach

*From Bao Futu (white house) towards Futu Sarabia (1994-95)*

Téná	Clan	Lango Bélâ
Jafa Ténâ	Bataonâ	Jafa Langu
Ténâ Âná	Bataonâ	Kelaké Langu
Kebako Pukâ	Bataonâ	Ola Langu (originally Lamanudek)
Kelulus	Bedionâ	Muri Langu
Kena Pukâ	Bedionâ	Mikku Langu
Sili Ténâ	Bataonâ	Kifa Langu
Dolu Ténâ	Sulaonâ	Langu Kikoonâ
Horo Ténâ	Bataonâ	Kifa Langu ( <i>léo</i> stored in house 'Basa')
Sogé Ténâ	Tapoonâ	Ado Langu
Holo Sapang	Bataonâ	Kifa Langu ( <i>léo</i> stored in a house)
Teti Heri	Batafo	Kaja Langu
Koppo Paker	Oléonâ	Oléonâ Langu
Nara Ténâ	Lamakera	Prafi Langu
<i>Kapela Santu Petrus</i>	<i>(Chapel of St. Peter)</i>	<i>Site of Ikâ Kotâ</i>
Bui Pukâ	Blikolollo	Korohama Langu (Téti Nama Papâ)
Sika Ténâ	Sulaonâ	Langu Sulaonâ
Demo Sapang	Blikolollo	Lera Langu (Lali Nama Papâ)
Boli Sapang	Harionâ	Harionâ Langu
Kebéla Ténâ	Lefotukâ	Lima Langu
Muko Ténâ	Atakéi	Tero Langu
Mnula Blolo	Lamakera	Badi Langu
Notâ Ténâ	Lamanudek	Lamanudek Langu
Praso Sapang	Lélaonâ	Sinu Langu
Baka Ténâ	Tufaonâ	Arakié Langu

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# *Bapa Kolu Bedionâ*

Jean Weiner 1996, acrylic on canvas 209x140cm

Like the Orientalist art that it mimics, the painting that appears as the frontispiece to this ethnography is done in a realist style. It depicts the single statuesque figure of a man with bare arms and chest, a fabric of cloth swathed around his head, standing steadfastly on board an old wooden boat surrounded by sea and a vast sky of billowing clouds.

At first glance it appears that this painting fixes its subject, objectified by the viewer's gaze into a motionless pose. Yet, the details of this scene disrupt this initial reading. Mr Kolu Beding (of the clan Bedionâ) stands at the stern of a Lamaleran whaling boat, the tiller resting in one arm, while his free hand is raised to shield his eyes from the sun as he gazes out to sea. He appears to be looking for, or at, something – but that thing remains beyond our view. Immediately I am caught up in a desire to follow his gaze and venture off beyond the canvas in search of that elusive (no)thing.

Then I notice on Bapa Kolu's left wrist a bright blue digital watch. A piece of technology with which to measure time. Time! Surely this romantic scene is out of time – a scene that time forgot. Instantly the watch interrupts the illusion of the traditional as some motionless remnant of the past. The watch worries.

The watch is not the only disruptive object of this painting. The medallion on Bapa Kolu Beding's chest is a plastic cameo of Jesus Christ. Bapa Kolu is a practising Catholic. And then, at the bottom of the painting, there is a blue plastic container in the hull of the boat. I wonder why it is in the boat, and in this painting: whether it is full or empty, and if full, full of what – petrol, water? The painting doesn't say. This painting that, in its realist mode, looks as if it reveals through this scene the truth of Lamalera is not revealing; rather it veils and seduces.

The painting is sensuous. It beckons me to reach forward and touch the texture of the wood of the tiller that is cradled in the hollow of Bapa Kolu's arm, his hand elegantly draped across the handle. Now I notice that the pose of Bapa Kolu is not simply



heroically masculine, it is also disturbingly feminine. Similarly the sea reminds me of the fluidity of rhythmic motion which seems so feminine, but also of the adventure and pursuit associated with a masculine activity. And there, in the soft swirls of colour in those dramatic clouds, is that possibly the snout of a sperm whale looming above Bapa Kolu's head? But perhaps I imagine things.

I return my gaze to the figure, and as I study it, its realism appears photographic. I wonder if this painting is taken from a photograph, and I speculate upon the prospect of this painting of a photograph that has itself been photographed in order to be scanned into a computer and printed out so that it can appear as the frontispiece to this dissertation. All this reproduction of reproduction disturbs me, for it suspends the very notion of reality that this painting pretends to offer. I can no longer trust what is real or fake, original or copy.

And I contemplate how to read an ethnography that begins with a painting that is so full of false leads and double messages, where reality becomes fiction and fiction reality; where the land of Lamalera, which seems to offer a notion of origin and stability, becomes Lamalera-land.

SEA

---

# Seduction of a *P*assage

**Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise  
and fall and fall and rise again.**

**‘And in me too the wave rises. It swells, it arches  
its back. I am aware once more of a new desire’.**

Virginia Woolf *The Waves*

## *Lamalera*

Like characters out of *Moby Dick*, the people who live in this village on the south coast of Lembata still hunt whales using small boats. There's the added drama of a harpooner who leaps from the boat on to the back of the whale and plunges his harpoon deep into its flesh. The whaling season is limited to those months of the year from about May to October when the seas aren't too rough. Even then, the whales are infrequent and unpredictable....

Only a few whales a year are caught now, perhaps 20 to 25, since there aren't so many around any more. Declining whale numbers have also meant that quite a few young men have left the village to seek work elsewhere, and there's a possibility that the whale-hunting skills will decline. Most whales caught are sperm whales though occasionally smaller pilot whales are taken. When whales are scarce the villagers harpoon sharks, manta rays and dolphins....

The whaling boats are made entirely of wood with wooden pegs instead of nails. Each vessel carries a mast and a sail made of palm leaves, but these are lowered during the hunt when the men row furiously to overtake the whale. There's usually a crew of about 15 and as the gap between the boat and the whale narrows, the harpooner takes the three-metre long harpoon, which is attached by a long coil of rope to the frame of the boat, leaps on to the back of the whale and plunges in the harpoon. An injured whale will try to dive, dragging the boat with it, but cannot escape since it has to resurface to breathe.

The whale meat is shared out by traditional dictates. The heads go to two families of original landowners – a custom observed, it is said, since the 15th century. Later settlers from Maluku and Sulawesi were allowed to stay and hunt whales only on condition that the head of each whale be given to the two families.... Most of the whale meat is dried in the sun. The blubber is melted to make fuel for oil lamps. Not all the meat is used in the village – some is traded with the mountain villages for fruit and vegetables.

This guidebook entry goes on to outline the difficulties of getting to the village and finding accommodation. It concludes the entry on Lamalera thus:

If you're worried about the reaction of village people on distant islands, the wariness works both ways; if you've ever been greeted by a machete-carrying *kepala desa* you'll realise that a large, hairy foreigner isn't the most daunting creature that could wander into an Indonesian village. You'll endear yourself to them if you cultivate that dehydrated, heat-stroked, couldn't-lift-a-finger-to-harm-a-gecko appearance – you'll soon be in someone's house gulping down water, surrounded by dozens of wide-eyed children. (Cummings et al. 1990: 638-639)

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**I** was seduced by this passage. Many years before I dared dream of undergoing the rite of passage of anthropology, I experienced Lamalera as a tourist reading the Lonely Planet guidebook, planning a journey. Thus, my relationship with Lamalera is not straightforwardly as an anthropologist, for Lamalera is producing me as an anthropologist even as I am simultaneously engaged in producing Lamalera and anthropology through the ritual of this ethnographic dissertation. In turn, the markers who read this dissertation are likewise involved in this process.

To proceed from the guidebook quotation is to introduce the central thesis of this ethnography: that life is lived, always and already, in relation. The quotation demonstrates that Lamalera is not simply a place, geographically located, separate and which pre-exists relations, but is a space both lived and living, a 'practised place' – a space that is lived and alive in our stories as well as our bodies (de Certeau 1984:117; Bachelard 1969:15, 34-35). Stories, myths, rituals and artefacts are involved in producing Lamalera, and anthropology, in their very enactment. Such texts may appear in a variety of forms: written and verbal, artefact and practice, holy and secular, fact and fiction. However, this is not to imply that such texts produce a thing. Not at all. Texts exist in relation. In the here and now of their constant becoming, in their performance – even in a solitary enactment – these texts are originating. They are therefore origin stories. But this is not to speak of an origin that lies in the distant past. Origin is present.

I am seduced by the guidebook quotation and other texts of Lamalera because in them I feel deeper stories that simultaneously speak of our very being. These tales are not simply about who we are; they are more profoundly about how we exist in the world. In texts of Lamalera I experience fleeting reminders of these deeper, sacred stories, but because these stories live in our very bodies, allowing ourselves to feel at home in a sacred text (Crites 1989:69-71), we cannot recognise the sacred from an external viewpoint. The discipline of anthropology, likewise, offers no external perspective. Instead, the everyday practices of anthropology constantly reveal the complexities of relation. As Lévi-Strauss was led to theorise through his studies of mythology, it is not possible to tell if our thoughts find expression through stories or if stories express themselves through us (see 1969:4, 13, 12). Similarly theorists of space also suggest that space 'speaks' us. Merleau-Ponty refers to this notion of lived space as anthropological space: 'space is existential' and 'existence is spatial' (1962:293; also de Certeau 1984:117).

To write about my experiences of the space of Lamalera is to acknowledge that I cannot step outside the relations of this text. I can only recognise sacred themes in

texts of Lamalera, only feel the lure of the passage from the Lonely Planet guidebook, because I am not outside of, but completely entwined in, this relation.

The guidebook entry that first seduced me so many years ago has revealed themes that are repeated in my own experiences of Lamalera as well as being present in other texts about the village. I have begun to realise that these tales that resonate with me so strongly regarding Lamalera are not limited to this site but are archetypal themes that reverberate across generations and across cultures. This ethnography, even without my being conscious of the fact, has all along been inspired by these archetypes.

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The passage from the guidebook begins with the memorable line: 'Like characters out of *Moby Dick*'. With these words it establishes that the unique practices to be found in Lamalera resonate with a story from a novel. But it is not simply that Lamalerans are mere characters and that the guidebook is an example of Orientalist discourse. This opening line also hints of a relation – albeit a fragile one – where each story brings the other to life.

*Moby Dick* is a complex tale that not only tells of an heroic whaling adventure, but also speaks of the Romantic quest to journey into the unknown to hunt down that elusive beast that dwells in the sea. The words of the guidebook cause this sacred story to come alive again through Lamalera, for here 'people...still hunt whales using small boats.' The 'added drama' that makes the Lamaleran practice so powerfully evocative is that the harpooner 'leaps from the boat on to the back of the whale and plunges his harpoon deep into its flesh.' The hero still does battle with a marine monster. The hunter is once more vulnerable to the great jaws of the whale, even as the whale is exposed to the strike of the harpooner's blade.

Even though fishermen of Lamalera 'still' hunt whales, according to the guidebook, it is uncertain how much longer this practice can continue, for 'only a few whales a year are caught now'. Due to 'declining whale numbers', traditions, like species, are disappearing. Similarly, people of Lamalera are themselves under threat for already 'quite a few young men have left the village', and there is the possibility that the 'whale-hunting skills will decline'. While the quotation speaks of disappearing species, traditions and culture, it simultaneously evokes a fear of being lost. This sense of a loss of self-

certainty is, moreover, heightened by the positioning of whales and boats along with people, as central characters in this drama, implying that this tale is not solely about humans.

In the quotation it can be seen that the whale is pivotal to this story. It is the prize of this hunt, the primary species of whale sought being the sperm whale – like *Moby Dick*. The sperm whale therefore becomes the most important of the whales, yet all whales have a higher status over other sea animals, for it is only ‘when whales are scarce’ that ‘the villagers harpoon [whale] sharks,<sup>1</sup> manta rays and dolphins’. But the whale, through the persistence of its recurring image, always suggests something more, some deeper story evoked by this deep diving cetacean.

It is evident that the whale, and its hunt, is also intimately connected with the whaling boats, and this ancient style of boat enables the imagining of Lamalera as a traditional whaling community: ‘The whaling boats are made entirely of wood’; they use ‘wooden pegs instead of nails.’ Yet these boats also set the scene for this romantic adventure, for ‘each vessel carries a mast and a sail’, and the sail is ‘made of palm leaves’. This description conjures up all those images of traditional island craft of the southern archipelagoes, all the romance of the south seas: islands, palm trees, balmy nights.

But this reverie is abruptly interrupted as I read that ‘during the hunt the men row furiously to overtake the whale’. Suddenly I feel the pace of my reading change; I read on furiously, dragged along by this passage. ‘As the gap between the boat and the whale narrows, the harpooner takes the three-metre long harpoon, which is attached by a long coil of rope to the frame of the boat, leaps on to the back of the whale and plunges in the harpoon.’ Reminiscent of the scene in the film of *Moby Dick* where Ahab is tied to the whale,<sup>2</sup> here the guidebook description, also through a harpoon rope, hints of the animist ties that entwine whales, hunters and artefacts in relation – how each is implicated in the other.

The quotation continues: ‘An injured whale will try to dive, dragging the boat with it, but cannot escape since it has to resurface to breathe.’ As these words indicate, there is a

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<sup>1</sup> Although whale sharks or basking sharks are commonly caught in the waters around Lamalera, other species of shark are rare as these animals continue to be heavily fished by boats from Flores and by commercial fishing ships from other countries.

<sup>2</sup> John Huston [director] 1956. In Melville’s book, it is Fedallah who is tied to the whale through the harpoon rope (1986: 679). However, the scene on pages 668-669 tells of many men and boats and ropes entwined with *Moby Dick*. Finally Ahab threatens to let himself be ‘towed to pieces’ by being tied to the whale. He hurls the harpoon and the line wraps itself around his neck dragging him into the depths of the sea as *Moby Dick* dives (1986:684).

very real danger of losing control. As a reader, I, too, am caught up in this tale and cannot maintain the distance of a dispassionate observer. Boats carry me off course, whales engulf me.

Even as raw flesh, the whale demonstrates the strength of its relations with humans. The carcass maintains the traditions that make this village unique; it acts to originate Lamalera through the mundane practices of the division of the catch and exchange. The guidebook states that the 'whale meat is shared out by traditional dictates' while 'the heads go to two families of original landowners – custom observed, it is said, since the 15th century.' Thus flesh grounds the village and identifies the relationship between original inhabitants and later settlers. Whale meat, and by extension the whale, is the economic basis of this village and the currency which not only binds together the different clans of Lamalera, but connects Lamalera to other villages through interrelations of exchange. 'Most of the whale meat is dried in the sun. The blubber is melted to make fuel for oil lamps. Not all the meat is used in the village – some is traded with the mountain villages for fruit and vegetables.' So through this exchange of whale flesh, the origin journeys of the ancestors are reborn in the everyday practices of their descendants (Eliade 1989).

The guidebook continues with this adventure story, moving from ancient voyages of the ancestors to modern travels of tourists. Here the quotation indicates that this modern voyage is one fraught with dangers, hardships and uncertainty. It hints of a journey to a land far away and lost in time, to a place both strange and exotic. The purpose of the guidebook is, of course, to lead us through this strangeness, to make it familiar. 'If you're worried about the reaction of village people on distant islands', the quotation states – thus evoking in the reader the fear of the unknown other – maybe you should worry less for 'the wariness works both ways'.

And yet I wonder if the excerpt actually speaks of a two way relation. The example used to demonstrate this wariness doesn't describe the villagers' wariness. It remains only ours: 'if you've ever been greeted by a machete-carrying *kepala desa*', the guidebook declares, 'you'll realise that a large, hairy foreigner isn't the most daunting creature that could wander into an Indonesian village.' Surely this is to speak of our fear, the writer's and the readers' fear, a fear conjured up in the whole notion of the primitive and the bogey man (a term derived from *Bugis*, the name of a tribe of seafarers from Sulawesi). It is this fear which is conquered through the guidebook when it demonstrates that the danger is transcended through experience – the experience of the guidebook writer whose words imply that he, himself, has been

greeted by a machete-carrying *kepala desa*. At first glance, if the reader doesn't know that the term *kepala desa* simply means 'village head', it would indeed appear that this is someone, or something, to be wary of. Yet a village head with a machete is not necessarily dangerous. In most cases, a machete in a village is a tool, not a weapon. In the end, the words of the guidebook, rather than allaying a fear of the other, incite this passion.

However, with the experience gained from the guidebook, the traveller can employ techniques to overcome foreignness, and thus their fear. The trick is to 'endear yourself to them', the method being to 'cultivate that dehydrated, heat-stroked, couldn't-lift-a-finger-to-harm-a-gecko appearance'. With this technique you're guaranteed to be welcome, in fact 'you'll soon be in someone's house gulping down water'. With *that* appearance you will tame the savage to be welcomed and marvelled at by the innocent savage, for you'll be 'surrounded by dozens of wide-eyed children'.

Here the guidebook entry again demonstrates the complexity of its tale, for it is apparent that this quotation addresses a community of Lonely Planet travellers who somehow already know this journey even as they set out into the unknown. It is assumed that the reader knows how to cultivate *that* look. At the same time though, the story consistently hints of the risks involved in this passage, and suggests that the journey may sail off course. In travelling to Lamalera you risk losing your way. The instructions on how to get to the village make the reader aware that the voyage is dangerous. And yet these warnings likewise indicate that to deviate from the passage also offers the potential for other experiences.

While the quotation recognises this potential to experience otherness and ourselves differently, the very presence of guidebooks indicates our desire for certainty and sameness. This is the desire to tame the unknown – to know Lamalera and thereby know self. The notion of the innocent childlike native that is conjured up in the guidebook entry thus suggests that Lamalera exists in a magical place, in a time of innocence – before the fall. Lamalera is pure and therefore original, even if Lamalerans are like characters out of *Moby Dick*. In the land of Lamalera, guidebook readers have the chance to find origins.

This excerpt, from beginning to end, repeatedly tells a story I seem always to be remembering. Even in such a condensed form, the quotation speaks so eloquently of a quest, of heroic adventure, of a rite of passage – to find self. Yet, at the same time, this passage also tells a tale of misadventure, of losing the way and never returning. And



somewhere, in my very being, I already feel this archetypal tale which is endlessly repeated in stories of Lamalera. Once again, there is awakened in me the lust to roam the seas in the wake of this story.

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The title of this chapter, *Seduction of a Passage*, refers to the passage from the Lonely Planet guidebook which first drew me to Lamalera so many years ago. It also suggests the passage of a journey, although there is always – whether travelling the line of a story or relating the storyline of a journey – the sneaking suspicion that this voyage is forever being led astray.

Stories, in fact, cannot tolerate flowing in sequential order. Even this prefatory chapter, which pre-positions the chapters that follow, interrupts the passage of the story, for it pre-empts the themes of the stories to come, just as the Lonely Planet guidebook pre-positioned Lamalera. It is as if this chapter's purpose, like that of a preposition, is only to hint toward something which is to come; as if it is nothing in itself, merely 'empty, white, transparent' and 'devoid of all stability' (Serres 1995:129). This pre-positioning thus makes it impossible to know if we move forward in a journey or if we are always recognising something we meet with. However, the disruption of the flow of a story is not limited to the strange order of chapters. The line of the text itself is never straightforward. Passages of words jump out demanding to be read again for their touching beauty. We reread, and skim and skip. And we read as we look up from the page, losing ourselves in reverie (Barthes 1986:29; Bachelard 1969:14). Even the very words of a story wander; words cannot stand still, for metaphors are always present in the space of words, enabling us to travel in a story while also allowing us to write about journeys. Metaphors hold us, they comfort us, making us feel at home as they carry us off into strange uncharted seas. As Balzac was led to comment, there 'are mysteries buried in every human word' (quoted in Bachelard 1983:188). However, this mystery is not of the word itself but rather emanates through the interplay of signs and meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1964a:42).

It is not just words and their metaphoric wanderings that allow for this mystery. The mystery likewise lies in the relation of ink on paper. As my eyes skim across the surface of the page, I think I follow the black line of text, and yet the vast sea of white is always there supporting the inky marks. It is this relation between the islands of black

on the sea of white which enables me to read. The white allows room to make the leap between marks and meanings. Thus this space is not blank, but is the very stuff, the substance of potential. This nothingness is, in fact, the presence of all the things that have yet to be written (Metcalf forthcoming).

In the processes of writing, of scribing ink on the page, we experience the mystery of relationality. It is not that words precede the marks and spaces of the page; words emerge in the writing, with ink and paper. The whiteness of the page is both awesome and awful, precisely because it offers this space in which to both wonder and wander.

However, it is this same space which is consistently denied in the quest for stable meanings. Instead of being filled with the wonder of transitional spaces as life-giving, we fear gaps and ruptures, imagining them as obscene lapses from the flawlessness of completion (Metcalf forthcoming). So accustomed are we to our endless attempts at hiding these gaps that Catherine Clément, in writing of this fear, conjures up the homely image of philosophers who spend their time plugging up holes with the hems of their dressing gowns (1994:5). This same desire for perfection and completion is evident in travel stories where, in the quest for a triumphant return, fissures are nimbly traversed. But journeys, like stories, are full of lapses; travellers become bewildered in the vast seas of experience, no longer knowing where they are, or where they are going. The actual experience of this journey happens in a dreamlike space where some moments seem to last for days, while some days flick by in the wink of an eye. But this experience must be forgotten in order to tell the storyline of a journey.

Throughout the book *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, Julian Barnes calls forth these associations between writing and roving and being on the sea. His words tell of a journey full of uncertainty:

All novelists know their art proceeds by indirection. When tempted by didacticism, the writer should imagine a spruce sea-captain eyeing the storm ahead, bustling from instrument to instrument in a catherine wheel of gold braid, expelling crisp orders down the speaking tube. But there is nobody below decks; the engine-room was never installed, and the rudder broke off centuries ago. The captain may put on a very good act, convincing not just himself but even some of the passengers; though whether their floating world will come through depends not on him but on the mad winds and sullen tides, the icebergs and the sudden crusts of reef. (1990: 227)

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In a volume of the STA (Student Travel Association) travel magazine *Escape*, I am startled by an advertisement for Lonely Planet Publications which depicts so graphically what I already know but can never find the words to express. The advertisement simply states: 'travel = παζζιον' (1997:6-7). The accompanying image to this claim that travel is passionate is a montage comprising a ceramic child Jesus, arms uplifted and outstretched, surrounded by a radiating halo of fruits. This montage doesn't just depict any passion; this is the passion of Christ.

Although this advertisement is very alluring, and if, as it invites me to ponder, travel is passion, I wonder how it is also an escape – as the title of the magazine suggests it to be. Passion evokes a desire that simultaneously speaks of seduction. A desire that holds me in its embrace. Passion is about a relation. It is about being so intricately entwined in relation that there is no escape. If travel is passion, it is not, ultimately, an escape.<sup>3</sup> As the boat sets off from the shore to venture into the unknown, I am filled with a sense of freedom, but this is not an escape from relations, for it is the sea that holds me, allowing the boat to travel its currents. In order to journey I must trust in this relation with the sea. This is not an escape but rather a giving over.

And yet, there *is* a sense in which the passion of travel speaks of escape. In losing self, in being in relation, self-certainty is momentarily escaped from. We find ourselves letting go. This is to be reminded of the ruptures in the journey, how we lose our way and begin to become different to self through the experience of the other. This loss of self, though, is both joyous and terrifying.

Passion is also about bliss and suffering. The Passion of Christ is about his suffering. Likewise, in the rite of passage of anthropology's signature practice of fieldwork – as in the rites that anthropologists study – there is an inherent sense of the necessity of undergoing a hardship, of suffering. It is in this liminal state, a space at once terrifying and extraordinary, that the initiate begins to become different to self. In this ecstatic state the neophyte becomes not self, and in letting go, is transformed. In the words of Catherine Clément: 'Human jouissance requires that one lose one's head.' The rapturous embrace of passion, in which I feel so alive, requires that I lose myself. And in this moment, 'the mooring ropes that hold fast the subject...are cast off at last' (1994:15).

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3 Laurence Dubois, in a paper that explores the desire in travel and anthropology, also refers to the inescapability of travel. In his analysis 'the places toward which one goes, seeking escape, have already been written upon' (1995:309). Kathleen Stewart likewise speaks of the impossibility of escape and evokes the excesses of ruin and abandonment (1996:22).

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This ethnography begins with the sea. Not because this is where I alone choose to start, but it seems to me that the sea in some way also chose this. The sea suggests beginnings, a setting out, a venture into the unknown. And yet, although the sea speaks of beginnings, its own beginning remains elusive, the seashore forever moving and permeable. The beginnings of this ethnography also remain indefinable. It is impossible to say whether this dissertation begins here in this prefatory chapter, or perhaps with the entry from the Lonely Planet guidebook, or in Lamalera. Or maybe before, somewhere in the mists of history – Lamalera's, mine, or both. I could further ponder histories as those of parents and ancestors and their beginnings, I could ponder back to the waters of life. Then again, I can also imagine the world calling itself forth in its own ontogenesis. Calling life from the sea, calling forth ancestors, parents, Lamalera, me – this thesis (Merleau-Ponty 1968:137). Rather than beginning somewhere in the past, I now see this ethnography waiting to be born by readers, by a repetition yet to come. In this way I can imagine a different desire, not just a nostalgic desire to hunt down origins, but a passivity, a waiting – a desire that gives over to seduction. To be carried away on the sea: I find this thought so full of reverie. The sea speaks of endless possibilities, and hints of a vast emptiness. As life emerged out of the sea of nothingness, so, too, in the embrace of the sea, I return to nothing.

The endless movement of the waves of the ocean suggest the possibility of a new desire. The closing words of Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* draw the reader towards the open expanse of the sea. She speaks of an eternal renewal imagined in an 'incessant rise and fall and fall and rise'. This is sea as an embodied element: 'in me too the wave rises. It swells, it arches its back' (1992:228). Woolf's words suggest rhythm and repetition, and an openness towards new possibilities (Irigaray 1985a:106-118). Yet I also sense a danger involved in this giving over. There is a looming threat of annihilation, of a disintegration of 'self'. But this very loss gives rise to endless possibilities for other ways of being.

The sense of annihilation of self that I feel in Woolf's words is like being in the sea. Immersed in the waters, I have a heightened sense of being in relation with the elements. I must give over to the sea, and in the sea's liquid embrace, I am held upwards, suspended. I remember this feeling of being held by water from a time in

childhood when I was learning to float. To find the balance for floating I would have to think nice thoughts. In giving myself over to these thoughts and water, I would suddenly find myself afloat. I could not just think of the nice things, or will myself to float; the memory that comes to me is of giving over. I had to sacrifice 'self' in order that thoughts and water could touch me and uplift me. To be suspended by water required suspending 'self'. To float requires trust in water, a letting go of my fear of the liquid substance. In the words of Bachelard: 'The call of water demands...a total offering, an inner offering. Water needs an inhabitant' (1983:164).

Again, in the activity of swimming is suggested a necessary passivity – a relation between water and body. I cannot swim without water; it is the liquid that enables me to move. The water propels as much as the movements of my body. As the character Stein, in the novel *Lord Jim*, says:

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns.... No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. (1957:163)<sup>4</sup>

Just as water can support me, so too, can it overcome me. Trying to free myself from this element I struggle, and then, engulfed by its strong embrace, I drown. And again I am reminded of the complex relationship Virginia Woolf had with the water. The sea seemed to live with her all her life. In her autobiography she writes of the contentment she gains from the sea and the rhythm of its sounds. And this plenitude is called up in an early memory: 'It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in the bed in the nursery.... It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach' (1992:xiv). Her novels and diaries consistently call up this relation, often resting on metaphors of fluidity. And yet there was also in her life and writing the constant threat of the vast expanse and great depths of the waters. Her words and actions evoke both the elation of casting off the mooring ropes, of roaming worlds beyond the conscious, while suggesting the ever present foreboding of being engulfed by writing, of being overwhelmed by dark emotions, of being submerged. In the end, Woolf sacrificed herself to the waters, surrendering to their depths.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This quote, in turn, reminds me of my father Stein Lundberg (who, for me, is secretly 'Tuan Jim'). I can imagine him standing on the edge of a sea pool speaking these cryptic words which allow me to swim.

<sup>5</sup> This overwhelming aspect of water was suggested to me in a conversation with the scientist Dr Gerry Cassis, of the Australian Museum. He had been reading a biography of Antarctic exploration where the experience of water was not one of fluids but of hardness – mountainous.

For Bachelard, the contemplation of water likewise necessitates a constant falling away, water he says, dies every minute and its pain is infinite (1983:4,6). To lose oneself to water is to be lost in total dissolution. Water is the element which evokes substantial nothingness (1983:47, 91). Yet this nothingness is not empty, as Michelet has shown; it holds a sense of fullness.

No more space and no more time, no fixed point that can catch our attention; and then there is no more attention. Deep is the reverie and deeper and deeper...an ocean of dreams on the smooth ocean of water. (Michelet in Bachelard 1983:131)

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Like the rhythmic rise and fall of the waves, this ethnography explores themes that consistently recur in tales and practices of Lamalera. In the stories that follow I feel the closeness of the sea. It is the element of the sea which allows me a sense of the flow of these stories – a journey, a wandering, and a repetition – suggesting that these stories are simultaneously always the same even as they are always different, like the forever changing pattern created by the waves breaking endlessly on the shore (see Lévi-Strauss 1969:14; Gleick 1988).

Each of the following stories is about this intertwining, where the subject I write about is simultaneously writing itself through me. These are archetypal tales – tales that can never be told once and for all, but rather reverberate in the stories and practices that can be told.

The following chapters are about relationships between Lamalera and myself and others, whether people, animals, objects, practices, or stories themselves. These are passionate tales about seduction and desire – about the very desire to be seduced. And because the stories I tell are ones that resonate with me, in this way I am also relating spaces of my own desire, and seduction. Throughout this ethnography I have tried to stay close to the experiences that have helped me to feel the everyday practices of Lamalera and that have also allowed me to reflect upon my own practices of anthropology. This is not so much an ethnography of a place called Lamalera, but a space in which Lamalerans and tourists and whales and whale meat and boats and anthropologists and stories are involved in the inextricable intertwining of relations. It is these relations that this ethnography speaks of, and through.

# Fantasy Islands

**We know we have been here before, in fairy stories read in childhood, and also in our dreams and in our life-as-dreams.... It happened a long time ago, yesterday, and is happening now.**

*The New York Times* on the style of Karen Blixen

**Then I understood that this adventure...is, in reality, an adventure in the unconscious, an adventure which is stirred in the night of a soul.**

Gaston Bachelard *Water and Dreams*







This story begins a long time ago, in the enchanting land of 'once upon a time'. In the practice of anthropology I recognise stories from childhood. But they aren't my stories; they're boys' stories, stories I only ever gained glimpses of from the corner of my eye. 'Boys' Own' stories are about adventure (see Torgovnick 1990:3-41). They tell of facing a great challenge, often getting slightly bruised, a little scratched in the process, but nevertheless surmounting this ordeal, in order to return to the fold of the home.

I call these 'boys' stories' for they are the stories that appeared in books for boys.<sup>1</sup> 'Girls' Own' stories were strongly based around home and garden, sometimes a *Secret Garden* (Burnett 1951).<sup>2</sup> They could be fun and often outrageous enough, but I don't remember them in the same light as the boys' stories which seduced me with their freedom and bravery, with their journeys. I don't mean to say that in girls' stories we could never venture out, but girls were too often accompanying boys, and boys were more daring; they were the leaders.

Boys' stories are about glory. They tell of founding the world and the self (Eliade 1989:18; Berger 1984:55-56). In girls' stories there was always the nagging doubt that something was missing, as if this lack was the girl herself. If you travelled far enough with girls' stories you discovered that this gap was never fully rectified, for in older girls' stories, the girls became women, and fell in love, they married and had little girls and boys of their own. *Little Women* grew up to become *Good Wives* (Alcott 1996; 1972). Even though the girl grows up, the stories about women never fully change. Situated in binary opposition to the male, who is portrayed as the brave, as full,<sup>3</sup> the female is still imagined as 'nothing to see' (Irigaray 1985a:69-70). Thus, my desire was to appropriate a boys' story, to go out and hunt down this story and bring it home and make it mine.

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Boys' stories rang true, like the magical call of *Treasure Island*: 'Seaward ho! Hang the treasure! It's the glory of the sea that has turned my head' (Stevenson 1978:48). Boys'

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this chapter appeared in Lundberg (2000a). I remain grateful for the *TAJA* reviewers' criticisms of the draft paper submitted for publication.

<sup>2</sup> The story of *The Secret Garden*, apart from calling up a politics of gender, has also been read from the perspective of a politics of race. See Stoler (1995:149-150).

<sup>3</sup> On this play of fullness and lack see Lutkehaus (in Behar and Gordon 1995).

stories speak of the archaic pull of the sea, of venturing out into the wilds, to a remote place, preferably an island; of battling against great odds: monsters, villains and starvation; of uncovering the secret and returning with its treasure. In *Treasure Island*, young Jim Hawkins does battle with ruthless and murderous pirates. Many are the scars of their trade: a great white gash cuts across the cheek of Billy Bones while Long John Silver, perhaps the most famous pirate of them all, hobbles on one leg. Like Ahab, that great sea captain also of white scar and one leg, these men are to be both feared and yet strangely admired for their monomaniacal pursuit of the dreadful treasure that is their undoing. And although the young hero, Jim Hawkins, also pursues treasure, his hunt is not lead by a single-minded vision. Jim is led time and time again to save the day by his impulsiveness – by a certain serendipity.

*Treasure Island* is not the only story that speaks of the Boys' Own adventure. In childhood there are many adventure islands. They appear in stories in books, in articles in *National Geographic*,<sup>4</sup> and in geography at school. In my own experience, adventure islands were embodied in holidays spent on Stradbroke Island – these were magical times of long days filled with sun and sand.

Yet, one of the most alluring descriptions of islands appears not in novels or classroom lessons or holidays from childhood, but in a recent book by Oliver Sacks. In this text a dream of islands is once more awakened. Sacks's islands are full of cycads and exotic neurological cases; he ventures out in search of the secret workings of the mind. And his deeds are lead by serendipity and impulse. As the neurologist explains in his introduction to *The Island of the Colour Blind*: 'if they were impulsive and unsystematic, my island experiences were intense and rich, and ramified all sorts of directions which continually surprise me' (1996:xiii).

In these words I feel the same sense of adventure offered in Boys' Own stories. And because I, too, sense the pull of islands – because I am touched by Sacks's words, just as he is touched by his experiences to write – I am confused by the author's own analysis of his reverie, for I feel him suddenly withdrawing from this imagery he has awakened in me:

remembering has caused me to reinvent these visits, in a sense, constructing a personal, idiosyncratic, perhaps eccentric view of these islands, informed in part with a lifelong romance with islands and island botany. (1996:xiv)

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<sup>4</sup> The lure of *National Geographic* forms a story unto itself. See Lutz and Collins (1993).

There is in this quotation that sense of containment inherent in the notion of islands – the way they are always simultaneously maps of a secret and isolated self even as they speak of adventure. Yet this very sense of the romance of islands indicates that a dream of islands is not idiosyncratic; this is a reverie so many of us share (see Daws 1980; Le Dœuff 1989:1-20; Dumont 1992; Vickers 1989). So while Sacks's words in one instant reveal his concern that his imagination may not reflect the way things really are – that these are private dreams – in the next instant his words speak of the collective nature of this imagery. 'Islands have always fascinated me; perhaps they fascinate everyone' (1996:3).

Like the islands of my mind, Sacks's islands are those remembered from the books of his childhood. 'Islands were special places, remote and mysterious, intensely attractive, yet frightening too.' But these are not islands lost in the past; these are the islands embodied in the present of his remembering. He goes on to detail these islands of childhood: 'I read about castaways, desert islands, prison islands, leper islands. I adored *The Lost World*, Conan Doyle's splendid yarn about an isolated South American plateau full of dinosaurs and Jurassic life-forms' (1996:4). Today this same tale thrives, reaching an even greater audience of children, and adults, through such films as *Jurassic Park*. Suddenly I remember the way my breath was taken away at the first glimpse of those dinosaurs grazing in the distance. In that moment they were alive, living in the here and now on the movie screen. And like that brief, yet endlessly wondrous experience with dinosaurs, I feel in Sacks's words the same sense of the real in the imaginary: 'Later when I came to meet Herman Melville and Robert Louis Stevenson, the real and the imaginary fused in my mind' (1996:4).

This fusion of fact and fiction, of science and science fiction, does not disappear, however, when the boy grows into a man. As Sacks brings his reader from the past of childhood closer to the present, his story continues to hold the past, bringing it to life through new adventures and passions:

Later still, factual and scientific accounts began to dominate my reading – Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, Wallace's *Malay Archipelago*,...Humbolt's *Personal Narrative*... – and now the sense of the romantic, the mythical, the mysterious, became subordinated to the passion of scientific curiosity. (1996:4)

Reading Sacks's book – the detail of childhood stories and the profound recognition of the romantic, mythical and mysterious qualities of these stories – I am convinced that his boys' own adventure stories have not been replaced by scientific stories, but rather,

they live in and through them. It is the archetypal quality of these stories that enable that sense of passion inherent in the dreamy term 'scientific curiosity'.

It is not just neurologists and natural scientists<sup>5</sup> who feel the call to adventure and islands. This story is likewise that of anthropology (Dumont 1992:15-17). In the discipline's practice of ethnography, in fieldwork and writings, live these tales as old as time, which are brought to life once again. This is the eternal realm of 'once upon a time' that lives in the present as it does in the past – and the future (see Loy 1988:215-225; Sheldrake 1988:260).

It is the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who speaks of the mythic quality of story time, for in stories it is as if the flow of time has disappeared. As Lévi-Strauss explains, the story unfolds in time and yet it has a special temporal quality, as if it needs time only in order to deny it, to obliterate it. Mythic time, like the temporality experienced in listening to music, is not just linear but is enclosed within itself. The act of reading the myth, or listening to music, immobilises time. 'It catches and enfolds it as one catches and enfolds a cloth flapping in the wind' (Lévi-Strauss 1969:16, 1968:209; see also Stewart 1996:93). In the folds of myth and music we feel the gentle touch of a momentary immortality. Myth holds together both the passing of time and a permanent constant. Likewise, myth's stories change constantly and yet give a sense of time immemorial.

In the fairy story of *Peter Pan*, I sense this magical land that whispers of no-time and all-time. The Neverland of this story feels so right:

Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors, and caves through which a river runs, and princes with six elder brothers, and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose. (Barrie 1993:11)

This island speaks of a sacred space surrounded by the flow of ordinary life. As de Certeau puts it: 'Island stays provide a counterpoint to the law of the watch' (1986:148). Again it is anthropology that is compelled to explore this strange land. Inspired by Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner spoke of the liminal period of the *rites de passage* as the

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<sup>5</sup> One evening, Dr Shane McEvey, an entomologist at the Australian Museum, related the story of an adventure as a young man in his early twenties. He led a group on an expedition to an island in the Torres Strait. The island was unknown to the young scientists – chosen off survey maps for its isolation, small size and topographical features. The band of young men, led by their sense of adventure and overwhelming scientific curiosity, were set down on the beach surrounded by their equipment and provisions while the charter boat departed, leaving them for several weeks. The timing of their boat's return was delayed and they ran out of food resorting to shooting pigeons for their supper. This is a magical real story.

space neither here nor there, but between the states of being in mundane life (Turner 1967:93-110). And the experience of this extra-ordinary state demonstrates that it is never far away; the everyday consistently reveals these liminal lands. Even something as familiar as a fairy tale allows a sense of the sublime. Never Neverland is an island where we never grow up, where we are forever doing battle with pirates, and where we create ourselves anew again and again as we perform the story. Thus, storytelling is a sacred performance; it forms our very world and enables us to live.

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This is the same sacred story that Michael Taussig speaks of as he follows the passage of ritual performance evoked by Victor Turner as he, in turn, writes of a Ndembu doctor who divines a wandering incisor tooth in the body of a sick man in order to heal the social body. What this intricate story shows – via Turner, Ndembu healer, incisor tooth and back through Taussig's words – is that 'the subject addressed and the addressing of the subject become one' (Taussig 1992:150). This story of ritual performance demonstrates how the Aristotelian structure of Turner's ethnographic drama produces the same mimetic magic that Turner describes.

The point is not whether this wonderful essay of Turner's is right or wrong according to certain Positivist criteria, but to ask how it subliminally operates on us as a ritual of truth-making, shaping our feeling and intuitive as well as highly conscious understandings (Taussig 1992:151).

Anthropologists, like all shamanic story tellers, cannot remain detached from the text. The story lives through the body of the writer. Yet in anthropological texts there has been a strong desire for separation from, and mastery over, the story. Here again are Taussig's words explaining this complex magic of anthropology's *graphies*:

I want to suggest that this shaping is enormously facilitated by and indeed dependent upon the text's *appropriation* of the African magic and dramatic power of the ritual it describes. There is thus an intentional or unintentional usage of Frazer's Law of Sympathy, a magical usage, not only in the actual rite itself, but in its representation by the anthropologist-writer mimetically engaging the flow of events described with the flow of his theoretical argument, to the benefit and empowerment of the latter. (1992:151)<sup>6</sup>

The drama of a beginning and middle and end, this narrative sequence that Aristotle spoke of, is what gives the sense of a journey in our stories. And on the return of the

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<sup>6</sup> On the magical and contagious nature of sympathy see also Mead (1972:298-301) and Taussig (1993).

journey we gain a sense of something complete. Yet this wonderful sense of a perfect fit that anthropologists find at the closure of their ethnographies and theoretical explanations is not the glory of truth but rather narrative's circularity (Game and Metcalfe 1996:71). Taussig continues:

While the villagers...locate their aggrieved ancestor's tooth and therewith purify the village, we piggy-back on the same magical ritual to find, not the tooth, but the purity of structure, the reality of the imaginary integrated whole. (1992:151)

Anthropological writings, however, have tried to deny the story in their telling. Traditionally, anthropology's *graphies*, it would seem, have not wished to acknowledge the heroic journeys in their texts. More recently though, reflexive ethnographies have made the move to recognise the journey in anthropology. In these writings travel and desire are openly spoken of (Clifford 1997, 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Dubois in Behar and Gordon 1995; Pratt 1992). But the point is, of course, that this sense of journeying is inherent in anthropology and its texts: in the rite of passage; in the sequential numbering of chapters; in the introduction, body and conclusion. Even so, the discipline of anthropology has placed more stress on categorising than storytelling, for its major premise has rested upon a notion of the whole (Thornton in Marcus 1992). This assumption starts from the idea that the other culture is separate and entire. Hence the work of anthropologists was to piece together this whole. Similarly, the employment of the 'ethnographic present' has created the other as a timeless exotic totality, an island lost in time (Fabian 1983; Hastrup 1990; Tsing 1993:xiv-xv). But this is a projection of plenitude in the other, and a desire for completion through the other; it is to reveal the desires of many anthropologies which have been based on the notion of society and culture as things which can be known.

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This desire for the penetration and closure of truth is what I sense in many of the various stories of Lamalera. It is, likewise, the effect accrued from the numerous monographs and articles about the village written by the anthropologist Professor Robert Barnes (1974, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988). These writings span over twenty years, culminating in his recent book on Lamalera (1996).

This book, in its encyclopaedic style and coverage, attempts to grasp every aspect of life and death in reference to Lamalera: from regional to international context; from local subsistence whaling to the history of world whaling; from geologically historical time to

a final chapter on the future. The book reports on the social, political, linguistic, economic and cultural organisation of the village. It attempts to cover Lamalera from beginning to end. Where ethnographic detail is sparse, the book is compelled to fill in the gaps with information from surrounding districts linguistically related to Lamalera. Yet even after eighteen chapters, an introduction and seven appendices, Professor Barnes still feels his task incomplete and apologises that 'my data for some topics of general ethnographic interest, such as child rearing and star lore, are not as rich as those I have been able to publish for Kédang' (1996:viii).<sup>7</sup>

Clearly in Barnes's work there is a notion of finitude: that anthropology, like culture, is a thing; and a book, big enough, full enough, and punctilious enough, can present Lamalera to this discipline. Yet rather than inducing a cosy sense of arrival and completion, this book instilled in me a devastating sense of fear.

Whichever lead I followed or story I attempted to write about Lamalera, Barnes had already left his imprint before me. Lamalera appeared closed off to any further stories because this rigorous and capacious book had already either described, or otherwise marked out, everything that there could be to say about Lamalera – and in the process, it seemed to have consumed the village in its entirety. Barnes's text, through its very writing practice, invoked the *logos* in the name anthropology – *logos* referring to conscious reason, but also to the divine Word, the word of the Almighty Father. This suffix thus calls up the law of the Fathers; it guards the imagined borders of anthropology. As a novice it was my duty to summon this Word in order to legitimate my own words, and thereby reconstitute the discipline of anthropology. Novices, it would seem, are involved in constantly feeding this spectre.

Like the story of the phantom whale, Barnes's book invoked in me the image of the devouring monster, one that could gobble up novices along with cultures. And like captain Ahab I felt myself lacking in the face of this great beast and sensed that the only way to make myself whole was to annihilate that which seemed to always swim before me. Hence, as in the archetypal stories of Oedipus and the primal horde, in order to be like the parent, in order to become an anthropologist, I would be forced to kill the father and take his place. In the story of the primal horde, the father is, furthermore, consumed by the sons in an act that ensures they gain his power (Freud 1960:141-142).

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<sup>7</sup> Kédang is an area in the north-east of Lembata. Lamalera is situated in the south of the same island. Barnes undertook two years of fieldwork and many follow up visits in Kédang. Part of his concern with the fullness, or lack thereof, in his work on Lamalera is possibly the fact that he was never able to carry out a lengthy or undisturbed fieldwork visit in this village. This feeling of lack, as conveyed in the writings of such a long practising ethnographer, reinforces the point that this desire can never be fulfilled.

It is this same repellent and terrifying story that has been at work in the everyday practices of anthropology. In the rite of passage and the gift of the story, novices conjure up the law of the father, consuming his word as the sons of the primal horde consumed his flesh. Thus the *logos* – the full and mighty word of the father – becomes the sacrificial feast upon which novices nourish themselves by quoting the words of the parents in order to justify their own.

Paradoxically, then, in anthropology, as in all ancestor cults, the past is not simply inherited; we in fact live among the ancestors. This repulsive Oedipal story shows that I could not rid myself of the frightful apparition of Barnes's words. My fear-ridden, murderous desire to free myself of his words already revealed that I was in relation with them. Moreover, any relationship I formed with Lamalera would necessarily be a relationship with the texts of other researchers, whether Lamaleran or otherwise. Indeed Barnes's and other researchers' engagements with Lamalera were part of the everyday life of the village, and just as Lamalera is not a place or a thing divorced from these relations, neither is anthropology a thing; rather, it is constantly created through these relations. And this relationship is itself a story.

The denial of storytelling in ethnographic writing has been based on a refusal to acknowledge this mediatory quality of the ethnographic enterprise. Yet, as contemporary reflexive ethnographies have argued, anthropology does not pre-exist the anthropologists who carry out its many practices. Anthropology creates the objects of its studies: those cultures, societies, clans and regions. While some anthropologists have wished to deny the stories they tell, their employment of a naturalistic narrative structure supports the sense of accomplishment and truth that the same anthropologists desire. Their words and structures tell stories (Game and Metcalfe 1996:71).

To argue for a reflexive anthropology open to otherness is not to argue for a oneness with the other. Nonetheless, recent debates in Australian anthropology have been presented in this binary scenario: either anthropologists are distanced, scientific and truthful, or they are too close – dupes and liars for indigenous people. An article outlining just such a crisis in anthropology was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (1999) the week before the Australian Anthropological Society's annual conference. In the article Ben Hill argues that many anthropologists are losing scientific credibility because they choose to be bound to the political and economic concerns of the Aboriginal communities they represent. Hill's commentary gives a passionate sense of his frustration with this desire for immersion with the other that he sees in some



anthropologist's practices. At the same time, though, Hill's analysis of the cause of this downfall of anthropology is itself reminiscent of a story we know so well. As the article delves deeper into the problem, it begins to give a sense of a fall from grace. In this story, the mess that the discipline finds itself in – this chaos caused by the intertwining with the other – is associated with feminist anthropology which is repeatedly cited as a primary reason for the fall of the discipline from its imagined previous heights. Even so, the full blame does not rest here. Rather, behind these naïve feminine practitioners (which include soft male anthropologists and environmentalists) lurks the slipperiness of post-structuralist Continental theory; Derrida and Baudrillard are named. In this story of the fall, the task is for anthropology to once again rise up from this flood of chaos, with Hill's argument the beacon that lights the way by appealing to truth as the path to redemption. Here the notion of the quest for perfection and wholeness is yet again summoned. This is a tale of an anthropology that was once pure and complete, but which now lies ruptured and in need of mending. In order to heal this breach gaps must be filled in and borders secured.

However, although Hill's argument for a return to the imagined truth of the discipline can itself be read as contaminated by the mythological stories on which his own analysis must rest in order to give it a sense of veracity, his scathing critique of a desire he senses in some Australian anthropological practice is not without its own legitimacy even if his examples are highly questionable. To argue for closeness and sameness as a compensation for distance and separation, and the atrocities wrought on Aboriginal peoples due to this approach, is likewise to deny a relation with the other. To be advocate and spokesperson for the other is to again desire completion through an imagined wholeness. Instead of a notion of oneness through separation, this is to conjure wholeness through immersion with the other. In this desire to become one with the other, the difficulties as well as the possibilities of relationality are once more denied.<sup>8</sup> In the end, Hill's article only serves to reinstate the binary opposition of closeness *or* distance, chaos *or* purity.

In this will to a sanitised text – a text that only acts to tell another piece of the jigsaw of truth, either through distance or through immersion – lies the desire for an unmediated knowledge of the other, and thus the inherent contaminatory quality of relations of

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<sup>8</sup> In response to Hill's article, Grant McCall (1999:16-17) notes that the persistence of debates within the discipline demonstrates that an ethical questioning of anthropological practice is constantly engaged in. McCall argues that Hill's article demonstrates a commonly held desire for separation from the difficulties that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are involved in and are trying to work *within* – and not deny or distance themselves from. Hill's story is a nostalgic desire for an imaginary time when it was easier to deny that white Australia was, in fact, in these relations.

ethnographic practice is denied. However, our writing is not that readily controlled. If we choose to read these texts differently, it is possible for us to see these writings not as truths, but as stories – creative stories. And one of the stories that anthropology tells over and over again, most often subliminally, is that of the journey of desire.

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Contemporary discourses of culture remain highly indebted to Hegel's philosophy of desire. Indeed, as Judith Butler advises: 'Hegel's subject of desire remains a compelling fiction' (1987:x). These words remind me that Hegelian desire is as present in fiction – in the fairytales and myths that so seriously frame our lives – as it is in stories that are based on an ideal of truth. Additionally, her words refer the reader to the auto-deconstructive quality of Hegel's story, the way in which the story always escapes itself. Thus, as Butler implies, the notion of the subject as self-present and as human is undermined, even as Hegel's philosophy argues for the subject's primacy.

According to Hegel, desire is for the other, and the desire for the other is in order to return to self, in order to know self through knowing the other. However, this movement reveals a paradox, for this separate self is based on a movement of relation, albeit a negative relation. It is this moment of paradox that I wish to celebrate as a way in which situated stories can demonstrate the possibilities for other desires, desires that seep through the fissures in Hegel's story. My argument is that moments of other desiring always and already lie within all styles of anthropology. Those anthropological texts specifically engaged in a reflexive sensibility reveal certain of these suspended moments,<sup>9</sup> but the ruptures, and the possibilities of other desires which these allow, are not limited to a post-modern anthropology (see Clifford & Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Marcus 1992; Behar and Gordon 1995).

Hegel's biography of 'spirit' is the story of a quest for an evolution from lower states of being, immersed in a sensuous world without any differentiation of a separate consciousness, to simple consciousness, and on to consciousness of self. Self-consciousness, in this analysis, is just one stage along the path toward universal knowledge. Ultimately, the quest to know self is to desire to know the world, the whole (Hegel 1931:219-220).

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<sup>9</sup> And even as they reveal certain moments, they cannot but help leave out others that they can't deal with. As reflexive practice theorises: there is no final story – no end.

In the movement towards a conscious self, the self attempts to negate the sensuous world in order to return from this world to self, in order to know 'that is not I' (Hegel 1931:149-178). But the realisation of self-consciousness in relation to the other of nature is only the first moment in this quest. In order to be truly self-conscious it is necessary to realise self in relation not only to nature but to other selves similar to the self. In this second movement the self recognises another self-consciousness which has performed the same process of negation – an other that is by definition different but simultaneously the same (Hegel 1931:217). And here it can be seen that the path of Hegel's story begins to wind and loop, for the goal of self-conscious independence paradoxically requires inter-relations. The way to one-self, to self-consciousness, can only be through a relation to another self-consciousness (Hegel 1931:220, 231; Game 1991:67).

This impossible final separation from the other demonstrates that for Hegel there is no self-consciousness outside the mediations of relations (Butler 1987:7-8,47; Cixous in Cixous and Clément 1986:71). Yet this intimacy inherent in Hegel's quest is not limited to that between humans. Significantly, the first move was for transcendence from immersion in the sensuous world, nature. It is apparent from this movement to transcend immersion that the self, rather than being originally separate and then coming into relation, is formed *of* relation. The origin is not pure and separate, but *is* relational. Nevertheless, the desire for self-certainty is the desire to transcend sensuality, the relational. And this longing for transcendence is told in Hegel's master-slave story which is about the striving for identity of self, with self: the desire for a unified self.

The master-slave story is about the struggle of two self-conscious beings that are pitted against each other in violent and deadly opposition. These opponents battle to determine which one will win, which one has the will to achieve autonomous identity, and which one will lose and remain a mere echo-reflection of the victor.

However, this is ultimately a battle bound for failure, for according to Hegel's own formulation, without an independent other, self-consciousness loses its own identity; with only a no-thing to judge itself by, the master cannot recognise self. The quest has been in vain, for desire needs a living other to desire (Hegel 1931:226). In the master-slave story, the death of the other – its objectification (where the object equates with a lack, a not-subject) – equals the death of the self. The master must die because the slave cannot return the gaze; the slave cannot reflect back an independent self-

consciousness (see Sartre 1966).<sup>10</sup> In turn, the master's death would mean the end of the possibility for the slave to procure the reflection of self-certainty. The slave, too, will die. Ultimately the desire for a unified, single self is a desire for stasis via the appropriation of the other, with the desire for stasis being a desire for the end of the story which is, in itself, a form of death.

But, in a final ironic twist, it is Hegel's very story which lives on. The desire for closure fails and the story must be constantly re-enacted.

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My desire in anthropology was based on a desire to be fulfilled; I wanted to appropriate the ritual story of anthropology in order to found my self, for in anthropology I read a grown up 'boy's own' adventure story. I wanted to cannibalise these grown men's stories, and in so doing, kill the male and gain his strength, devour the spirit strength of his story: the practice of anthropology.

Anthropology is a discipline based on the notion of journeying. For instance, there is anthropology's trademark practice of ethnography which entails both fieldwork and writing. I recognised in fieldwork the journey of a rite of passage where I could dream of undergoing initiation, of going out and undertaking an ordeal, in order to return – a dream of finding place and self.

Perhaps I speak of the romance of anthropology (Dubois in Behar and Gordon 1995: 306-312; Stewart 1996:4-5; Tsing 1993: x-xi, 7, 213-214). The recurring motif of the heroic journey, which is commonly at practice in anthropology, is an archetype that has been recognised and even appropriated by some of the discipline's fathers. Thus, George Stocking Jr. writes that Malinowski's *Argonauts* 'is itself a kind of euhemerist myth...the European Jason who brings back the Golden Fleece of ethnographic knowledge' (1983:109). Likewise, Susan Sontag could see in the writings of Lévi-Strauss the same romantic theme of the 'anthropologist as hero' (Sontag in Hayes 1966). Stocking and Sontag show that these famous ancestors were moved by the heroic quest. Malinowski sensed in the hero myth a founding theme for ethnographic

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<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, when the slave 'steals' glimpses of the master, an independent self-consciousness is reflected back. In contemplating this battle of the gaze, I recognise the deadly significance of the rule whereby colonised people and subjects of the sovereign were forbidden to look the master in the eye.

practice, and today his arrival scene on a Trobriand island still holds the magic of an ethnography aware of its story:

Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight. (Malinowski 1961:4)

This is the same mythic theme Sontag feels Lévi-Strauss was also drawn to. However, Lévi-Strauss was well aware that he could not control the archetypal stories, for, even as he wrote about myths, he felt the myths writing themselves through him (1969:12; also Merleau-Ponty 1968:151). We do not control the myth; rather, the myth lives us.

In this romantic quest to find self, we already know, somewhere in our very bones, that this is an adventure that necessitates leaving the sanctuary of the known. Thus to undertake fieldwork, one must first of all leave home, the Father and the university department. Out on one's own, alone, one journeys forth to an other's locale – preferably exotic and therefore preferably across the sea. The sea: that zone of neutrality which allows for transition (van Gennep 1960:18-23), a zone which today is often transformed into the fluidity of air. Some people feel nostalgia for the sea crossing, but I adore the ritual of the air. Entering the airport, the separation ritual at the portal. Then the flight – the flight away which is simultaneously the flight toward. And finally arriving at another port, repeating the paper checking – that screening, filtering, cleansing ritual of the threshold – before crossing into another world (van Gennep 1960:18-23). In the space of a few hours I am magically changed, for this is a modern day ritual of shamanic flight (Taussig 1992:162; Eliade 1960:99-109). From the world of the secular I have entered the sphere of the sacred, an uncanny realm called field.<sup>11</sup>

This is a space out of the ordinary, a liminal space: foreign and fantastic. Language, daily practices and food – all are alien, indigestible.<sup>12</sup> The foreignness infects the candidate herself; she suffers from the illness of deprivation, homesickness and other diseases, likewise unfamiliar, as exotic as the locale. Malarial fevers are something to write home about.<sup>13</sup> The ordeal of initiation necessitates this brush with exotic death (Turner 1967:95-97; Biddle 1993), for the liminal space in the journey of the rite of

<sup>11</sup> On the problematic notion of 'field' when it doesn't fulfil the ritual of travel and separation, when it remains too homely, see: Clifford (1997:ch.3) and Pratt (in Clifford and Marcus 1986).

<sup>12</sup> I am reminded of Enid Blyton's series *The Secret Seven* and *The Famous Five*. The ordeals apparent in these novels include food deprivation. In one (or more?) of Blyton's books I was highly repulsed by the children eating tinned tongue (Lundberg 2000b).

<sup>13</sup> I had imagined that the notion of malaria as an heroic illness was particular to me personally because my father, whom I imagine as *the boys'* own adventurer, had contracted malaria while living in Sabah, Borneo. I hadn't realised the ritual significance of illness in the field until returning to university where I was greeted with references to my own bout of malaria.

passage is about the annihilation of self. Yet, even as the foreignness infects the candidate, as she becomes a stranger to her self and gives over to the unknown, she begins to see herself in a new light<sup>14</sup> (Turner 1967:102,105). In this state of ritual isolation one is weak and vulnerable – but also powerful and extraordinary, for one is outside the everyday (van Gennep 1960:26). And if one lives through this ordeal, at some point, but preferably not before the cycle of a year has passed, one returns.

It is at this stage, on return, that one is somehow split; one comes face to face with being two (see Taussig 1993:40-41). And this split is an illness: the fieldworker is still contaminated by having been in close proximity to the other. Yet culture shock on return from the field is simultaneously a constitutive disease, for it demonstrates anthropology's ability to achieve closeness to the other. Thus we claim participant-observation where anthropology always wavers between projecting itself as being 'inside' the culture it studies and as standing 'outside'. To prove special knowledge of the other, anthropology must argue that it got 'inside' the other. However, to prove its scientific credibility, it must return to objectivity through the unencumbered withdrawal from the other. Thus the homecoming necessitates a breaching, a purifying ritual (Douglas 1966). The novice must write, must pass the test of 'clarification' through clarification: a cleansing. Writing: that is the cure (see Clifford 1988:104). The fieldworker writes to cure the self, by writing to become self – one self – a self in the reflection of the Father. This is her gift. The gift that she brings back is her story about the other, a souvenir (Susan Stewart 1993:132-145). And the purpose of the journey was for this return to home and the gift of this story. But if her illness is severe, if she remains contaminated through being too close to the other, she may never return. She is said to have 'gone native'; she cannot extract herself from relation with the other, has failed the trial of self-consciousness.

However, this failure is not the candidate's alone. The significance of the initiation, as Turner's work so dramatically reveals, is that this rite is both the individual's and society's. Thus her fall must be censured for it signals the failure of society as a whole, to become whole through the structure of the narrative. Yet as Hegel's story has shown, this creation is never secure. The very existence of the discipline of anthropology likewise demonstrates that society is not a thing, inert, but is constantly being created in the present. Hence, a new candidate is sent out.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps this light emanates from the lamp which symbolises both the Romantic quest for the inner depths, and the lamp that symbolises the vigilant wait – something that seems a necessary adjunct to the journey of desire. See also Boon (in Stocking 1989:139) and Bachelard (1969:34).

<sup>15</sup> In writing this section I feel the uncanny echoes of a paper by Laurent Dubois (in Behar and Gordon 1995).

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Again, this renewed beginning implies an end that will return to the beginning. The anthropological candidate ventures out to the unknown, the isles of far away, in order to return with the treasure: knowledge of the other. Boy's stories, like the rite of passage, not only tell of the need to venture out, but also warn of the need to return. A story that fails to return is a failed story (Game and Metcalfe 1996:71).

Many tales warn of this fate of no return: the ghost ship *The Flying Dutchman* (Wagner 1987) is compelled to endlessly travel the seas; in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, Captain Nemo becomes more and more obsessive in his collecting and in his quest for the sub-marine journey, to journey forever (Verne 1992); Lord Jim sacrifices himself in the Eastern Archipelagoes (Conrad 1957); while in *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab is a monomaniac in quest of the great white whale of the psyche (Melville 1986). These are romantic and heroic figures – as are the pirates who sail the seven seas and the oceans blue of our imaginations and stories. All are lost at sea. But the sea is not the only place to be lost. The land of Never Never harboured the lost boys. In Neverland, you never grow up, remaining forever a Peter Pan (Barrie 1993).

Thus texts, whether in the form of matter or practice, myths or writings, are serious stories – including those in the guise of fiction – that speak to us about ourselves, even as they speak about an other. Stories are told throughout our lives, while life becomes a journey through the structure of stories (Van Den Abbeele 1992; de Certeau 1984:ch 2; Game and Metcalfe 1996:65-76; Sacks 1986:104; Felman 1982). Yet, at the same time as shaping our lives, stories already hold within their very structure the moment of rupture.<sup>16</sup>

The neurologist Oliver Sacks tells a story of William Thompson, a man whose memory spans only a few seconds, and who is constantly creating stories about the people and events around him. Here is Sacks's poetic description of his patient's condition:

Abysses of amnesia continually opened beneath him, but he would bridge them, nimbly, by fluent confabulations and fictions of all kinds. For him they were not fictions, but how he suddenly saw, or interpreted, the world. Its radical

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<sup>16</sup> This is the same double moment that Merleau-Ponty (1968), and likewise Derrida (1999), speak of when they argue that the invisible is always already held in the visible. Likewise see Turner (1967:95-96) in regards to the liminal as the invisible held in the betwixt and between of the visible.

flux and incoherence could not be tolerated, acknowledged, for an instant – there was, instead, this strange, delirious, quasi-coherence, as Mr Thompson, with his ceaseless, unconscious, quick-fire inventions continually improvised a world around him – an Arabian Nights world, a phantasmagoria, a dream of ever-changing people, figures, situations.... (1986:104)

In this neurological case study we can see that the story *does* exist, it is real. We are constantly creating stories in order to live our lives (also Sacks 1998). But Sacks's study not only dramatically shows how storytelling is vital to our lives, it simultaneously reveals that the story is always failing. In his analysis of the case of Mr Thompson, Sacks treats this rupture as the lack, an illness. The very story, this story from neurology, like the story of desire, and anthropological stories, and the boys' own adventure story, already holds within it the moment of its failure. Yet it is this moment of lack that is so full, for it holds out the promise of other stories, the possibility of different stories.

The significance of this failure is evidenced by Turner, who, remarking on Hegel, states: 'Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions' and yet this same space is 'a pure realm of possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise' (Turner 1967:97). And in this Neverland, perhaps there lies another way in which to read the desire in islands: islands not as wholes, but as holes; places not so much distant and lost, but spaces where we lose ourselves. Marooned, we recreate ourselves – differently (see Defoe 1985).

It is this rupture in the story that is so vital. For here in the realm of the liminal, the hero is no longer in control. In this moment of losing self is simultaneously offered an instant of sympathy with the other. This is the eerie and beautiful feeling I receive in reading Ernest Hemmingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1999) – a story touched by a lingering sorrow that speaks of life's joy. In this tale I sense a lack which is full.

The rite of passage of anthropology: its journey out, its liminal death and its returning cleansing ritual of writing – this very procedure demonstrates that the return is never simple, never unproblematically executed. We never return to self-presence. This is not to deny that the entire process is part of the constitution of self – it is. However, this mandatory ritual procedure indicates that this very constitution is through and with the other. In the words of de Certeau:

Through the native, the reality of the elsewhere causes the voyage to drift, it diverts it, anchoring it in a dreamland. The circle is not perfect. Fiction cuts



across it. That exodus transformed into "circulation" remains open to "embellishments" and interlacing with the other. (1986:148)

This recognition of the contamination of self, the inevitable relationality of self with other, is truly anthropology's magic – even as it has been seen as its negative (see Tsing 1993). This would be to recognise that, on return, things are not the same as on departure, for the experience of the journey has been affective. On physical return the initiate finds that she is different; she does not see things the same way she once did. The person who returns is not precisely the same one who departed. The home of the self has changed.

This would be to problematise the return and home as the end of the journey. Home is an *unheimlich* space. To go out and return implies the ability to grow and develop; to be housed is to be able to grow. Hence I realise that in order to be able to enact the journey, all along I needed to be safely housed (Bachelard 1969:5-10). Home is not a place that we leave and return to. Home is a sense of space, and we may meet it suddenly, just around the corner, no matter where we go.

And so finally, I turn to Alice for a story, for in her story I recognise an adventure that is so similar to, and yet so different from, boys' stories. This story speaks of falling, of failing, of being led. It is a story of being out of control and being vulnerable. But this in no way means that Alice has reached some higher level, has magically – through a denial of Hegelian desire – found herself above the rest of us. No. She remains as fallible as ever, for her desire and will is as strong as ever. In this story nothing is ultimately overcome: not an other, not the self, not even a journey.

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Alice is a wanderer who travels to Wonderland, a land of adventure. But Alice doesn't journey forth, stride out with purpose; she follows. Curiosity leads (see Thomas 1994). The passage of her desire is deep and subterranean: she falls into the labyrinthine bowels of adventure. And I never quite know if this is really Alice's adventure or whether the adventure of curiosity consumes her. It is hard to tell. Then again, nothing is stable and fixed in this story, not even Alice's body which appears to have a will of its own – although whether possessed is unknown. Perhaps this is Alice's lesson, for her mind's will loses its power in this fluid land, though this is not to deny that she still wants to exert it in an all too obviously head-strong way. But I like Alice all the more

because she is so obviously head-strong, so fallible, so into falling – surrender. She doesn't suddenly shed her desires and will, and in their place grow wings and fly off into the heavens as Alice in Angel-land. Not her. She merely stays in the underworld to learn to face its danger, to live with this danger – the danger of fluid indeterminacy.

And then she is returned.

Her travels, however, have been the travels of dreams and imagination – the unconscious. Throughout her journey Alice remains safely housed in the arms of her older sister, in the comfort of a garden-field, on a grassy slope next to a stream. And when Alice awakens she shares the gift of her story with her sister. In turn, her sister becomes infected by the journey. In the story of the adventures in Wonderland, Alice's return and the gift of her story makes home uncanny. It is now her older sister to whom the White Rabbit and other animals appear (Carroll n.d.:208). The journey infects home. Home, like anthropology's field, is a space of stories and dreams and memories.

In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland I find a story I can call my own, in which I feel at home – a story that helps me wander.

# TWO

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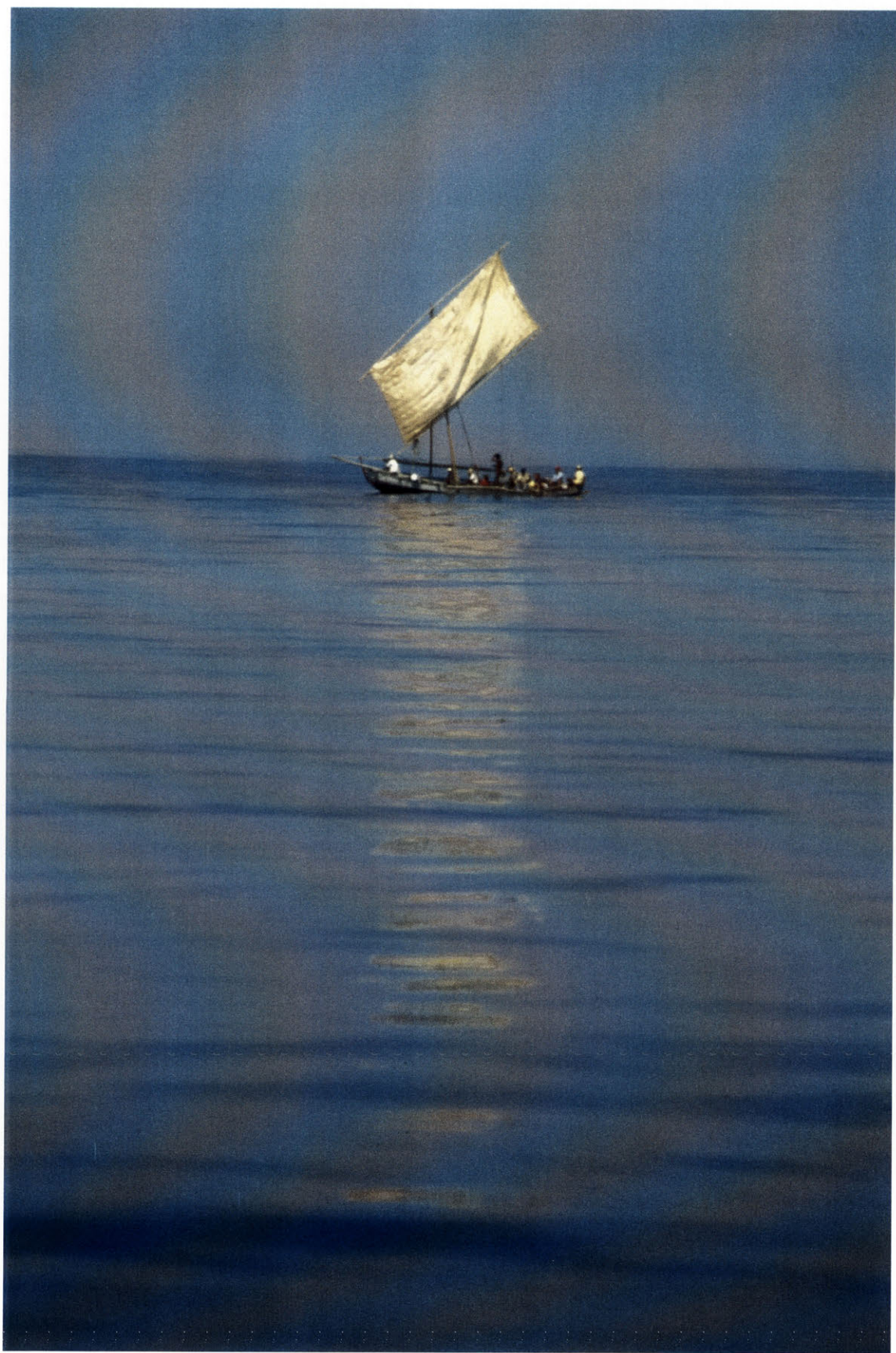
## Lost at Sea...Again

**To disappear into deep water or to disappear toward a far horizon, to become part of the depth or infinity, such is the destiny of man that finds its image in the destiny of water.**

Gaston Bachelard *Dreams of Water*

**A fragment of the beat disappears, and of this disappearance, rhythm is born.**

Catherine Clément *Syncope*



On arriving in Lamalera I felt lost, at sea. The two years of intensive effort that had been spent planning for this fieldwork stay – Indonesian language courses, postgraduate anthropology subjects, library research, paper work for permits, visiting sponsoring government and university departments – did not diminish this sinking feeling. All my plans could not prepare me for the actual experience of fieldwork, for this devastating sense of loss of self.<sup>1</sup> During my preparations there had always been a comforting sense of purpose. But now that I was in the village I was no longer quite sure of what to do. I was fearful of doing nothing, of just being in Lamalera, and I desperately wanted to be doing something.

In a frantic attempt to save my active self, I clung to daily routines and the business of 'research' (see Clifford 1988:102-107). But despite a compulsion to indulge in these rituals of organisation, like the heroic character Lord Jim whose romantic tale begins when he is shipwrecked at sea, I sensed my looming disintegration:

'You couldn't distinguish the sea from the sky; there was nothing to see and nothing to hear. Not a glimmer, not a shape, not a sound....'

Annihilation - hey! and all the time it was only a clouded sky, a sea that did not break, the air that did not stir. Only a night; only a silence. (Conrad 1957:90-91)

This description of disappearing into the vast expanse of ocean merged with cloudy sky graphically illustrates the very space of annihilation. However, this space of nothing already contains the hint of something. It is an expectant silence, a shadowy night, a heavy stillness, and a thick misty air. The very details of this narration demand that we slow down, pause, look again, and listen.

It was during the first two weeks of my year long stay in Lamalera, during this time of my own profound sense of being lost, that four whaling boats disappeared at sea.

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*Baléo, baléo, baléo, baléo...baléoooo!* *Baléo, baléo, baléo, baléo...baléoooo!* The call to man the whaling boats goes up as a pod of sperm whales is sighted off shore. Immediately we turn our attention to scanning the sea, but to the eyes of my partner and

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<sup>1</sup> The encounters of Paul Rabinow in Morocco (1977), Renato Rosaldo in the Philippines (1984), Dorinne Kondo in Japan (1990) and Jennifer Biddle in Australia (1993), all warn of the dangers of fieldwork to the anthropologist's sense of being. However, even though in re-reading these texts they confirm the pattern of my own experiences, I had at the time never imagined they would apply to my research – as if I could remain untouched by the experience of the rite of passage of anthropology.

myself, the ocean is nothing but a vast expanse of water. We see no whales, we recognise no currents. To us the sea appears empty; to the eyes of the whale hunters the sea is full.

Men come running to the beach – bare feet, shorts, a *lipa*<sup>2</sup> hanging over one shoulder, and a bamboo container or plastic bag carrying the makings of cigarettes: *tebako* and small strips of *koli* (lontar palm leaf) in which to roll it. They go straight to the boat they work<sup>3</sup> and try to quickly assemble enough men for a crew. As it is not yet the whaling season when the *téna* go out to sea regularly, the crews are made up of men – aging from teenage boys to grandfathers – who are attending to crops or doing chores close to the village.<sup>4</sup> They quickly remove the woven hood that fits over the stem post (*menula*) and with help from other men, women and children they push the heavy *téna* out of the boat huts, over a series of smooth logs that serve as rollers, down the black sand beach and into the sea, jumping aboard at the last minute as the boat hits the surf. On this day, six whaling boats are launched.

From the rather ostentatious white house on the eastern end of the little bay there is a clear view of the sea. Two of our neighbours, Mikhael, a school teacher, and his brother Stefan, a whaler, come over and watch the action through our binoculars. The brothers' uncle owns this house that was recommended to us by the local Catholic priest, Pater Dupont.<sup>5</sup> We moved in only two days before (and will move to a permanent house in a month). These young men, along with several children, have been dropping

<sup>2</sup> A *lipa* is a man's sarong, also quite often worn by women for everyday work. It can be hand woven or shop bought. The material is sewn together to make a tube which one steps into and then folds around the waist. For work, men will often wear the tube hanging across from one shoulder to the opposite hip. In the boat, the *lipa* is frequently taken off and tied to one of the thwarts where it is safe and handy.

<sup>3</sup> Men may crew the *téna* of their father's or mother's clans or their *opu laki*, the clan of their brothers-in-law. A relationship between a man and the clan, or subclan, of a particular *téna* can always be established, but these relationships are versatile, allowing men the possibility to crew a number of boats.

<sup>4</sup> This is the end of the wet season, the harvesting time known as *tamata taka* in the local Lamaleran dialect of the Lamaholot language. During this season men may be on the slopes of the mountain away from the beach attending small fields of maize that people of Lamalera in recent years have been encouraged to farm by the local government. This is a short season, from March to April, when the monsoon rains die down. This season is also referred to as *nalé saré*, the time of good conditions for seaworms, *Leodice viridis*. The seas quieten and the *nalé* that spawn and surface for only a couple of nights are collected and eaten. It is not yet *léra*, the dry season, which lasts from May to September and which produces the good weather, winds, seas and currents for *léfa*, when the boats go out hunting sea game six days a week. Nevertheless, *tamata taka* is a time when whales are known to swim the Timor Straits and the Savu Sea as the currents change and begin to flow from the east, the current being known as *olé*. The very hot, dry and still season from September through October is called *barafâi* or sometimes *léfa bogel* because, although whales still come, the conditions for catching them are very difficult and the men are therefore said to be 'lazy' about going to sea. The wet season from November to February is called *kronâ*. In my experience the very hot season *barafâi* lasted to the beginning of January.

<sup>5</sup> Father (Pater) Dupont retired from the Parish of Lamalera and surrounding villages in November 1994, after working here for over 30 years. He was replaced by Pater Bataonâ.



in regularly since we arrived. I feel my personal space invaded as they walk in and casually start looking through our binoculars. Then I feel guilty and confused, reminded of how Malinowski had fathered the practice of ethnographic fieldwork through his critique of anthropologists who remained safely on their verandahs. In other words, he was critical of those anthropologists who didn't live amongst the people whose practices they studied. In turn, it has been observed that Malinowski, likewise, desired to escape his situation (Stocking 1983:108). His tent may have been in the middle of a village, but this did not prevent him from using it to hide away. And now here I was...already failing. I wanted to be a good anthropologist, which meant being open, but my whole being ached for solitude. Hiding my feelings, I go out on to the verandah to join the others.

The *téna* can be seen straight out to sea. Further out, beyond the horizon, lies Timor. The boats are already surrounded by whales and in the throes of the hunt. Mikhael and Stefan tell us whales have been harpooned. Again I am stunned by this ability to read details in what I can only see as an empty space. Then suddenly there is a momentary glimpse of a harpooner launching himself from the *hâmmâlollo* (the bamboo platform that stretches out over the bow of the *téna*) and, forgetting my guilty anger, I am suddenly caught up with the others in the excitement of this moment.

In the early afternoon two whaling boats, the Baka Ténâ and the Mnula Blolo return with sperm whales in tow. One whale is a nine metre female and the other a toothless infant of about three metres. The larger whale has one end of a rope threaded through a hole carved through its snout region; the other end is secured to a post of the *najâ*, the hut of the *téna*. This whale will be divided up tomorrow when the tide goes out. The small whale is carved up immediately. Its meat is red in comparison to the black meat of the adult *koteklema*<sup>6</sup> I have already seen.

Later in the day two *jonson*<sup>7</sup> – modern wooden boats with outboard motors – go out to search for the four *téna* that are still at sea. The *jonson* take out supplies of food, water and spare equipment. But by nightfall the *jonson* return without having made a sighting. People gather in small groups on the beach keeping a vigil, their pressure lamps lighting up the little bay to help the *téna* find their way home.

<sup>6</sup> *Koteklema*, sperm whale, is also spelt *kotâklema* by members of the village. As spelling becomes influenced by the rules of Bahasa Indonesia, the silent *e* is inserted to make *kotekelema*. The cetacean is named after its distinctive head, *kotâ*. Professor Keraf (clan Lamakera) notes that *kotâ* becomes *kote* when followed by the letter *k* (Keraf 1978:20).

<sup>7</sup> The *jonson* is a more modern design of wooden boat named after the Johnson brand of outboard motors, regardless of which brand of motor is actually used.

It rains heavily during the night and in the morning the *téna* still haven't returned. The two *jonson* head out again. While we wait for the boats I bury myself in 'studying', in the hope that the inquisitive children will get bored and wander off. I write up my journal which, no matter how I try to force myself into its routine, always seems to need updating. Apart from a newly developing obsession to include my experimental recipes, I note the many new words in Indonesian and in the Lamaleran dialect of the regional language of Lamaholot (see Keraf 1978). I am swamped with new vocabulary every time I speak to someone – perhaps this is why I crave solitude. I look out at the beach from my guiltily hidden position on the verandah; groups of people sit in the shade of a few *najâ*, likewise waiting for the return of the boats.

Jean and I head down to the beach. We recognise Mama<sup>8</sup> Maria Kedofil Krova (clan Tanakrofa) who manages the house we are renting and who settled us in. We have met her only twice before but already feel relaxed in her presence; she seems to radiate a calm that is so welcome in our giddy space of day-to-day life. Maria Kedofil tells us that men have been dragged out to sea for two or three days before. She then goes on to explain which boats are missing and which clans they are from. Her information is clear and precise, slowing her speech a little to ensure we follow the details. All the lost *téna* are from the lower part of the village, Lali Fattâ (Lamalera B),<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Adults are generally addressed quite formally. *Mama* is a term used in the Flores region for a woman and is the most common greeting for women in Lamalera. It is equivalent to the Indonesian *Ibu*, by which outsiders may be addressed. *Mrs* is used for Western women, although *Mr* may also apply to them as well as men. In the Lamaleran dialect of the *Lamaholot* language, the corresponding term is *Ina*, which is used in ceremonial contexts. The term *Ema* is used in the same way. The term for older people, equivalent to grandparents – but also used to refer to ancestors – is most commonly *Bélé* which applies to both males and females. The Indonesian term *Nenek* (grandmother) is also widely used to apply to both older men and women. The Indonesian term for ancestors is *nenek moyang*. Grown men are referred to as *Bapa* – equivalent to the Indonesian *Bapak* – or, ceremonially, *Ama*. Children are most commonly called by their nicknames which will often be a combination of their Saint's name and their *lefo* (*kampung*) or village name; often children are simply referred to as *Ina* or *Ama*. This is especially the case if the child is named after a grandparent (which is common practice), for it is impolite to state your parent's name and thus parents cannot yell out their children's ancestral name. Girls may occasionally also be referred to as *Ema* and boys quite often as *Bapa*. All Lamalerans have three parts to their name: Saint's name; village name, which refers to their ancestors or certain events and carries ritual prohibitions; and their family name. The family name is either their actual clan name, or the clan name modified or shortened. For a further explanation of relationship terminology, see Keraf (1978:98-106).

<sup>9</sup> Têti Lefo (above village) and Lali Fattâ (down at the beach) are the place names which refer to the Lamalera that has a shared history and culture. The administrative division of Lamalera into parts A and B is quite different. Lamalera A includes the section of the village to the west and also other small hamlets that do not share the same history as Lamalera. Often Lamalera A is referred to in Indonesian as *atas* (above), as topographically it is situated above Lamalera B. Lamalera B consists of the eastern side of the village and includes the beach where the boats are housed. This section of the village is often referred to in Indonesian as *bawah*, below. It includes the new satellite section of the village called Futunlolo (or Lamalera C) whose residents are part of the various subclan houses located in either Têti Lefo or Lali Fattâ. The administrative section of Lamalera B also includes the historically separate villages of Ongaona and Fulandoni to the east. This ethnography is concerned with the Lamalera comprised of the ceremonial



which lies nestled around the beach and then stretches out to the east, rising a little up the steep side of the dormant volcano behind. The boats are from clans within the neighbourhood of the white house. The Kelulus and the Kéna Pukâ belong to the Bedionâ clan. We stayed at Bapa Abel Beding's (clan Bedionâ) 'homestay' for the week before we moved to the white house. He is both the *ata molâ*,<sup>10</sup> the shipwright of these boats, and the *téna alep*, the customary lord of the boat Kelulus. His homestay is also the ceremonial house (*lango bélâ*) for this boat. The Kéna Pukâ, although a *téna* of the Bedionâ clan, belongs to another branch of the family. Each major branch of a clan has its own *lango bélâ*, great house. Likewise each *téna* must have its own ceremonial house in which to store the rope called *léo fâ* (the leader which attaches between the harpoon and thicker ropes), and in which the members of the boat cooperative can meet.<sup>11</sup> The other two missing *téna* are the Téli Heri, which belongs to the Batafo clan, and the Kebako Pukâ, which is the boat of a clan house named Ola Langu, one of five separate houses (subclans) of the large Bataonâ clan. The white house that we have rented is owned by a member of the Bataonâ clan; however, this is a separate subclan and therefore has a different great house and a different boat.

In the afternoon the two *jonson* return. The crews confer with the men waiting in the bay, and then load up with fresh supplies that women bring to the beach. Abel Beding and Ambros Oléonâ, the *kepala desa* (governmental village head) of Lali Fattâ (Lamalera B) are on board. As the men head out, rain begins to pour. And then, as the darkness settles for another night, I start to feel panic rise inside me. I think of the men in small boats lost out in the black sea. I want to cry. Tears of confusion well up, triggered by the thought of the disappeared boats, but overflowing for my own deep sense of loss of self which the plight of the village seems to continually reflect back to me. I don't even know these men and feel hypocritical in allowing myself to be overwhelmed by events I'm not involved in. And yet, it is as if this accident is simultaneously manifested in my very being and embodied in my own barely controllable emotions – as if one were feeding the other. An uneasy sleep awaits me, hampered by these thoughts which seem to be more than just the narcissistic projections of an overwrought neophyte anthropologist.

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sections of Téli Lefo and Lali Fattâ - which are also the ceremonial centres for the residents who live in Futunilolo.

<sup>10</sup> The term *ata molâ* means a person of traditional knowledge. In this case it refers to boat construction.

<sup>11</sup> One of the theories of the term *Baléo*, the call to the hunt, is that it means 'fetch the *léo*'. Traditionally the *léo fâ* ropes must be kept in the ceremonial house and not in the boats (discussion with Bélé Petrus Hidâ Blikololong, clan Blikolollo, 1994). For a detailed reasoning of this term, see Barnes (1996:307).

The sun announces Saturday morning. Market day. We have a meagre breakfast and prepare to go on the long walk to Fulandoni to stock up on food. My anxiety continues to rise as the situation regarding the boats becomes more critical – still no word – and as I begin to realise how difficult it is to live independently in a subsistence village. We actually don't know how to manage without running water, a fridge, a grocery store and permanent electricity. Perhaps the walk to market will do me some good, but I have a sneaking suspicion that I just want to escape from the village. I may have prepared myself for an abstract and heroic notion of research, but I feel less and less capable of dealing with the vagaries of a life in which this capable self is constantly sacrificed to the relations of day-to-day living.

We return in the early afternoon, exhausted and with little to show for the twelve kilometre hike. The stark reality of the market has sunk in: this exchange system caters little for money. Our fresh provisions won't last long, especially without refrigeration, and we have nothing to exchange for food. I start to seriously contemplate whether we can exist here, trying to do all, or most, of our own chores and also do 'fieldwork'. I'm worried that daily survival is getting in the way of 'research'.

The children notice we are back and begin to congregate on our front step. Every day they come around for medicine for their cuts or other minor ailments. These first-aid sessions began on our first day in the village when we were approached for *plester plester*. We have already restocked those plasters or bandaids, as well as antiseptics. Being able to contribute in this small way makes me feel useful, as if I am somehow a part of something. In doing something, I momentarily escape this anxious waiting – for the return of boats and the arrival of my longed-for anthropological self.

Mikhael comes over from next door. He politely asks to use the binoculars. His politeness makes me feel embarrassed for having previously pointed out that he should ask before using things; then again, he is the only person who is so forward in his approach. Mikhael often acts as a guide to travellers, journalists and documentary teams staying in this house, which perhaps explains to some degree his very relaxed and informal manner. He tells us that a boat has been spotted on the horizon. Jean and I turn and stare out to sea – nothing. Finally we make out something faint, a blurry square shape that indicates the rectangular sail of a *téna*. It is moving straight towards Lamalera. More people move down to the beach and the excitement slowly mounts. I'm still busy dressing the last of the children's cuts as the lone boat approaches, towed in by one of the *jonson*. It's the Tédi Heri. Jean heads to the beach. Suddenly the women start wailing and I am terrified of what might have happened. Visibly shaking, I quickly

apply the last bandage. This last patient is little Ansel Tapoonâ, a very sweet and shy boy who was one of the first children to come to me for treatment of a seriously infected cut that has been festering for several months. Speaking up, he says: '*Ibu nangis; Bapak mati*' – 'the women are crying; a man is dead.' By now I am very close to tears but feel immeasurably grateful to this boy who has reached out to me with these words. I feel, literally, touched.

I hurry down to the beach. Jean is helping to pull the whaling boat up the shore. No dead body is carried out, but men are escorted away by small groups of sobbing women. Some of these men are also in tears. In the midst of all this foreignness and this heightened commotion I feel so abysmally lost and afraid. One of the returned whalers holds a small audience as he tells about the misadventure. I hear a strange single-pitched rhythmic tune; I have no idea where it is coming from or if it is instrumental, vocal or some crazy wind. Nobody else appears to have noticed it. I wonder if I'm going insane. Still no body is taken from the boat. I feel so useless standing here amongst these people in their moment of grief, an eavesdropper on this crisis and their personal misery. I no longer have any idea of why I am here. Where am I? This isn't like those informative and assured ethnographies I have read. This is a terrible mess, and here I am, a complete stranger to these people and becoming more and more strange to myself, unable to communicate the right words, unable to put my hand out and touch someone. I feel so absolutely lacking in the face of this tragedy. I want be able to do something, anything; I want to run away. I walk over to Jean.

He seems more calm and rational and informs me quite clearly that there is no body. Mikhael comes towards us with a large pair of binoculars hanging around his neck. He has been in the thick of the commotion the whole time; we now rely on him to fill us in on some details. Again I am struck by the intricacies of the relationships in which I am enmeshed. I am constantly trying to distance myself from this young man whose manners I find too familiar: both too casual, and too recognisably the easygoing manners adopted by some travellers. Mikhael's manners offend me precisely because they remind me that in Lamaleran eyes I am seen as a tourist, rather than the anthropologist I desire to have reflected back to me. Though I desperately want to be someone, I don't want to be that someone.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, it is this identification of us as tourists which allows Mikhael to adopt the role of tourist guide, keeping us informed of this village event. Furthermore, this tourist-guide relation allows us, in turn, to feel at

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<sup>12</sup> Just as anthropologists don't want to be seen as 'tourists', neither do documentary makers, journalists or travellers.

ease to ask questions. Mikhael confirms that nobody is dead. The Tėti Heri has come back to report the last location of the three remaining boats still lost at sea.

As night falls and another search party heads out into the darkness, I suddenly feel alone. Now, instead of desperately desiring isolation, I long to be on the beach surrounded by groups of people, sitting around lamps, keeping watch in the black night. But I feel too awkward and alien to walk the small distance to the beach; I cannot bridge this awful gap.

All night the house is lit by the eerie glow of the lamps on the beach. I sleep fitfully, woken by the thunderous sound of waves crashing outside our bedroom window as the tide turns.

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Sunday morning. No news of the remaining boats. They have been out at sea for three nights, and today will be the men's fourth day without food. It will be an important day for prayer. Jean and I get up and wash. We put on our best clothes and wander up the hill to *Tėti Lefo* (Lamalera A) for Mass, smiling and nodding shyly as we pass people along the path. This simple act of washing and dressing up and exchanging greetings gives me a certain sense of things being in place. I am surprised to find this ritual, like the ritual of the Mass itself, so welcoming. The church is a cement structure with a high, corrugated iron roof. On the wall behind the altar is a mural depicting religious scenes, along with vignettes of the Vatican and views of the village and whaling boats. I enjoy allowing my eye to wander over this very pleasant mural where Saint Peter is, appropriately, a prominent saint. I also enjoy sitting in the calm of the church surrounded by people, listening to the rhythm of the hymns and the harmonies of voices all around me. I don't know the hymns and the harmonies are not familiar, and neither can I follow most of the words, but nonetheless, I recognise in this ritual pattern a serenity, and am soothed in its presence. Like the endless ocean, this is a space of nothingness that is simultaneously alive. In it I experience a stillness, the same feeling I experience in the presence of Mama Maria Kedofil. This is a space both empty *and* resonating with a comforting fullness.

This short-lived sense of peace passes when we arrive back at the house to the interruptions of daily life. Mikhael and his friends turn up to borrow the binoculars.

Children start to arrive to have their sores attended to and I sense that I can't cope with this constant interaction. Then I suddenly remember that Sunday is the day of rest: there will be no *klinik* on Sundays. Falling in with this pre-existing ritual structure seems so right. The children, recognising this reasoning, move off to play in the sand and sea while Jean and I attend to chores around the house as we wait for word of the boats.

As another evening descends, people once more take up the watch on the beach. At midnight I am woken by the loud wailing of the women as the *jonson* returns with no news. And so the wait and the vigil continues.

On Monday we go to the main town of Lewoleba, heading off in the pre-dawn gloom to hike up the mountain in order to catch the truck for the bone-jarring four hour ride into town for the Monday market. Stocked up with provisions, we make the long return trip back on Tuesday, hiking down the mountain and arriving home exhausted from the difficult travel. Immediately a few children turn up to have their cuts looked at. Then Mikhael comes over to tell us that the boats and men have finally been found.

I realise how grateful I am that Mikhael thought to bring us this information that he heard on the local radio news broadcast from Kupang, in Timor. Ours may be a rather clumsy relationship, full of personal and cultural differences, but nevertheless I realise this *is* a relationship, and like all relations, it has moments of difficulty *and* grace. But there is something more in this strange arrangement that feeds my sense of vulnerability. I realise it is not me, the neophyte anthropologist, who gathers information. Rather, I seem to be a passive receptor subject to the accidents of information people pass on to me. Mikhael goes on to explain that the remaining thirty-four men were sighted and picked up by the tourist ship *Spice Islander*. While everyone in the village is very relieved, concern now focuses on the two *téna* that remain submerged below the sea's surface. All that people know at this stage is that the Kena Pukâ and all the men have been taken to Kupang, the territorial capital, from where they will travel to Larantuka on Flores to report to the *bupati* (regent) before coming home. On their return there will be a ritual gathering in order to reverse ill effects caused by the wailing of the bereaved women. Through this crying the men have been treated as the dead: this situation must be remedied to allow them to return safely.

It is still several days before the men will come home to Lamalera with the details of their story. In the meantime Jean and I continue with our attempts to cope with daily life.

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A small breakthrough in food comes via the little *klinik*. A woman had come to see me about her daughter who had scabies. When we were in Lewoleba we bought some cream to treat it, and now I head off to deliver this to her. On a sudden whim I ask in return for some green tree leaf vegetable from her *merunggai* tree. And later when I take little Ansel to the *Puskesmas* (public health clinic) to be diagnosed for his swollen stomach and pay for his treatment of worming tablets, his parents send me a *kemânu*, flying fish. These are only small steps in exchange but they give us a sense of being in relation with a few people. However we still remain completely hopeless at everyday chores. When we do get fresh food, we are unsure of how to prepare it. Sesilia, the little girl next door, shows me the proper way to peel choko. Her movements are so elaborate that I laugh, recognizing in her motions my own status as a very incompetent woman. And when Jean delicately scales, cleans, and fillets our first ever flying fish, the children gather around and giggle as they watch what appears to be a bizarre ritual. The local method of preparation is to gut the fish, chop off the 'wings', then cut it in half and fry the pieces in coconut oil, head and tail included. Through these daily chores, we start to recognise, when we're not feeling defensive and self-conscious, that our own cultural practices are not natural and real, but – as the laughing children have already hinted – are strange and exotic. Clearly, just as we can never *know* our own culture as if we were outside it, nor can we know the culture of Lamalera; more as if by accident, we quite simply begin learning aspects of this other practice.

Then, one evening, we have a glimpse of a different way of being in Lamalera. This sense of relation comes to us, strangely enough, in the guise of a local Indonesian pop song that the children are all singing: the 'Ging gang gooly' song. The words of the song mean nothing and it is therefore difficult for the children to remember, even though they love the tune. As a small group of neighbourhood children assembles on our front steps and begins singing yet again, Jean suddenly joins in – and he knows all the words! He had learnt the same song at Boy Scouts many years ago. We sit around for several evenings repeatedly singing the song with the children.

Singing this song that has no meaning is somehow full of meaning. This mundane activity is suddenly charged with a sacredness as it enables our neighbours and ourselves to weave tenuous threads of connection. Through these children, and their

crazy tune that just happens to be in the charts and just happens to be one of the very rare songs to which Jean knows the words, quite possibly precisely because they have no meaning – through this chance incident, we feel just a little at home.

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Glimmers of hope in daily life, however, seem far removed from my official reason for being in Lamalera. Research still remains extraordinarily elusive and difficult. Even informal interviews with tourists, conducted in the comforts of English and the familiarity of Western culture, are unpredictable. A stream of travellers has been through the village in the last two weeks and I try to meet them to find out their interest in, and reaction to, the village. When Jean and I first travelled to Lamalera in 1991, there was a German film documentary team here which blatantly shot around tourists (as subsequent documentaries continue to do).<sup>13</sup> It struck me that tourism was part of village life and need not be edited out.

My main interest is in what draws the travellers to Lamalera. There is a definite theme emerging concerning the romance of traditional whaling. Deciding to run with this motif, I try to obtain more concrete data regarding tourists' desires in Lamalera. A questionnaire (in English and French) is devised and copies left in each homestay.<sup>14</sup> The survey reveals that practically everyone, like the guidebooks they read, mentions Moby Dick. I wonder what it is about Moby Dick that is so seductive. Yet, although I find this sort of information thought provoking, I have no idea what it has to do with an ethnography about Lamalera. I keep collecting the questionnaires and doing interviews even though I fear this research is completely useless. In order to justify what may be a lapse into a topic of irrelevance, I cling to a small piece of advice given by one of my professors as I was about to leave for the field: 'observe everything', were the parting words of the anthropologist Raul Pertierra. I could only hope his words would guide me, even though my recent experiences in trying to observe things had suggested that vision wasn't the natural, taken-for-granted ability I had imagined it to be.

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, a recent documentary by Tim Severin (1999c) gives no hint of tourism in the village. The guest books of both Abel Beding's and Guru Ben's homestays, however, indicate tourists were in the village at the time. A documentary, which was to be produced by Hilton Cordell and Associates and directed by Sally Ingleton, and which specifically planned to include tourism, was unable to attract funding.

<sup>14</sup> The survey ran for two and a half years, with the majority of the questionnaires dating from 1994. The last of the questionnaires were collected on a return visit to the village in July 1996.

This research entailing working with tourists, as with my other attempts at observation and information gathering, likewise, always seems to go astray. I head off to Abel Beding's homestay to meet a couple of travellers only to find they have moved up the hill to Guru<sup>15</sup> Ben's homestay in Tėti Lefo (Lamalera A). Abel Beding's is also the *lango béléâ* (named Muri Langu) for the lost Kelulus. This ceremonial house has therefore been hosting meetings of the boat corporation and clan, as well as regular prayer meetings. The tourists, feeling uncomfortable and intrusive, thought it best to move. But when Jean and I then head up towards Tėti Lefo, it is only to find we have to detour around the village square where a meeting is in progress under the large *gudi* tree.<sup>16</sup> I am constantly frustrated in my attempts to bring this research – literally – into line.

Ever since the disappearance of the boats and their crews, there have been regular meetings in the village square of Lali Fattâ (Lamalera B). This meeting is attended by the *kepala desa* and some of the other men with high standing in the village. I never ask to sit in on these meetings, and always respectfully skirt around the square whenever they are in progress. But a few men down at the boat huts explain they are *adat* meetings to discuss why the boats are lost and where the fault could lie. People try to think of what may be the problem and why they are being punished by the ancestors. Individuals confess to faults that may be contributory, but accusations also run hot and several fierce arguments have already broken out. Implicit within these debates is the suggestion that this is not just a crisis of lost boats, but also an existential one. Instead of demonstrating a preordained cultural order, the responses to this situation suggest that Lamalerans feel morally at sea. In turn, my own discomfort in this situation implies both my feeling of being outside events, spying in, and paradoxically, of being, unwittingly, somehow morally involved. I secretly hope that the ancestors aren't angry because of my research, and I make a heartfelt vow to respect the ways of the ancestors. All of a sudden it seems so normal to pray to them, it feels so right and so comforting.

The men at the boat huts say the outcome of the *adat* meetings is positive because the crews have been found alive. Nevertheless, within the village there continues to be a low rumble of negative comments about the loss of the whale and the two *téna*. To return without the whale is a great loss, but to return without the boats is disastrous.

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<sup>15</sup> *Guru* is an Indonesian term meaning teacher. Ben Ebang (clan Ebâonâ) is the local school principal.

<sup>16</sup> The tree is called *budi* in Indonesian.



The story of the tragedy began when, after setting to sea and giving chase, two whales were harpooned. However, the whales were too wild to get additional harpoons into in order to kill them. As it got dark, the Tėti Heri and the Kéna Pukâ cut themselves free of their whale and then joined with the Kelulus and Kebako Pukâ in trying to finish off their catch. But the animal retaliated, stoving in the top bow strake (front plank) of the Kéna Pukâ. During the night the four boats continued to be dragged by the whale further from Lamalera. The next morning the Kebako Pukâ attempted to harpoon the whale, but again the whale struck. The Kelulus then moved in for a strike but the whale smashed the boat in which then sank below the surface. Kebako Pukâ advanced again but the maddened whale attacked and this boat also became submerged. They had no option now but to cut all the ropes and let the whale loose. The Kelulus and the Kebako Pukâ were lying below the surface of the ocean, tied to the Kéna Pukâ which carried all thirty-four remaining men. The Teti Heri had left the other boats at about midday the day before. At that stage they were near the coast of Timor. But with the whole entourage unable to sail, the men and boats were left to the mercy of the currents.

After the Tėti Heri left the three other *téna*, the boats continued to drift. First they were carried by a current coming from the west, *fura*, and thus on Saturday morning they could see Futu Atadéi, the peninsula which lies on the south-east point of Lembata Island. Then they were carried by the current coming from the east, *olé*, which carried them towards Pulau Solor, the island to the west of Lamalera. Yet by the evening of the same day, the men on the *téna* could see the glow from lights on the small island, Pulau Semau, in the entrance to the harbour of Kupang. The next day was Sunday; the men repented their sins and prayed. Then they made preparations for their deaths. They got ready ropes to tie their bodies to the boat. In this way, when the boats were found, so, too, would their bodies which could be returned to Lamalera for burial. To be forever lost at sea would mean that the men's spirits would never rest. Men, or their embodied remains, must return home. The whalers had done all they could to stay alive: they had collected some rain water for drinking and they had eaten bits of their shirts and slivers of wood from the boats to ward off hunger pains – but now their hopes for rescue were ebbing as the light faded from the sky and the dark closed in.

That evening, a little before midnight, the tourist ship *Spice Islander* sighted the boats and men near the island of Sumba. They were rescued after three whole nights at sea, just as they were about to enter into their fourth night. All the men were taken aboard, but only the *Kéna Pukâ* was sea-worthy and could be dragged behind the ship. The

Captain ordered the other two boats to be cut adrift. On Monday, the ship entered Kupang harbour and the men were handed over to the care of the *gubenor* (governor). They were also met by Lamaleran people who live in this territorial capital, including the reporter Michael Beding, a brother of Abel Beding and a clansman of the lost Kelulus.

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Michael Beding and his wife, Indah Lestari-Beding, later published an article in the local newspaper articulating the seriousness of the loss of the *téna* in that fateful meeting with the whale (1994:1,10). The title of the article reads: *Tragedi Dahsyat, Nelayan Kembali Tanpa Perahu* (A Dreadful Tragedy, Fishermen return without Boats). The article goes on to detail the emotional reactions of the men as the *téna* were cut loose: how one man could not look, how another ran to the front of the boat and declared he wanted to die with the *téna* while other men tried to restrain him, and how the whale hunters cried hysterically as the connecting ropes to the *téna* were severed. The article describes this as the worst possible tragedy for these fishermen, in that, after so many days at sea, they had to return to Lamalera without the boats. In the context of Lamaleran culture, this terrible loss is difficult to overcome. The proportions of the event are described by one of the men interviewed, Bertolomeus Lasan Krova (clan Tanakrofa):

*Saya sendiri...baru kali ini bertemu dengan paus seperti setan itu. Sudah 80 paus di mana saya juga ikut menangkapnya, tapi yang paling ganjil adalah paus ini, yang nafasnya begitu panjang, punya dagu seperti tidak ada dan hanya punya tiga gigi, punya punggung berwarna putih juga di dadanya, dan hilangnya di saat tali dipotong begitu kilat. Biasanya, apalagi dengan 10 tempuling di tubuhnya pasti masih berputar-putar di sekitar perahu. Tetapi ini langsung saja menghilang entah ke mana.*

This is the first time I have met with a satan-whale like that one. I have already joined in catching eighty whales, but this is the most peculiar: its spout was really long, its jaw was disfigured and had only three teeth, its back was coloured white as was also its chest, and in a lightning flash it could cut loose from the rope. Moreover, even with ten harpoons in its body it could have still turned the boat round and round. But it immediately disappeared off to I don't know where. (Beding and Beding 1994:1)

I am struck by the description of this 'satan whale'. Here in these words from Bapa Bertolomeus, in this article written by one of the sons of the village and his Indonesian wife, I recognise this peculiar whale. Its disfigurements, its colour, its ability to cut the rope with lightning speed and escape despite the many harpoons stuck in its back – all

these details resonate with *Moby Dick*. In Melville's book, too, Ahab describes to his men that one of the characteristics of Moby Dick is that his 'spout is a big one' (1986:260). However, it is not so much the whale's spout that haunts the imagination as the particularities of the animal's very body. The first sighting of Melville's whale, like Bapa Bertolemeus's description, speaks of the creature's strange jaw.

And thus, through the serene tranquilities of the tropical sea, among waves whose hand-clappings were suspended by exceeding rapture, Moby Dick moved on still withholding from sight the full horrors of his submerged trunk, entirely hiding the wrenched [*sic*] hideousness of his jaw. (1986: 657)

This is quite clearly not just the jaw of any whale, for Moby Dick has a 'long, narrow, scrolled lower jaw', a 'crooked jaw' (1986:658;260). And as for the trunk of its body, it possesses 'a peculiar snow-white wrinkled forehead, and a high pyramidal white hump' (1986:281).

The rest of his body was so streaked, and spotted, and marbled with the same shrouded hue, that, in the end, he had gained his distinctive appellation of the White Whale (1986:281).

And this same mighty whale, like the one encountered by the men of Lamalera, always escapes capture. This is a sperm whale of 'uncommon magnitude and malignity, which whale, after doing great mischief to his assailants, had completely escaped them' (Melville 1986:277).

Additionally, Moby Dick, like the whale Bapa Bertolomeus Krova describes, swims with the mark of the hunter in its back. In the words of Queequeg, the famous harpooner of Melville's novel, this whale carries 'a good many iron in him hide, too...all twiske-tee be-twisk, like him' (1986:260).

The familiar details of this description do not, however, stop with Moby Dick. There are likewise striking similarities with Leviathan. In the Old Testament, Leviathan is the dragon of the sea, the 'crooked serpent' (Isaiah 27:1; Melville 1986:78). In Hindu belief, the dark serpent 'is lightning, the divine spear and warlike power' (Cooper 1995:217). The same imagery reappears in modern literature. Virginia Woolf describes storm-tossed seas in metaphors that suggest satanic whales:

only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing, as the winds and waves disported themselves like the amorphous bulks of leviathans (1977:147).

The archetypal similarities between Leviathan and Moby Dick, and likewise the 'satan whale' that caused the *téna* and the men to disappear, remind me of how my research is also dragged off in unpredictable directions by this same whale, as it resurfaces in guidebooks and articles, in interviews and surveys with tourists – and in a quotation from a man who has never heard of Moby Dick. This research continually wanders, as subject to the vagaries of the currents as the two remaining *téna* lost at sea, never to be found.<sup>17</sup>

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Unexpectedly the world, or something, disappears. There is an absence: whether a loss of self or a loss of boats. But where is it precisely that one goes when lost at sea?

This is to ask the same question that Catherine Clément posed of syncope in her study of the philosophy of lack. Syncope – the missing beat, the fade and the faint. This loss is associated with the feminine: 'it is she who sinks down, dress spreading like a flower, fainting' (Clément 1994:1). The faint evokes a graceful image, but it also hints of a fall from grace. Syncope is the gap in the desire for a perfect whole, a rupture in the heroic quest.

It is essential for the beat to change register, and it is syncope, either visible or hidden, that does the work. From that moment something stops, life perhaps, or habit, the daily routine, even the blood in the veins (1994:3).

Clément's philosophy of syncope describes so well my own experiences of fieldwork. It is not simply that fieldwork is a change of location, or daily routine, or habit. This change induces a debilitating sense of loss. Something stops: life itself. This experience is likewise detailed by Victor Turner in his study of the liminal phase in the *rites de passage*. Neophytes undergoing initiation, he explains, 'are neither living nor dead from one aspect, and both living and dead from another. Their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories' (1967:97).<sup>18</sup> During this initiation neophytes become invisible, they no longer recognise themselves (1967:95).

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Severin's research in Lamalera was based on the quest for the white whale and is an excellent example of the compulsion of this archetype. Severin's work does not deal with the white whale as an archetype, and in his desire for a real white whale, he has included some dubious information. Especially misleading is the editing and translation of an interview filmed with Bélé Petrus Hidâ Blikololong aboard a *téna* (see Severin 1999a,b,c). This does not, however, take away from the point that Severin's feel for archetypes makes his own stories very alluring.

<sup>18</sup> Georges Bataille (1986) similarly theorises death as continuity as well as discontinuity.

Again, there is nothing to see. Recent feminist anthropology has taken up this notion of the gap as the very space of alterity. Thus, Kathleen Stewart, like Turner, writes of a state of being in between where 'things are neither fully present nor absent but linger and echo in a simultaneous lack/excess' (1996:67). Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing speaks of this space of marginality as both peripheral and transgressive. These are borderline (and also borderless) states (1993:13-18,ch.8).

Like these ethnographers, Catherine Clément doesn't just invite the reader to ponder the gap of syncope; she suggests that this very rupture enables movement. As the words of the poet Louis Aragon remind her, syncope:

Seeks a lack, a crack there

Where mutiny can pass

(quoted in Clément 1994:9)

Victor Turner similarly encourages researchers to ponder liminality as a crucial aspect of the rites of passage. It is through this gap, he notes, that the possibilities for new relations and ways of being may arise (Turner 1967:97). The significance of syncope is that this disappearance invites change.

However, the change brought about by syncope is not effected from the outside. The experience punctures one's very being. This is precisely the point Turner makes. Taking as an example the work of his colleague Audrey Richards (1956) on the initiation of girls in Bemba and Shilluk society, Turner notes that this rite is spoken of as 'growing a girl', indicating that the condition is embodied *in* the person.

To 'grow' a girl into a woman is to effect an ontological transformation; it is not merely to convey an unchanging substance from one position to another by a quasi-mechanical force (1967:101-102).

Initiation isn't the acquisition of knowledge; through this process neophytes embody knowledge. Dispossessed of their sense of self, in this transitional state neophytes characteristically 'have nothing' (1967:98-105). It is through this nothingness, in 'darkness, silence, celibacy, in the absence of merriment and movement' that a 'mystical solidarity' may arise (Turner 1967:110).

Darkness; silence; stillness – an absence. Annihilation! But, this is not necessarily extinction, for it is in this state of nothingness that we may meet with the sacred. Yet, it is this same state that is so very difficult to face or endure. This nothing is the yawning gap – the abyss. It is terrifying. Rather than submitting to this passive state, I found

myself trying to cling to the activity of 'research'. It was only through the unnerving and persistent repetition of the motif of disappearing that I was finally forced to slow down and to dwell momentarily in this 'space of error or gap' (Stewart 1996:26). It was, likewise, only through the repetition of the motif of disappearing that the details of this loss could begin to be felt, for none of these absences were exactly the same. My own fear of being lost was different from the boats lost at sea. Yet both these senses of absence were, in turn, so different to the feeling I encountered in the peaceful presence of Mama Maria Kedofil, or the beautiful stillness of the church and the ceremony of the Mass, or the supporting nothingness of the pop song without meaning. Moreover, the quality of this recurring motif, as evidenced through these examples, also suggests that while these are details of individual events, they nevertheless cannot be reduced to isolated incidences. The very repetition of this loss both verifies these specific stories, allowing them to be glimpsed as precise phenomena, or situated stories, and also suggests that they are never only personal or reducible to one culture – they bear the mark of the archetypal. In turn, the experience of loss is an integral part of the process of fieldwork. Anthropology's ritual practice, like the rites of passage it has spent so much time detailing, is based on syncope. Anthropology works its magic through the space of the gap.

Kathleen Stewart, among other feminist writers, maintains that it is this very lack that enables the prospect of a different ethics for anthropology. In the space of the gap stories gather, offering fragments of different stories:

They coalesce in moments and spaces poised on dangerous brinks.... Here on this edge facing danger, master narratives give way to the more fragmented, situated stories...and to the excesses of stories that fasten onto moments of shock.... Here the moves of master narrative give way, momentarily, to the movements of roaming and stopping (1996:107).

Such stories undermine the motif of the heroic journey as the basis of knowledge and being. Syncope acknowledges passivity as fundamental to the emergence of a different ontology and epistemology. Knowledge, according to this story, thus becomes reliant on the mystery of the unknown. We cannot know the other but can only be in relation with otherness. This suggests that anthropology necessitates relations with others and that every meeting is an ethical encounter – a situated story. Syncope hints of this encounter with the unknowable, the sacred (Clément 1994:11).

Four *téna* disappear, dragged away by a maddened whale. This whale in its very body carries the impress of syncope. A jaw all deformed, a crooked serpent of the sea. A

white whale. Clément, following Bataille, remarks that nature's syncopated beings are predisposed to being overwhelmed by the sacred. The lame, the cross-eyed, the crooked:

it is enough that the body be affected for the divine function to settle in, as if a fragile capacity for making consciousness disappear could be read in the flesh itself (1994:11).

To question where one goes when lost is to interrupt the adventure story that is preoccupied with a return to presence. It is to reconsider lack, not as empty but as strangely full. Lamaleran whale hunters on harpooning the whale were suddenly dragged out of control and lost at sea. Yet they steadfastly refused to cut the rope, for to cut the rope was also to sever the tie that held them and the whale in relation. Moreover, this tie also held the whalers in relation with the ancestors, with the fathers who had already made this journey.

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Throughout the drama of the lost boats I continue struggling with 'research'. I ask Jean, who has accompanied me in an official capacity as an artist, to draw a map of the position of each boat's *najâ* on the beach. Now we regularly get to wander up and down the beach with pens and pieces of paper. This at least makes us look as if we have a purpose, as if we are 'doing research'. However, this sense of fullness does not last long. Whenever I pause to think about it, I realise that I'm not convinced of the actual purpose of this map, nor of the map Jean begins of the main sections of the village. Neither map can portray my experiences of Lamalera, or, for that matter, the actual experiences of making these maps. What the maps do offer, though, is a sense of orientation: we begin to build up a picture of where each boat is positioned, and which subclan and great house each boat belongs to. And in this process of map making we are forced to go bodily forth. As Jean, in the heat of the day, paces out the relations of the *najâ* to each other and of houses to topography, and as I follow asking questions, we begin not just to know where things are, but find ourselves physically encountering people and *téna* and *najâ* and homes and *lango béléâ*. These maps, although it may not show on their surfaces, carry the invisible traces of these relations. And through these interactions, things never go according to plan.

As I walk along the beach, stopping occasionally to request information from the men working, or sitting in groups, or napping under the *najâ*, I am continually confused by

their responses. It is not just the boat name, or the clan name, or clan house they tell me about, they tell stories of the boats themselves. I find this constant state of excessive information as alarming as my lack of local knowledge. Nevertheless, I note it down.

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One of the stories that keeps recurring, drawing me from my research path, is the myth of the Dato Ténâ and the Whale. Snippets of this story surface as men persist in telling me about other occasions when boats have been lost at sea. This myth is also repeated when I ask about the origins of whale hunting, a question that has no answer. The sections of the myth translated here are extracted from a history of Lamalera based on a ritual recital of the origin stories performed in 1939 and later transcribed from memory by Guru Yosef Bura Bataonâ.

*Sekali jadi peledang<sup>19</sup> ini yang diketuai belawaing/ketuanya, yang bernama Dato Nudek menempuling seekor ikan paus besar. Peledang ini rupa-rupanya sendirian saja dihari itu dilautan. Buktinya tak ada peledang lain menolongnya. Hanya ternyata jelas oleh yang lain-lain bahwa mereka ada menempuling ikan tersebut. Lagi hidup. Sambil meluncur menarik peledang ini dengan lajunya kelautan lepas saja (arah ke pulau Timor). Berulang ditikam dengan tempuling yang lain-lain. Berulang-ulang pula di tikam-tikam dengan belada.<sup>20</sup> Lagi hidupkah ikan? Ja! Merontak-ontak juga? Ja! Meluncur menarik peledang? Ja, terus menerus saja menuju pulau Timor, arah ketimur. Siang dan malam terus-terus saja dengan arah kemikian, hingga peledang ini hilang lenyap tak kelihatan dari daratan pantai Lamalera. Para nelayan Lamalera dikerahkan keluar mencarinya sambil membawa perbekalan dan air minum secukupnya.*

Once upon a time, this *téna*, which was presided over by its elder named Dato Nudek [from the clan Lamanudek], harpooned a sperm whale. It appears that the *téna* was alone on the ocean that day. The evidence for this assumption is that there was no other *téna* helping. The only thing that is clear is that they harpooned the aforementioned whale. But the whale remained alive. It proceeded to drag the *téna* swiftly out towards the open sea in the direction of the island of Timor. Again and again the whale was stabbed with harpoon after harpoon. Repeatedly it was also stabbed with *belada* [lances]. Was the whale still alive? Yes! And struggling to get free? Yes! Dragging the *téna* at great speed? Yes, heading straight to eastern Timor. Day and night this scene went on until the *téna* completely vanished, not to be seen from the shore of Lamalera. The fishermen of Lamalera were called up to go out and conduct a search. They took with them fresh supplies and sufficient water.

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<sup>19</sup> *Pelé dang* or *plédang* is a term referring to the whaling boats; it is equivalent to the term *téna*.

<sup>20</sup> There are two notes about the Lamaleran term *belada* explaining that it is a type of lance. The tool was previously used for killing off the whale once it was secured to the boat.



*Hari pertama terpaksa pulang dengan kecewah dan sedih. Sebab: jangankan ketemu. Melihat tanda-tanda bukti, satupun tak ada. Berulang lagi keluar mencarinya pada hari kedua, ketiga, keempat.....pun tidak juga.*

The first day passed and they were forced to return home with great disappointment and sadness. The reason being: not only were they unable to find the men, they could not even see any sign of them. Again and again they went out searching, two, three and four days went by...in vain.

*Terpaksa diadakan saja peresmian untuk berkabung dll, karena dianggap tentu-tentu kaliannya menemui ajal. Kampung nelayan bagaikan ditutup kabut duka sajalah. Sunyi dan sepi. Baik di lautan maupun didaratan.*

So they were forced to carry out the rituals and ceremonial tasks of mourning, as all things considered, the men must surely have met their deaths. The fishing village was as if covered by a fog of sorrow. Still and silent. As it was at sea, so was it also on land.

*Sampai-sampai genap harinya berkabung itu, segala peledang keluar pula mencahari ikan, seperti biasa. Tetapi selama berminggu, berbulan, tak ketemu barang tanda, lagi pula khabar berita tentang peledang Datotena dan isinya, tak muncul orang-orangnya. Kasihan! Tentu-tentu hilang terus. Hati betul.*

When the mourning period was completed, all the *téna* went out again to fish, just as they used to. Even after weeks, months, there was still no sign. Nor did any news about the Dato Ténâ and the people aboard ever turn up. Mercy! They had disappeared without trace and must really be dead.

However, as Guru Bura goes on to point out, although the sea appeared empty and the boat and its men were nowhere to be seen, they were, in fact, all alive and without injury.

*Peledang dan isinya tak menemui sesuatu kecelakaan di waktu itu. Sekalipun ikan itu tak mau menyerah sepanjang siang dan malam. Belawaing Dato dengan rekan-rekannya tetap sabar dan tabah. Sampai pada akhirnya ikan menyerah, dan dimatikan dalam wilayah laut dipulau Pantar, (Duli). Rupanya terserah kepantai Duli oleh tingkahnya aliran arus, yang mengalir masuk ke Selat Marica dan Selat Ombai.*

The *téna* and its crew did not meet with an accident at that time. Although the fish struggled for the entire day and night, *Bélâfai* (captain) Dato and his crew continued to be patient and firm. At last the fish surrendered and was killed in the sea around Pantar Island and the village of Duli. It appears that the boat and its whale were surrendered up at the beach near Duli by the whim of the currents which flow in the Straits of Marica and Ombai.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> These currents are well known in the area for being notoriously strong. See Barnes (1974) for historical European reports of this phenomenon.

Guru Bura continues the story relating how the men arrived safely at Duli where the whale was butchered and exchanged for necessities. An agreement was made between Dato and his crew and the people of the surrounding villages that they would continue the market until the Dato Ténâ could leave for Lamalera. The market is called '*Mato baje*' (Dato's agreement). However, due to the difficulty of its location, the market has not been frequented in recent times.

It was several months before the Dato Ténâ could make the return journey to the island of Lembata as the men had to wait for the correct time to cross the ferocious straits. The ancestors had passed down the knowledge of astronomy and thus the marooned men could carefully calculate the time to return home via the phases of the moon. A wrong calculation, Guru Bura reminds his readers, 'can turn men into prey at the bottom of the sea.'

While the crew of the Dato Ténâ were stranded in Duli, they continued to hunt close to shore where the fish were abundant and tame. But the Dato Ténâ only caught small dolphins and ray such as *temu notong*, *kebong* and *moku*.<sup>22</sup> Dato didn't harpoon the big ones, such as *temu bélâ* and *belélang*<sup>23</sup> for the men only needed sufficient supplies to barter with the local villagers. On their return journey, they loaded only the dried meat, skin, and guts of the sperm whale they had caught, so their cargo was very light. The bones were left on Pantar and the fat was traded for food or given as their gift to the villagers.

The right time came and the whalers left Duli in fine spirits. They were, Guru Bura writes: 'impressed by the strangers at Duli and they left messages and hoped that in the years to come they might meet again at that place of the Dulis.'

But the tale does not end yet. The Dato Ténâ and its crew, influenced by their experiences of trade with the people of Duli, set up markets with the inhabitants of villages they stop at on the way, until they reach the village of Doni Nua Léla to the east of Lamalera. This is the site where the ancestors had lived for a period of time during

<sup>22</sup> The terms are Lamalera and translate as follows: *temu notong* is Frazer's Dolphin, *Lagenodelphis hosei* (Carwardine 1995: 208-209); *temu kebong* is known in English by several names including Melon-Headed Whale and Many-Toothed Blackfish; its scientific name is *Peponocephala electra*. Carwardine points out that Frazer's Dolphin's and Melon-Headed Whales are known to swim in the same areas (1995:156-157). This whale is very similar to the Pygmy Killer Whale. *Moku* is the Devil Ray, *Mobula diabolus*.

<sup>23</sup> Guru Bura here refers to *temu belau* which I have taken to mean *temu bélâ*, Short-finned Pilot Whale, *Globicephala macrorhynchus*. It might also refer to the smaller *temu blâ* (*belâ*), False Killer Whale, *Pseudorca crassidens*. *Belélang*, also spelt *blélâ*, is the giant manta ray, *Mantis birostris*.

their long migration to Lamalera. Dato reports in at this village which retains ancestral connections, and again sets up a market (*fulâ*), called Fulandoni – the market at Doni.<sup>24</sup>

*Khabar gembira yang mena[k]jupkan. Peledang Datotena mucul di Doni Nusa Lela. Semua anak buahnya selamat, nyaman, dalam keadaan segar bugar. Lagi-lagi peledangnya sarat dengan ikan-ikannya.*

The amazing good news. The Dato Ténâ reappeared in Doni Nua Léla. All members of the crew were safe and sound. On top of that, the *téna* was full of fish.

The crew of the *téna* realised that the people of Lamalera would have assumed they were all dead. They therefore were careful in their return, travelling at night so that acquaintances would not see them: they did not want to scare their families by a sudden reappearance.

*Tiba di Doni Nusa Lela (di pantai) pada waktu malam. Lalu ke kampung Nusa Lela dengan maksud membeli bekal dan melaporkan diri. Rumah yang ditujui tak percaya dan katanya bahwa itulah roh mereka sajalah (kewoko). Akhirnya belawaing memberi laporan jelas dengan berkata: "Saya ini belawaing Dato, pada peledangku Datotena. Kami menempuling ikan paus, dan dapat. Inilah sekeping ujung siripnya (iting). Kami sekaliannya selamat. Kami sekian lama ini berada di Duli. Kami kemari melaporkan diri, dan bermaksud membeli perbekalan. Kalau tak percaya sekarang, baiklah bila hari siang kamu menyaksikan dengan mata kepalamu keadaan kami dan peledang kami. Kami ini sungguh manusia hidup. Bukannya roh (kewoko)."*

They arrived at the beach of Doni Nua Léla during the night. Then to the village Nua Léla with the intention announcing themselves and of buying supplies. The household they found themselves with did not believe them and said it must be their spirits (*kefoko*). Finally the harpooner gave a clear report, saying: "I am *bélâfai* Dato, from my boat Dato Ténâ. We were hunting whales (*koteklema*) and got one. Here is a piece of the point of the fin (*iting*). We are all safe. During this long time we have been at Duli. We came here to announce ourselves, and to buy supplies. If you still don't believe us, wait till morning and you can witness with your own eyes our existence and that of our *téna*. We are truly living persons. Not spirits (*kefoko*)."

*Oleh penjelasan itu, isi rumah ini jadi percaya dan seluruh kampung Nusa Lela dimalam itu juga percaya dan datang berkerumun mendengar kisah yang dibawakan lamafa Dato dengan cucuran air mata. Ja, hati siapa tidak terharu, dan air mata mana yang dapat bertahan. Bayangkau: kalau kiranya peristiwa ini berlaku di Lamalera memang, bisa bisa malam ini menjadi ribut gaduh oleh ratapan dan tangisan para keluarga yang bersangkutan, pula para penghuni umumnya desa nelayan kita. Setelah hari siang, bernyata sungguh seperti*

<sup>24</sup> In the Lamaleran dialect the letter 'f' replaces the letter 'w'. Therefore Wulandoni is Fulandoni. However, many Lamalerans, especially in written documentation, use the letter 'w'. For instance, Guru Yosuf Bura Bataonâ's term *belawai(ng)* which in Lamaleran is *bélâfai*.

*kisahnyanya semalam tadi. Dengan pantas diadakan pasar dengan orang-orang disitu dan yang lain-lain dipedalaman (pasar Doni).*

Due to this explanation, the household believed them and that night the entire village of Nua Léla also believed them and they came in throngs to listen to the story told by harpooner Dato with tears in their eyes. Yes, who would not be touched, and who could hold their tears. Just imagine: if it happened that this incident occurred in Lamalera, the night might become full of the noise of howling and weeping of families and relations, likewise of all the inhabitants of our fishing village. With daytime came evidence of the truth of the story of that night. Immediately they set up a market together with those people and others from the inland (*fulâ Doni*).

*Khabar gembira disampaikan ke Lamalera. Desa Lamalera mengadakan pemulihan perkabungan yang berlalu berbulan itu. Lewat beberapa hari kemudian mereka disongsang oleh beberapa peledang. Di hantar ke Lamalera dengan cucuran air mata karena senang.*

The good news reached Lamalera. The village of Lamalera held a restoration ceremony to reverse the funerary rites which had been carried out in the previous months. A few days later the lost men were formally greeted by several *téna*. They were escorted to Lamalera with tears of joy.

*Bayangkan, hanya 1 peledang ini membongkar muatan ikan-ikanya, tetapi pantai pasir pelabuhan ini penuh sesak, menyemut manusia yang hadir menontonnya....*

Just imagine, only this one *téna* with its load of fish. Yet the beach of our harbour was crammed full, people swarmed to be present to observe it....

This one whale not only supplied the village with copious amounts of meat, but also with the necessary relationships required to trade the products of the hunt. Guru Bura goes on to describe the heroic terms in which the men of the Dato Ténâ were viewed. For these men had hunted down the great whale and returned with the treasure of its meat. And yet it was through their disappearance, through their vulnerability, through a certain passivity that they were able to return, changed. The qualities ascribed to the men are the same qualities that Guru Bura later sets out as the attributes and rules which whaler hunters of Lamalera should strive for in their pursuit of prey:

*Ya, semua-semua yang menyaksikan dengan mata kepala amat heran, kagum, terhadap segala yang di saksikannya di waktu itu. Heran, karena semua bapa-bapa itu selamat sejahtera, sehat-sehat dan segar bugar. Lagi pelendangnya selamat, dan penuh dengan keutuhannya tiba di Lamalera. Sedang kehilangan mereka dari pandangan, karena menempuling ikan yang paling hebat ini, lagi-lagi bertanda tanya. Kagum, karena terbukti keberanian kelabahan dan kesabarannya pada perjuangannya dengan ikan tersebut.*

Yes, everyone watched closely with amazement and admiration all that there was to witness at that time. With amazement, because all the men were healthy and safe. Moreover the boat was safe and totally full when it arrived in Lamalera. At the time they were lost from sight, they were harpooning that monstrous fish, again and again they struck. Admiration, because of their proven determination, endurance and patience in their struggle with that fish. (Bataonâ n.d. books 4-5)

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Each whale hunt is a ritual performance; it re-enacts the myth of the Dato Ténâ and the Whale. Likewise, when the four boats were lost at sea, the myth was again brought to life. In answer to my mundane questions, I was offered this sacred story which explained so much more than my questions would allow.

Something gets lost. Something is sacrificed, but there is also something gained. The details of the story of the Dato Ténâ and the Whale reveal how Dato and his crew are changed by their encounter with the whale and how these men return with their prize of the catch to change the village and its relations with its neighbours through a market based on the very body of the whale. The details of this myth of the disappearance of the Dato Ténâ simultaneously indicate that syncope, as the space of alterity, is not empty, but rather holds the promise of other ways of being (see Boon 1982:234). As Andrew Metcalfe reminds us: 'Nothing is found when its meaning is given up as lost' (forthcoming).

# THREE

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## Seeking *Moby Dick*

**Every reading of a work is surely in some sense a use of it. We may not use *Moby Dick* to learn how to hunt whales, but we 'get something out of it' even so.**

Terry Eagleton *Literary Theory*





Prefatory quotations are frequently cast aside as mere adornment, and not considered part of the 'real' text – their isolation being evidenced through their layout. My excerpt from Eagleton on this chapter's title page, for instance, is singled out, broken off from my writing by its setting, its indentation and the straits of white sea that surround it. Forming its own island, it speaks of wholeness. Emphasising the quotation through techniques such as emboldening or the employment of a different font adds to the impression of its isolation from the continent of the text (see Le Dœuff 1989:1-9).

Moreover, prefatory quotations can be imagined as shining beacons – a peak of wisdom that stands alone above the waves. Wherever we wander in the seas of writing, whenever we feel a wave of claustrophobia, we can look up and there are those guiding words that help us get our bearings so we can, once again, read on.

Authors, however, cannot control the text so rigidly, and cannot anticipate the ways in which the reader engages with the work. A reader's understanding is not limited to drifting with only one of the text's meanings at a time. Words hold more than a single meaning – they seep, they escape the boundaries of the page. Likewise, no quotation is an island unto itself; the same sea washes the mainland of the text. As readers, we are moved by these eddies, these light undercurrents of the spaces of the page (see Genette 1997:144-160; Derrida 1982; Tsing 1993:13-18).

All along my research has been moved by the currents of *Moby Dick*: since my very first experience of Lamalera when I read the entry in the Lonely Planet guidebook, and in the description given by Bapa Bertolomeus Lasan Krova of the great whale that dragged off the *téna*, and through interviews and questionnaires with tourists. However, it was via anthropology that this recurring trope of *Moby Dick* first surfaced in stories of Lamalera.<sup>1</sup> Professor Robert Barnes began studying Lamalera in the 1970s. His passage to Lamalera is in the wake of the great white whale. These are his initial words:

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<sup>1</sup> The following selection of texts illustrates my point about the recurring references to *Moby Dick*: Cummings (1990:638); Josse (1994:252); Muller (1992:185); Bangs & Kallen (1988:112); Ellis (1988:60); Wahyudi and Surjanto (1989:48); Tim Expedisi Lamalera (1991:268); Moore and Ives (1995:104); Severin (1999a, 1999b, 1999c); Barnes (1974, 1996:293) and (1988:249) in which he states that the director of a documentary (for which Barnes was the consultant) thought the series on Lamalera was to be along the lines of 'an Indonesian *Moby Dick*' (see Blake 1988); His Excellency, Wiryo, Indonesian Ambassador to Australia, in his opening speech to the exhibition *Lamalera: Whale hunters of Indonesia*, noted how the people of Lamalera have been likened to characters out of *Moby Dick*. The speech is printed in *Gamelan* (1998:5).



Was it not so, O Timor Tom! thou famed Leviathan, scarred like an iceberg, who so long did'st lurk in the Oriental straits of that name, whose spout was oft seen from the palmy beach of Ombay? (Melville quoted in Barnes 1974:137)

In writing about the whale hunters of Lamalera, Barnes is compelled to remember his own ancestors and is lured by a quotation that refers to traditional western whaling set in the hunting grounds of Timor and the Ombay Straits. These are the same hunting grounds through which the whale dragged the four *téna* early in 1994, while that romantic palmy beach of Ombay (Alor) reminds me of the same strait that the Dato Ténâ was dragged through by the whale of mythical times. And like those mighty boat-towing whales of Lamalera, the great Timor Tom, a synonym for *Moby Dick*, lures Barnes to begin the passage of his writings with those words. To read about the practices of sea game and whale hunting in Lamalera is thus to simultaneously read that these practices are a story, one which escapes its geographical and ethnographic location to resonate with the story from a novel. And this story in turn forms the epigraph of Barnes's writing.

The use of *Moby Dick* in reference to Lamalera is far more than some literary wrapping or a monstrous orientalist projection.<sup>2</sup> As my own prefatory quotation to this chapter advises: every reading of a work is a use of it. We get something out of *Moby Dick*, even if, as Eagleton (1983) suggests, we don't learn how to hunt whales. Yet I am still troubled. For Eagleton, too, has his way of declaring *Moby Dick* just fiction – not to be taken too seriously. I wonder what it is about the whale hunt that calls for this response to censure the story as merely fiction. The whale hunt consistently resurfaces; it beckons to readers, and yet it is this same hunt which is brushed aside, denied. Perhaps the fear is that we may, after all, use *Moby Dick* to learn how to hunt whales...

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*Moby Dick* is Herman Melville's most famous book. Itself like a mighty ocean, this book engulfs the reader. In the stirring words of the psychologist and literary critic Henry

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<sup>2</sup> I do not deny that there are strong orientalist, primitivist and exoticist tropes in stories of Lamalera. However, my interest is in how this narcissistic dream of the other is full of subversive cracks that allow the possibility for different ontologies. On orientalism, see Said (1995); on primitivism, Torgovnick (1990); on exoticism, Foster (1982). For reworkings of orientalism which recognise gaps in colonial discourse (including that of Romanticism), see: Bhabha (1983); Spivak (1987); Viswanathan (1989); Young (1990); Leask (1992); and Tsing (1993).

Murray: 'swept by Melville's gale and shaken by his appalling sea dragon...I was whelmed. Instead of my changing this book, this book changed me' (1960:25-26). And as this moving experience of the novel foretells, *Moby Dick* is a story that seems to defy our attempts at control, including control through literary classification. The recurring description of *Moby Dick* is that it is unique. There is an uncertainty that surrounds the novel which causes literary commentators to pause before their own systems of categorisation. As the anthropologist James Boon, among others, has highlighted, literary classification itself cannot be reduced to a stable entity (see Boon 1982, Boon and others in Stocking 1989, Halsted 1965, Mellor 1993, de Man 1993, Furst 1979). Thus when a classification is pronounced, it is done with a certain trepidation. *Moby Dick* is recognised as an uneasy addition to Romanticism – a late efflorescence (Brodhead 1986:29). Certainly this novel about the hunt fits with the genre of the quest-romance, the story of the Romantic's internalised quest which is the search for inner meaning – the desire for a return to longed-for wholeness; an origin story. And yet, in the case of *Moby Dick*, the heroic hunt is itself under suspicion: notions of a true inner self, transcendence, and the desire for wholeness are left floating. In this regard the book has also been compared with magic realism (Bezanson in Bryant 1986:190). The story that speaks itself through Melville's words defies categorisation because it evokes a myth as old as the ancestors: a quest to slay a monster, the White Whale; to voyage to a faraway place or underworld in search of a secret of treasure (Brodhead 1986:29). As the mythologist Mircea Eliade explains:

a familiar paradigmatic myth recounts the combat between the hero and a gigantic serpent, often three headed, sometimes replaced by a marine monster...and through him – history was regenerated, for it was in fact the revivification, the reactualization, of a primordial heroic myth. (Eliade 1989:37)

Significantly, the psychotherapist James Hillman notes that the archetype itself bears this same characteristic: it is a 'psychic premise with many heads' (1975:131).

The fact that *Moby Dick* is a multiple, rather than a singular quest, adds to the uncanny feeling of this particular hunt. The many characters who travel on the whaleship *Pequod* are on separate though interrelated voyages, each in pursuit of a host of internal secrets. As the literary analyst Richard Brodhead remarks, the book is 'a many-headed representation of the soul engaged in a single, if multifaceted, adventure' (1986:30-31). Here the quest of the soul is like Leviathan itself. It is a many-headed mythical dragon of the sea and the indefinable whaleness of *Moby Dick*, while the book itself remains a massive unknown (Bryant 1986:xix, xvii). Thus the crew ventures out on the journey of the hunt, drawn by a single, though multifaceted, set of desires – a

collective, though individual, search for that which escapes them. And the liquid element of these elusive desires looms in the first chapter long before the *Pequod* sets sail.

'Call me Ishmael', Melville begins. Ishmael is the narrator and the philosopher – the lover of rationality and wisdom. He is also a young man who feels the relentless pull of shadowy undercurrents. It is these oceanic yearnings that seduce him to his voyage.

Some years ago – never mind how long precisely –...I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul;...then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball....I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or another, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me. (Melville 1986:93)

Ishmael's words call up the sea as that element which speaks so much of the elusive aspects of our being – of a meditative inner world. In this imagining, meditation and water are wedded for ever (Melville 1986:94). As Ishmael is again set to pondering, his words serve to remind us that the lure of the sea is a collective as well as individual seduction:

Why is almost every robust healthy boy with a robust healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity...? Surely all this is not without meaning. And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all. (Melville 1986:95)

As Ishmael expresses through the myth of Narcissus, the reflection of self is a tormentingly mild image. Reflected there in the surface of the pool is a shadowy phantom, and it is this watery image that we seek to hold. Yet as we draw closer to see it more clearly, as we reach out to grasp it, it pulls us into the dark depths. In see(k)ing the phantom, whether the Whale, Lamalera or a certain notion of Anthropology, we never arrive. The other can never be known, as if grasping something; rather we are seduced by the phantom, lured off course. Here the notion of a singular vision vanishes. And again, it is the myth of Narcissus that allows us to feel this complex relation:

at times transparent, at others a mirror, water bemuses us with the possibility of penetrating the surface of nature, yet it flatters and disturbs us by casting back our own image. What do we actually see – the object or ourselves?... What makes water the telltale element in a landscape is that it so clearly elicits the narcissistic response. (Leo Marx quoted by editor in Melville 1986:704)

As this quotation indicates, the act of perception becomes bemused. It is this same notion of the intertwining which is explored through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological study of the sense of sight:

since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things...

And he continues,

I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity – which is the second and more profound sense of narcissism:...to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:139)

These words enable me to imagine a way of seeing, a narcissistic vision which is not reduced to the one-way stare of subject to object; of self to other (see Bhabha 1983:204, 1985:75-78; Bhabha in Fanon 1986:xxiv; Spivak 1987; Young 1990:156; Trinh 1989). This visionary intertwining, in turn, interrupts the very notion of a search for Moby Dick. No longer is it possible to know whether we simply see(k) the other, or whether we are simultaneously, through the other, drawn into a relationship that can never be reduced to the singular. As the rite of passage of ethnography itself indicates, we do not *do* fieldwork or write the story of the other; we *undergo* fieldwork and the ethnography we write is also writing us. Or, as Nietzsche noted:

He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long into the abyss, the abyss will also gaze into you. (1973:84 no.146)

Thus, as Ishmael casts off, he is already seduced by this desire to quest: 'I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas and land on barbarous coasts.' Ishmael's heroic vision is captured by untameable cravings to journey tabooed seas and to arrive at savage, whale-like islands (Melville 1986:98). In search of the undeliverable and nameless perils of the whale, Ishmael determines to sail the wild seas, to dive into the depths – to be engulfed.

Ishmael boards ship. He joins a company of 'Islanders', a captain and crew – every one of them an *isolato* incapable of acknowledging the common continent of men, but each living separate (Melville 1986:216).<sup>3</sup> These isolatoes, in their desperate attempt to seek the oily beast, neglect to see the phantom drifting through their individual seas and swimming the ocean of their collective being.<sup>4</sup> Each man, believing himself an island, refuses to acknowledge the common waters that lap their shores. The monomaniacal Captain Ahab, for instance, cannot relate to any of his crew – his whole world within the text is written in monologue, often soliloquy. Yet Ahab, like all the men who crew the whaleship, is nonetheless seduced by the call of the hunt. In their common fantasy of separation, each man feels himself incomplete, and thus joins in the quest to hunt down the elusive beast in the desire to become whole. But the voyage will not, in the end, mend the lack these men feel. The ship they board is doomed, bearing the mark of the disappearing. The *Pequod*, named after a massacred Indigenous American tribe,<sup>5</sup> journeys forth carrying her offspring of dispossessed seamen, bound on an unrelenting quest of 'chasing huge white apparitions on the rim of the unknown' (Daws 1980:102).

And so we venture forth under the guidance of Captain Ahab, who, in his unswerving journey toward his destiny, night after night pores over oceanographic charts, ceaselessly calculating the routes of the sperm whale in order to track down *Moby Dick*.

Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me.... The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run.... Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way! (Melville 1986:266)

Ahab is filled with the spirit of the hunt; he is the hero in pursuit; he journeys the straight and narrow. Gavan Daws, in *A Dream of Islands*, points out that when Ahab 'exalted in his crazy dominance over his crew, he used the language of machine technology.... He was a machine, a train, and a train was iron, and the iron flew as straight as a harpoon' (Daws 1980:108).<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Edward Said maintains that Captain Ahab is 'an allegorical representation of the American world quest; he is obsessed, compelling, unstoppable, completely wrapped up in his own rhetorical justification and his sense of cosmic symbolism' (1994:349).

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<sup>3</sup> I'm always drawn to the similarity between Melville's *isolato* and the notion of the Romantic author as solitary figure. On the solitary Romantic, see Kermode (1957).

<sup>4</sup> Watters argues that the novel, rather than promoting individualism, shows its destructive consequences. See Watters in Stern (1960:107-114).

<sup>5</sup> Melville's own voyage began in 1841 on the *Acushnet* – a whaleship named after an extinct Indigenous American tribe.

<sup>6</sup> Daws description corresponds with the psychoanalytic understanding of the heroic spirit as outlined by Hillman: masculine and active, it rises vertically and travels as straight as an arrow (1975:68-69).

Yet I wonder at these metaphors of control which cling so closely to Ahab. For as Daws and Said imply, Ahab in his monomaniacal quest is out of control, spirited away by the hunt. Thus, although I, too, find that *Moby Dick* speaks about the expansiveness of colonial conquest and the industrialism and technologies that support it, I am quickly chastened in any reductive compulsion to think the book simple allegory or orientalism. It is Ishmael who pre-figures these allegorical readings of his story. 'So ignorant are most landsmen of some of the plainest and most palpable wonders of the world, that...they might scout at *Moby Dick* as a monstrous fable, or still worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory' (Melville 1986:306). As Ishmael implies, perhaps this tale requires a reader willing to cast off from grounded certitudes into uncharted seas. The book's editor backs Ishmael up. 'For how call a work "allegory" if it contains no maps, no complex interpretative guide, but...their very antithesis? If anything it seems a kind of allegory *à rebours* – a clue to the impossibility to any final map, a clue to mysterious, persuasive and malicious *disorder*' (Beaver in Melville 1986:27).

As James Hillman claims, allegory is a defensive reaction. It is the work of the rational mind against the full power of the psyche's irrational propensity (Hillman 1975:8). Allegory, like the heroic hunt for the great whale, is involved in see(k)ing completion, albeit via a circuitous route. But as Goethe warned:

There is a great difference in a poet's seeking the particular from the general and his seeing the general in the particular. The former gives rise to allegory, where the particular serves only as an instance or example of the general; the latter, however, is the true nature of poetry; the expression of the particular without any thought of, or reference to, the general. Whoever grasps the particular in all its vitality also grasps the general, without being aware of it, or only becoming aware of it at a later stage. (Cited in Taussig 1992:152)

For me, this quotation sums up the poetical practice of the mythopoeic imagination. My interest isn't in the argument for which this quotation has previously been engaged, the debate between the traditional Romantics' notion of symbolism as opposed to allegory, for the symbol is likewise too solid for this slippery tale. Symbolism speaks too much of a primordial form of knowledge where the symbol stands for the totality of the magical moment, the flash of originary knowledge. No. *Moby Dick* unveils itself as mythopoesis. Melville, in layer upon layer of mythologies is lead to an archetypal myth as old as the ancestors: the cosmic struggle of Ahab and the White Whale; the mythical story of the hero who must travel on a sea journey as black as night in order to battle a marine monster (Franklin 1963:54; Eliade 1989:37). And yet, Melville, through his pilfering and layering, his impregnation of fact with fiction, the multiplicity of his quest, demonstrates

that mythopoesis yields no singular truth. No journey travels straight like a harpoon; journeys are interrupted, they wander. In imbrication of myth and metaphor there is no totalisation, no synthesis, no treasured meaning to be discovered on far-away isles and brought home, no ultimate truth lurking in the depths waiting to be hunted down and raised to the surface. The myth that writes itself in Melville's book is archetypal. It is a sacred story looming forth from the psyche, written through the element of the sea.<sup>7</sup>

Carl Jung wrote of the psyche as that aspect of each of us which incorporates the conscious and the unconscious, and also the collective unconscious – the realm beyond our individual self (Jung 1968a, 1983). Thus, in the story of *Moby Dick*, as with the Jungian psyche, the individual is not an isolated island but is touched by a world ocean. The collective unconscious is like water; imagined as nothingness, it nevertheless holds us. It is unfathomably deep and never-endingly vast; it is the far-away past and the forever future. In this calculation, the psychological individual is never separate; the subject is always and already in relation and therefore not in control and self-present.

This is not psyche as spirit – heroic, transcendent, flying straight – but as soul: ponderous and dreamy, the feminine sea. And like the psyche itself, the mythic stories that emerge from this realm have the quality of water. They have great dark depths, like a sea without a bed. Stephen Crites calls these archetypal myths sacred stories and his words express their beauty and their power.

Every serious attempt to express them creates poetry. The expressions admit of a great variation in detail, but no variation fully grasps the story within these diverse stories. (1989:69)

These stories are not in any simple way authored, writers do not control stories. Such stories 'are not like monuments that men behold, but like dwelling places. People live in them' (Crites 1989:70). Archetypes are like recurring themes or characters that live in stories, and they are more, for it is the archetypes that write themselves through the stories we tell and thus enable us to feel a story as sacred.

People do not sit down on a cool afternoon and think themselves up a sacred story. They awaken to a sacred story, and their most significant mundane stories are told in the effort, never quite fully successful, to articulate it. (Crites 1989:71)

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<sup>7</sup> In a letter to his wife Emma, while on board a steamship, Jung wrote : 'The sea is like music; it has all the dreams of the soul within itself and sounds them over' (1983:402).

In his analysis of Romanticism and psychology, Martin Bickman writes that archetypes are not stories as 'transparencies to be read through to some deeper meaning' but are 'themselves central loci, nodes of psychological organisation' (1988:174). Archetypes are like the characters of our psyche that are already written in the whiteness, that all-colour, of our page. They swim the between of the world ocean seducing the hunter and eluding his fiery harpoon. Thus Romanticism, and its explorations of the human psyche, was the setting from which psychoanalysis could emerge<sup>8</sup> – the unconscious and collective unconscious, already writing itself. But it is not simply that the unconscious and collective unconscious was waiting there to be read by Freud or Jung.<sup>9</sup> It is in practice that archetypes are felt, in a reading that is simultaneously a writing. And significantly Bickman notes that it was writing itself which formed the main psychological event in Melville's life (1988:174).

Archetypes reverberate in the stories we tell, whether in practice or rituals, in fiction or myth or ethnography. They are the very stuff of anthropology: patterns we sense but cannot grasp. Melville, too, knew this experience. After the first reading of his friend Hawthorne's book, Melville describes his feelings with a phrase so apt that it epitomises what I have tried to convey of the wonder of archetypes. He was moved quite simply by 'the shock of recognition' (Murray in Stern 1960:25).

Archetypes are themselves like the white phantom Moby Dick, while Moby Dick is the archetype of archetypes. Like a great whale, archetypes always remain just beyond explanation, indefinable – and yet they are like a foundation: blubbery matter. The great white whale as 'the gliding great demon of the seas of life' (Melville 1986:286) is a story that not only comes from the unconscious, but is a story about the unconscious and our relationship with this incomprehensible part of our being.

Thus, when Ahab finally meets his white destiny, the *Pequod* and her crew go down with him; only one soul is spared. Yet, even then, it remains ambiguous whether Ishmael is born anew, baring the marks of his relation with the other, or whether he returns – an *isolato* – to the continent of his discontent. The hunt proves unredeeming. However, it nevertheless remains that Ishmael survives the sea and the whale, which invites us to wonder whether he has managed to achieve deliverance. This story speaks

<sup>8</sup> See Bickman (1988:xii, 150-174). Likewise Henry A. Murray writes: 'In the procession of my experiences *Moby-Dick* anteceded Psychology' (Murray in Stern 1960:25).

<sup>9</sup> In Robinson's (1991) semiotic and Freudian interpretation of Melville and *Moby Dick*, I sense this notion of an unconscious waiting to be deciphered rather than an unconscious in relation. Franklin (1963) moves towards demonstrating the interrelation between psychoanalysis and mythology.



simultaneously of a birth and death. And the hints of this paradoxical ending lie in the early pages of the book.

In a matrimonial bed of an inn in the port-town of Nantucket, Ishmael, at the very beginning of his story, meets the majestic savage, Queequeg. A prince of a Pacific island, Queequeg had stowed away on a whaling ship in order to discover the land and knowledge of the whites. In this beautifully simple inversion of the roles of the first and third worlds, Queequeg, the anthropologist, does not however experience a journey of heroic transcendence. Finding the white civilisation corrupt, he believes he has in turn been corrupted and thus feels he can never return home. Impure and contagious, he remains an *isolato*, wandering the seas of the whites and speaking their gibberish. At first reading, Queequeg's adventures appear to be yet another story of the degradation of the savage, the disappearance of purity in the face of the power of the West. Yet this would be to imagine that we begin isolatoes, separate and pure. Re-reading Queequeg's story, not as debased hero, but as one capable of living with the other, and enduring the ontological difficulties this entails, we can begin to see his story as offering a way towards relationality through his encounter with Ishmael.

In a scene acknowledging the inextricable matrimony of being, the two isolatoes befriend each other and decide to ship together. Queequeg gives to Ishmael his brotherhood and loyalty; he shares with him his money, and, in Ishmael's imagination, provides a source of native calm and sanity in that mad world:

ultimately the white man began to think of the majestic savage as offering him some sort of healing and self-completion, as if the two men were parts of the human whole, the one part essential to the other. A tattooed skin did not necessarily mean an evil soul. Indeed, Queequeg came to stand for human dignity and honest impulse, and his tattoos, 'hieroglyphic marks' made by a 'departed prophet and seer of his island,' amounted to a 'complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth'. (Daws 1980:103-104)

Yet while these words tell of Ishmael's romantic desire to heal the breach and find self-completion through the savage that we always see outside ourselves in the other and which we forever seek in fear-ridden voyages to the far-away, they also hint that this sailing is doomed. As the book journeys forth we are to find that the primitive has been here all along in the seas of our own being. As Mircea Eliade has demonstrated in his rethinking of the notion of the primitive, our fear is based in a terror of an archaic ontology which speaks of a way of being that is archetypal. According to this ontology, reality is perceived through the imitation or repetition of an archetype (Eliade 1989:34).

Thus the fear of the primitive is a fear of this ontology based on relationality and repetition as opposed to a notion of self-sameness and originality. But, as the myth of the great whale tells us, if we face the archetype, if we learn to dwell in this realm of the ancients, we learn to live without fear of the other. We learn that those frightful tattoos are just another language written upon us by the wise ancestors. Furthermore we also learn that the individual and the unconscious are not in isolation, but rather, like the Jungian collective unconscious, the ancestors trace their mark on our psyche. We do not live in isolation, but in relation – with the unconscious, with the ancestors, with the other – and we are produced out of this relation and never severed from it.

Thus there is a danger in believing that the savage is separate from us – either outside on far-away islands, or deep inside, dwelling in secret kingdoms. The archaic is part of us just as we are part of the archaic. We cannot venture out, nor dive down to retrieve it to make ourselves whole; the savage does not offer the healing and self completion desired of 'it'.<sup>10</sup> Rather the archetype swims the watery depths, as it does the surface of our page – and the hieroglyphics are never finally decipherable.

However, even though readers of Melville's earlier novels *Typee* and *Oomoo*, 'were given a kind of quiet permission to think about Marquesans as 'safe' savages, as a version of themselves, strange but somehow akin, in fact what the white race might have been before some of its primitive freedoms were civilized away' (Daws 1980:89), and even though Queequeg upon his own death offers his friend salvation (for Ishmael stays afloat in the sea on the mortuary canoe that Queequeg, during a severe illness, had made in preparation for his death journey) – after this long journey, it seems pre-emptive to leave *Moby Dick* so seamlessly and simply resolved. For Melville's story is more like the very lifebuoy that saves Ishmael's life, the mortuary canoe that:

embraces such opposites as life and death, inscribed with visible yet ultimately unreadable hieroglyphics. These markings copied by Queequeg from his own body suggest the ways in which we ourselves can embody wisdom but cannot articulate it fully.... The coffin lifebuoy has form, but it is also the hollowness, the undefined emptiness at its core, that lets it support life. (Bickman 1988:151)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On the appropriation of the savage as origin myth and archaic healer, see Taussig (1992:149-182).

<sup>11</sup> The lifebuoy appears often in the story of the heroic sea journey. The following rendition is from Sinbad the Sailor: 'Almighty Allah preserved me from drowning and threw in my way a great wooden tub.... I gripped it for the sweetness of life.... Darkness closed in upon me while in this plight and the winds and waves bore me on all that night and the next day' (Burton 1977:390-391).

The collective unconscious from which Melville writes, even as it writes him and writes the myths he rewrites – this archetypal realm knows no centre, no containment or closure. It is this which gives Melville's words such life:

The very awareness that there is more to our being than can be expressed in words charges those words with ambivalence, incompleteness, multiplicity, and resonance. (Bickman 1988:151)

And thus, unlike in his earlier Rousseauian novels where the civilized can become whole and holy through communion with nature and peoples considered closer to nature, in *Moby Dick* it remains ambiguous as to whether Ishmael transcends his watery soul, whether the phantom that swims through him is put to rest. Through his friendship with Queequeg he has experienced the inextricable interrelations of all life. And accepting the relation of life is to perceive the necessary contaminatory qualities of being. The lofty and illusory heights of a heroic transcendent spirit, and the dream of isolated islands, are denied in this book.

As the closing words of the epic voyage reveal, Ishmael is left cast away and straying. And yet, as he wanders, he is also borne...on the seas of life. In Ishmael's own words:

Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. The unharmed sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks. On the second day, a sail drew nearer, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the devious-cruising *Rachel*, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan. (Melville 1986:687)<sup>12</sup>

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To introduce Lamalera with a quotation from *Moby Dick* is to do far more than make a passing reference to a famous book about the Romantic era of Western whaling. As the story of *Moby Dick* suggests, the very notion of separation is like an island – a fantasy washed by oneiric seas.

Every reading of *Moby Dick* is a use of it; and despite Eagleton's reserve, it can be used to learn how to hunt whales. The how of the hunt in *Moby Dick* demonstrates that

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<sup>12</sup> The Captain of the *Rachel* had earlier pleaded with the *Pequod* to join him in searching for missing crew, including his twelve year old son: 'by her still halting course and winding, woful [*sic*] way, you plainly saw that this ship that so wept with spray, still remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children, because they were not' (Melville 1986:641). The reference is to Matthew (2:18).

the heroic quest is not just about going out, slaying the sea monster, and returning. Readers are embroiled in this hunt and cannot stand outside it. Through interrelation with the other – whales and whale hunters and archetypes and stories – we stray, no longer sure whether we pursue the other or are led into the indeterminable depths of intertwining.

Re-reading Barnes's initial article on Lamalera in the light of this discussion highlights ways in which the anthropologist's words are always unshored. And in such a reading, I feel Barnes's very subjectivity (and simultaneously my own) begin to dissipate. It becomes uncertain whether it is Barnes who chooses to quote *Moby Dick* or whether the great white phantom plunges the seas of his psyche and surfaces on his page. Likewise, it becomes difficult to determine whether subsequent commentators on Lamalera indulge in plagiarising Barnes's article, as he is led through ample evidence to suspect (1988:242), or whether the Lamaleran practice of large game hunting, and the privileged position of the whale hunt, and especially the sacred hunt of the sperm whale, breaches the page of the researchers and journalists who follow.

Barnes's first article on Lamalera is deeply moving. Alive with 'the shock of recognition', it reverberates. Like all archetypal stories, it speaks of things that can be felt but never fully articulated. I don't just read Barnes's words but am swept up in the journey of his text. I, too, am seduced by the myth of the hunt for the great whale, lured by the heroic quest of anthropology.

With Barnes words I am channelled into the Timor Straits as the anthropologist moves from *Moby Dick* to his own entry to Lamalera:

The Timor Straits have borne vessels trafficking in the colorful and historic ventures of many periods in human navigation. Anciently, sandalwood from the island of Timor found its way, in all probability, to markets in China. The same product later attracted Arab, and Makasarese, Portuguese and Dutch traders and fleets. Local traditions allude to the navies of the ancient Javanese empire of Madjapahit or the political influence of the spice kingdom of Ternate. Magellan's *Victoria* sailed through the Timor Straits on its journey around the globe, as did many subsequent expeditions of discovery, exploration, commerce or conquest. It was a recognized hunting-ground on the schedules of nineteenth-century British and American whaling voyages, and modern commerce still uses it as a sea lane to Australia and the Western Pacific.

Among those who go out upon its waters in search of livelihood are the expert boatmen, fishermen and hunters of large sea mammals from...Lamalera (Barnes 1974:137).<sup>13</sup>

Thus Barnes makes his entry to Lamalera. But in this threshold passage he does not separate himself off from other men. The archetype of the anthropologist as lone hero braving unknown seas and landing on the sandy beach of a palmy isle is not the entry Barnes's words evoke. His words instead create an image of the exotic island kingdom of Indonesia with its sandalwood, and spices, and ambergris – an 'eternal western warehouse of fantasy about oriental riches' (Daws 1980:105). In this regard, Lamalera refers not just to a place on the map, but also to a state of mind – a dream (Daws 1980:xi). Beginning with the fiction of *Moby Dick*, Barnes's story turns to journeys of exploration, discovery, conquest, colonialism and commerce, with this list of ancestors including his own British and American forefathers on whaling voyages in search of the great sperm whale. From the fiction of *Moby Dick*, Barnes's journey takes us to the authority of the history of commercial whaling – and onwards to the fact of anthropology, for among those who venture the waters of the Timor Straits in search of livelihood and the whale are the men of Lamalera whose culture Barnes will document.

It is when Barnes begins the section of his story that tells of the daring hunt performed by Lamalera whalers that he is compelled to position himself as the legitimate teller of this story, while at the same time demonstrating that this is a legitimate story to be told. Suddenly it becomes evident that this is an origin story. And so, in order for this story to work, Barnes must prove that Lamalera is original and that he is the original teller. Barnes' origin scene is not his arrival at the village but is rather here, at the site of the whale hunt. This is where he originates both himself and the story of Lamalera:

Brief descriptions of the local whale-hunt have been published from time to time, but evidently none by eyewitnesses. Until recently, neither village had been visited by a professional ethnographer other than Ernst Vatter, who made a brief excursion through the area in 1929. (1974:137)<sup>14</sup>

He goes on to outline his task, again emphasising the original contribution of his paper:

[T]he primary objective of this paper – an eyewitness account of the capture of a whale, together with the first photographs of the hunt – is of such singular interest that it seems to justify presentation in this preliminary form. (1974:138)

<sup>13</sup> On the neighbouring island of Solor lies the village of Lamakera. The Lamakerans previously specialised in hunting baleine whales while the Lamalerans hunt only cachelot, toothed whales.

<sup>14</sup> Max Weber, among other researchers made early reports on whaling in this region. See Barnes (1974:141).

And finally:

At this point I will turn to a description of the hunt as I experienced it. Though there are some points of possible disagreement with the earlier reports, none of these are of any great moment, and we can be fairly sure that it is still conducted today very much as it was a century and a half ago when Europeans first began to be aware of it. After this long period, I think I am the first European to witness the capture of whale; I am certainly the first to do so from the vantage point of one of the vessels involved, and the following account and the accompanying photographs are the first published results of such direct observations. (1974:154)

But even as Barnes proves that he is the first, that his research site remains pure, and thus that his research is original, in the same section of his paper his words tell another tale – a tale of confusion and entanglement, of passion, of submission and passivity. In Barnes's story of the hunt for the great whale, as in Melville's, there is a double moment. The story of the heroic quest speaks at the same time of a voyage out of control. It is this ambivalence in the story that opens this text up to other readings, and therefore possibilities for different relations (see Bhabha 1983, 1985).<sup>15</sup>

To do Barnes's words the justice they deserve I quote the long extract in full:

What appeared to an inexperienced observer as a fairly futile day of fishing took on new life when the fleet sailed into a school of porpoise, and suddenly several boats were occupied in different areas with an earnest chase.... We were ourselves hard after a shoal of the animals, when one of our crew, with what would seem remarkable presence of mind, noticed that a boat far on the other side of the fleet had struck a whale. We immediately forgot the porpoise and turned toward the whale. It seems that every boat in the fleet had seen at almost the same time that one of them had speared a whale, and they then converged, with all the speed the sails and oars could produce, on the boat and injured whale.

When one of their fellows is wounded, whale draw around it, and the best chance to strike another is offered by sailing into this milling group. On this principle, the widespread fleet formed with what seemed to me in remarkable suddenness a congested pack at the center of which was a boat racing without control behind a maddened whale. Just at the moment that we found ourselves in the middle of this tight group, the whale turned in our direction. The boat to which it was attached collected two more in being pulled around, and this helpless mass then came directly on top of us, breaking in a plank at the side. The whale was already bleeding profusely and my memory of this moment is

<sup>15</sup> Homi Bhabha's concern is with orientalist discourse. He maintains that such stories always contain ambivalent moments. He critiques Edward Said's argument as dependent on a notion of the West as origin site.

made up of images of the red clouds in the sea around us, the heaving mass of whales on all sides, the harpooners, harpoon platforms and above all the razor-sharp harpoons themselves which kept passing over-head, and the threat of further collision continually reappearing in an always new quarter.

My point of observation was naturally that of a passive and inexperienced outsider. To the crewmen this was an everyday matter over which, despite appearances, they never lost control, and we were almost immediately freed from the other boats and had ourselves a whale. This does not mean that we were in no danger of finding ourselves suddenly in a similar situation, for we, too, became parties to an uncontrolled race behind a maddened whale. Boats which were rushing full speed after another objective suddenly found us being pulled across their bows.

In an exciting few minutes the two boats were pulled by their whales back and forth across each other's paths, while the other boats tried to set harpoons into the whale and while the crew attempted to place hooks into them to draw them close to the side of the boat. When we were finally secured to ours, the boat began to heave with the whale's throws and shipped large quantities of water and blood. The prime concern at this moment was to kill the whale as soon as possible, and as it became more exhausted it was possible to draw it full length against the side of the boat. It was tied fast and the crew then lined up along this side and started hacking on the whale with their long cutting knives.... Melville says that when cutting the whale, they must occasionally stop to hone the cutting spades, which must be kept as sharp as possible. The same is true of the knives used in Lamalerap and each member of the crew keeps a sharpening stone near his place in the boat.... [S]ome of the crewmen jump into the water to dive under the whale and cut from underneath. When one of the men got his knife into the whale's heart, his spout sent up a shower of blood. (1974:154,157)

I adore this story. To my mind this is Barnes's most beautiful piece about Lamalera. This is a story not just about a place, but also a space. Fully embodied by the anthropologist, it speaks of a confusion of desires. On the one hand it tells of the desire to be first, to originate self and to return home with the gift of knowledge. This desire tells the heroic story of the chase, of battling the monster, enduring its wrath, and slaying the dragon that lives in the sea. On the other hand, Barnes also speaks of being swamped, swallowed up by the experience of fieldwork, of being passive, led out of control - swept away by the great whale. This is an excited anthropologist who passionately writes of heaving death throws, of red clouds in the sea and the climax of a spouting shower of blood.

This was Barnes's first paper on Lamalera, but it was to be the last time he would write with such openness, and with such verve. In this paper I feel the archetypal story. This is a story of relations between the young anthropologist and his discipline and the whalers of Lamalera and the very whale itself. In this first paper I can feel the anthropologist thoroughly implicated and contaminated in this intertwining: there is no escape, no purity of distance, no origin. In this scenario the desire to be separate, whole, original is shown to be untenable. Like the archetypal tale of *Moby Dick*, in Barnes's story of the whale hunters and the whale, which is equally a story of the anthropologist and the hunt for the other, there is, in the end, no origin to be captured and brought home.



# FOUR

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## Swallowed by a Whale

**Often when I am by the water...I dream I am inside a fish and the whole world is the cathedral of his great ribcase and spine.... If, as it seems in my dream, I am inside a fish, how much more truly then is the fish inside me when I awake?**

Sven Berlin quoted in Andrew Metcalfe *Nothing*



The Danish traveller had arrived in Lamalera two weeks previously at the beginning of June and the tourist season. He was always full of enthusiasm, and in the face of the hardships and difficulties of our daily life and research, Bent Lomholt reminded us of all the positive things about just being...in Lamalera. Yet now he lay under the mosquito net in his bed at Abel Beding's homestay, delirious with fever, alternating between sweltering heat and shivering cold – and terrified by a whale that was growing in his stomach. He begged us to remove it.<sup>1</sup> But we were powerless to do anything except administer malaria tablets, tell him that everything would be all right, and hope that our words would come true.<sup>2</sup>

That night I lay awake unable to sleep, unnerved by this graphic reminder of life's vulnerability. It was not just Bent's illness that caused my nervousness; his fragility, in turn, seemed to embody the delicate space that held Lamalerans, tourists, photographers, journalists, researchers, documentary producers, museum curators and anthropologists in relation. Bent the intrepid traveller who, a few days before, had been out on a *téna* photographing the harpooning of game, and had plunged into the sea to take underwater shots of the final dramatic knife-thrusting kill of a whale shark,<sup>3</sup> lay in his bed overwhelmed by the beast now growing inside him.<sup>4</sup>

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The whale of Bent's unconscious struck a deep chord in my imagination. This dream whale convinced me more than all my 'research' that the whale was of central importance, not only to Lamalerans, but also to the Indonesian, Japanese, European, English, Irish, American and Australian researchers and tourists who came here to

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<sup>1</sup> Jean remembers the monster of Bent's hallucination as a whale shark – my journal is blank for the crucial days of Bent's fever so I cannot check on this detail. The marine monster can, of course, appear in various guises: simultaneously whale, shark, fish, serpent etc. The movies *Jaws* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* are likewise lurking in this story.

<sup>2</sup> The nursing of Bent involved the entire Beding household, who diagnosed his symptoms and notified us, as well as the traveller who shared the room with Bent and who not only helped us figure out doses of tablets but stayed up the first night to watch over him.

<sup>3</sup> Bent sent us copies of a couple of these slides as a way of saying thank you for 'saving his life'. One of his photographs was used as the cover image of the brochure for the exhibition *Lamalera: Whale Hunters of Indonesia* at the Australian National Maritime Museum (Lundberg and Weiner 1998-1999).

<sup>4</sup> Bent was moved to our house. Jean set out for the main town of Lewoleba to collect Bent's backpack and medical kit. During Jean's absence Bent's fever became much worse until one night he became overpowered by deliriums. At that point he could no longer recognise English. I was convinced he was going to die. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Bapa Abel, without the aid of a common language, had convinced a tourist who had arrived in the village that afternoon to accompany him to our house. By exceptional coincidence, Morten Olesen was Danish. All night he nursed Bent and in the early hours of the morning the fever finally broke.

partake of this hunt. As Bent lay in his sick bed, men of Lamalera continued to go to sea in pursuit of the prize catch of sperm whale. Women continued to walk to market in order to exchange dried whale meat and fish for vegetables and other staples. And tourists and researchers continued to follow the practices of everyday life in Lamalera and buy souvenirs of whales' teeth and *ikat* weavings depicting sperm whales.<sup>5</sup>

Although the importance of the whale in Lamalera was everywhere evident, the reasons for the whale's central status could not, however, be articulated in any straight forward way – not by Lamalerans, nor by the people who followed their everyday practices. When, for instance, I asked Bélé Petrus Hidâ Blikololong about the spirit of *koteklema*, he was careful with his explanation of this animist notion and stated that this was the belief of the ancestors before Lamalerans became Catholic. In a very intricate clarification he explained that because they now believe in God, animist beliefs are incorporated into the new religion. God made the whale; therefore, a belief in God is a way of believing in the whale. On the other hand, Bapa Petrus Koli Lefolein (clan Lefolói) emphatically reminded me that 'of course' *koteklema* has a spirit, and to disregard the spirit of the whale is to invite disaster. The fact that Bapa Koli was Catholic did not inhibit this animist belief. Amongst researchers and tourists, the whale likewise elicits complex responses that hint of spiritual connections to this animal. Indonesian researchers and journalists (including Lamaleran) are keen to write about the unique whaling practices in Lamalera as a specific tradition of the archipelago, emphasising the ritual aspects of this hunt.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the acclaimed Japanese photographer Bon Ishikawa explained that his culture's fascination with Lamaleran whale hunting coincides with Japan's ancient relation with the whale and a nostalgia for ancestral traditions – including whale hunting. Likewise Westerners also mentioned ties through both ancient and modern traditions of whale hunting, as well as through *Moby Dick*, and the environmental need to save whales. All these examples spoke of a highly complex notion of the relations that exist between people and whales as well as cultures of whale hunting and whale conservation.

In the same fortnight in which Bent lay weak and helpless in his sick bed after his close encounter with the deadly whale, rumour came to me of one researcher offering a bonus to a boat's crew if he got a photograph of a whale being harpooned, while

<sup>5</sup> Susan Stewart argues that this is a desire to take the beast home (1993:134). However, this example suggests that it is uncertain whether we take home souvenirs or souvenirs take us home.

<sup>6</sup> See: Adi and Longa 1989; Bataonâ n.d.; Beding and Beding 1994; bin Saju 1994; Keraf 1978; Krova 1992; Kusuma and Wahyudi 1989; Mukhlis 1992; Oléonâ 1992; Pakpahan, Ryanto and Wahyudi 1989; Soemardjan 1988; Tim Expedisi Lamalera 1991; Wahyudi 1989a, 1989b; Wahyudi and Surjanto 1989; Widuri and Wahyudi 1989.

another researcher on a scouting mission for an eco-tourist whale-watching company offered a bonus to another crew if they refrained from harpooning whales.<sup>7</sup>

This is obviously a whale that cannot be reduced to a single meaning. In this respect it invokes Melville's (1986) famous description, in his chapter *Cetology*, of the whale meaning simultaneously all things and nothing – exactly the feeling of the archetype. And as Stephen Crites remarks, archetypes or sacred stories live in us – in the arms and legs and belly – even as we live in them (1989:69-70).

The whale of Bent's hallucinations may have lived in his belly, yet it strikes me that Bent was simultaneously being swallowed by the whale.

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With a sense of welcome surprise, I find that the archetype of being in the belly of the whale has reverberated with one of the forefathers of my own school of sociology and anthropology, Professor Sol Encel. The small book entitled *Inside the Whale* (Bell and Encel 1978) imagines society as Leviathan, and the ten personal accounts of social research in this early contribution to Australian reflexive practice demonstrate that the researcher can never stand outside society. Rather, the editors invite researchers to take up a practice of 'spying out the inside' – an invitation that emphasises a conviction in the ethics of situated practices.

This is an honest work that consistently argues for different power relations in research. Yet I find that although the notion of power is questioned by the analyses presented, it nevertheless remains that power is always imagined as the possession of the rich, the educated, and of the West – even as the book attempts to interrupt, if not

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<sup>7</sup> The boat corporations and the *kepala desa* have decided that those who earn money out of documenting Lamalera should be charged a fee. This is a confronting practice for many researchers who have trouble dealing with Lamalera as simultaneously traditional, subsistent and commercial. The bonus that was offered to the crew was a negotiation that argued that researchers should pay extra when they get photographs rather than be charged a flat fee. These negotiations escalated when the boat that harpooned the whale argued that it should be paid along with the boat that the photographer took the photo from. Similarly the small fee charged for tourists to go out on the boats is likewise confronting for many people and was often spoken of as the end of innocence for the village. The practice of charging for commercial documentation comes with its own complexities of implementation, as it is often difficult to discern who is a tourist and who is a professional (especially in the case of video cameras). Furthermore, several Lamaleran people are under the impression that all tourists must sell the photos they take. I was once asked why tourists would take photographs of people they didn't know, and couldn't even have a conversation with, if they weren't planning to sell the photographs. It is, of course, a shockingly astute question.

reverse, this flow. *Inside the Whale* argues for a studying up. Colin Bell validates this position with a quotation from Laura Nader's chapter in Dell Hymes's classic *Rethinking Anthropology* (1974). Nader suggests that researchers:

might indeed ask themselves whether the entirety of fieldwork does not depend upon a certain power relationship in favour of the anthropologist, and whether indeed such dominant subordinate relationships may not be affecting the kinds of theories we are wearing. What if, in reinventing anthropology, anthropologists were to study the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless...? (Quoted in Bell and Encel 1978:27)

Although this quotation begins to question the discipline of anthropology through its very practice, the plea to study up does not radically rethink power *per se*. Relations between west and others have not undergone change; all that is altered is the object of the anthropological gaze. While this new direction of the gaze involves different dynamics and therefore different ways of reflecting upon anthropology, there is no suggestion that the other can actively subvert power or possess it in their own right. There is, similarly, no indication that those perceived as the powerful may at the same time be vulnerable. In short, there is little sense of interdependence.

For Bell and Encel, being in the belly is like being a separate entity inside the Leviathan that is culture or society, and culture, accordingly, is like the cathedral of the whale's great ribcase and spine. It is this imagery of the whale and being in its belly which remains limited, implying an inherent notion of 'thingness' and of separation. Culture becomes a thing that the researcher can enter at will in order to spy it out. In this rendition of the tale, Jonah remains self-willed and self-conscious, and the whale's belly loses its compelling visceral horror. There is, likewise, no sense of that paradoxical reversal where the whale suddenly appears simultaneously inside us – a gestalt switch so suggestive of the intertwining relations of sociality. This second scenario, as demonstrated by Bent Lomholt's experience, produces an even more nightmarish image. It is this notion of intertwining and incorporation, a notion which remains sanitised in the sociologists' account, that suggests a way in which to re-think power – through the belly of the whale.

It is precisely a sense of vulnerability, underemphasised in Bell and Encel's book, that George Orwell highlights in his short story *Inside the Whale* (1962). Orwell is seduced by a style of writing that invokes a dimension in which our received notions of time and space are subverted. In this dimension the reader and writer are together, and Orwell, as reader, feels the author writing words especially for him, as if the author's voice was speaking directly to him (1962:43). As an example of an author who rouses this

sense of the mystical, who speaks to the reader while writing about the trivial and the mundane, Orwell cites Henry Miller. Here he presents Miller in a striking light – as passive. According to Orwell, Miller's most successful pieces feel as if they are written from the belly of the whale, from a Jonah perspective, 'a willing Jonah', where Miller 'performed the essential Jonah act of allowing himself to be swallowed, remaining passive, *accepting*' (1962:43).

In order to make his point, Orwell takes up a passage from an essay by Miller on the diary of Anais Nin. He notes that for Miller, Nin is the most feminine of writers. In his opinion, this is because she so strongly evokes passivity, like a 'Jonah in the whale's belly' (1962:42). And taking this theme further, Miller mentions Aldous Huxley's essay on a painting by El Greco. Orwell explains:

Huxley remarks that the people in El Greco's pictures always look as though they were in the bellies of whales, and professes to find something peculiarly horrible in the idea of being in a 'visceral prison'. (Orwell 1962:42)

As Orwell observes, in contrast to this fear of the materiality of the body, Miller feels that being swallowed by a whale is not the worst thing that could happen to someone, hinting that he finds the idea rather attractive. 'However it may be with Anais Nin,' writes Orwell, 'there is no question that Miller himself is inside the whale.' (1962:43). He goes on to advise his readers:

The passive attitude will come back, and it will be more consciously passive than before.... Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism – robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to them. Get inside the whale – or rather, admit that you are inside the whale (for you are, of course). (1962:48-49)

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The notion of being swallowed by a sea monster is an archetype that recurs throughout history and across geographical regions. One related version of this story is that of landing on a 'dangerous island' which turns out to be the back of a whale and then proceeding to make a fire for cooking. Woken by the fire, the beast dives and the men upon its back are swallowed up by the sea. This rendition of swallowing is related in the Islamic story of Sinbad the Sailor in the *Tales from the Arabian Nights* (Burton 1977:389-390); it is also told in the Irish legend of Saint Brendan; in the writings of Scandinavian ecclesiastic Olaus Magnus, and the treatise on the *Wonders of the World* by the Persian cosmographer al-Qazwini (Burton 1977:390 n.1). The notion recurs in



Milton's *Paradise Lost* where Leviathan, 'slumbering on the Norway foam', is mistaken for an island (Borges 1974:155-157).

The related story of being swallowed by the whale-fish itself is spoken of in the historical novel *Count Belisarius* by Robert Graves (1954:73). It also appears in the *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling (1921), the fairytale of Pinocchio, the Indigenous American myth of Hiawatha and Mishe-Nahma, the Polynesian myth of Rata, in the Hindu Ramayana, the Egyptian myth of Set, the Greek legend of Typhon and the story of Hercules and the whale, the Babylonian epic of Marduk and Tiamat, the Hebrew myth of Yahweh and Rahab (Jung 1956:212-347), the Judeo-Christian tale of Jonah and the Whale, and on through to the story of *Moby Dick* (1986). A similar motif appears in a myth from the Banggai Islands, off Luwuk in Eastern Sulawesi, Indonesia. A fisherman caught a large fat fish, *ambar*,<sup>8</sup> and when the stomach was cut open a young boy emerged. The boy was adopted by the Raja and grew up to be a mighty ruler (Proyek Penelitian dan Pencatatan Kebudayaan Daerah 1979).<sup>9</sup>

The notion of being swallowed, conjured up by the very body of Leviathan, continues to pursue us in contemporary literature. In Julian Barnes's novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1990), the tale is again called up. After telling of Jonah's swallowing and rebirth via the convulsive passageway of the whale's vomit, the author ponders the wonder of this whale. As he points out, it is the whale that both horrifies and inspires. We forget the setting and the moral point of the story, but we don't neglect the whale and the act of swallowing. And, he adds, this tale is also repeatedly depicted in religious art, 'Giotto shows him chomping on Jonah's thighs.... Brueghel, Michelangelo, Corregio, Rubens and Dali emblazoned the tale' (1990:177).

What is it about Jonah's escapade that transfixes us? Is it the moment of swallowing, the oscillation between danger and salvation, when we imagine ourselves miraculously rescued from the peril of drowning only to be cast into the peril of being eaten alive? Is it the three days and three nights in the whale's belly, that image of enclosure, smothering, live burial?... And is a more textbook fear involved: does the image of pulsing blubber set off some terror of being transported back to the womb? Or are we most struck by the third element in the story, the deliverance...? Is this why the myth swims through our memory?

Perhaps: or perhaps not at all (1990:177-181).

<sup>8</sup> The Arabic *ambar*, means ambergris.

<sup>9</sup> This story bears strong similarities to the Romantic Pañji epics as discussed in Vickers (1989:53-4) and Boon (1977:197-202).



Julian Barnes interrupts a seamless reading of this story. Here, the whale is no elemental symbol of the desire for the womb. Yet, as the story conveys, we cannot deny that there is something compelling about the size and rotundity of the whale, something in that excessive corporeality, and something about being in its belly, that haunts us.

Jungian psychoanalytic theory, although recognising the archetype of the whale's belly as a desire for the maternal womb, states that this is not simply a desire to return to oneness with the mother and a single undifferentiated origin. This regression is not to the foetus. Regression – a necessary and positive process towards maturation, according to Jung – does not stop short at the mother; it continues to the realm of the mothers – the unconscious. In this realm the neophyte is passive; she must submit to the unconscious until, in continued regression, she enters into the eternal feminine, the world of archetypes and the collective unconscious. Thus Jung, rather than speaking of an Oedipal complex, speaks of a Jonah and the whale complex. In Jungian analysis problems do not lie in the past, but are here being created in the present. Regression is not into the past but into time immemorial – past, present and future. There is no origin to be recuperated and brought to presence (Jung 1956:419-420, 330). As Julian Barnes concurs:

the point is this: not that myth refers us back to some original event which has been fancifully transcribed as it passed through the collective memory; but that it refers us forward to something that will happen (1990:181).

To enter the realm of the ancestors, the collective unconscious, is to find oneself in a wonderland where the archetypes speak to the neophyte, allowing her to move forward. This is not a story of origin, but of relations. In the space of the liminal – a black sea, a night, silent and still – we enter the realm of the sacred, while the sacred enters us. Rebirth, then, is through relations with others: ancestors, whales.

Thus, Julian Barnes refers to another tale of being in the belly of the monster:

On the 25th August 1891, James Bartley, a thirty-five-year-old sailor on the *Star of the East* was swallowed by a sperm whale....

The whale was later killed and taken alongside the *Star of the East*, whose crewmen, unaware of the proximity of their lost comrade, spent the rest of the day and part of the night flensing their capture. The next morning they attached lifting tackle to the stomach and lifted it on deck. There seemed to be a light spasmodic movement from within. The sailors, expecting a large fish or perhaps a shark, slit open the paunch and discovered James Bartley: unconscious, his

face, neck and hands bleached white by the gastric fluids, but still alive.  
(1990:179-180)<sup>10</sup>

What gives this passage its terrifying edge is that small detail of the whiteness of the partially consumed sailor. It is not simply that James Bartley disappears into the whale, transcending his ordeal to return alive. Bartley, according to his own recollection of the event, was in a state of utter passivity.

Suddenly I found myself in a sack much larger than my body, but completely dark.... Soon I felt a great pain in my head and my breathing became more and more difficult. At the same time I felt a terrible heat; it seemed to consume me, growing hotter and hotter....<sup>11</sup> It tormented me beyond all endurance, while at the same time the awful silence of the terrible prison weighed me down. I tried to rise, to move my arms and legs, to cry out. All action was now impossible (Quoted in Barnes 1990:179).

Bartley returns, but he has already been partially incorporated into the whale. He has come back unconscious and with the white mark of the monster etched into his skin.

The whiteness of the sailor reminds me of Victor Turner's account of how Ndembu neophytes, on the return from the liminal, are washed and daubed with white. In the anthropologist's description, whiteness suggests the rebirth of the novice into society after disappearing into the abyss – a realm which Turner notes is synonymous with 'fainting'. This is syncope: 'to have a black-out'. The liminal death of the rite of passage, Turner states, 'is a black-out, a period of powerlessness and passivity between two living states' (1967:72).<sup>12</sup> According to this analysis, whiteness implies the return of the neophyte to wholeness, to the imagined orderly structures of society. White, in this regard, is associated with purity, harmony and completion. It has the same purifying characteristics as water, which in many cultures, including Lamaleran, is considered to be white (Turner 1967:67, 70-77).

<sup>10</sup> Victor Scheffer, in his story of a year in a whale's life, mentions the Bartley case (but not the whiteness), as well as the case of a whaler, who, in 1771, was swallowed and taken under by a sperm whale but not long after ejected alive. In 1893, a seal hunter was swallowed by a sperm whale. The whale was killed and the following day the stomach, along with the sailor, removed. The sailor was dead, 'the whale's gastric mucosa had encased his body...like the foot of a huge snail. His face, hands and one of his legs...were badly macerated and partly digested'. Scheffer expresses his scepticism as to the truth of these stories (1969:83-86).

<sup>11</sup> The heat and fire motif is very common in stories of being swallowed by the whale. Often the hero's hair is lost due to the heat. See Jung (1956:210).

<sup>12</sup> Likewise Mircea Eliade informs us that to enter into the belly of the whale is to dive into the primal indistinctness, the cosmic night. In the belly of the whale all the secrets and mysteries of life are revealed (1960: 218-222). In turn, Jung argues that whoever can venture into the belly of the whale, and sojourn there, conquers the monster to gain eternal youth. He concludes, as does Eliade, that this archetypal motif belongs to the rebirth myth (Jung 1956:251-252; Eliade 1958).

However, there is a risk of over-simplification in reading the rite of passage as transcendence of the body and death. That detail of Bartley's white-etched skin, an albino mark that stayed with him the rest of his life (Barnes 1990:180), suggests to me that there is something more to this story. It seems that the whale, in fact, got under the sailor's skin. Bartley was not a separate and hermetically sealed entity inside the whale – a whale, which in turn is imagined as being securely bordered by the giant girth of its own corporeality. Rather, after having entered the whale, the sailor returns with the whale inside him. In a sense, then, Bartley never leaves the whale.

In this way, we are offered the possibility of reading the notion of the return from the liminal, not as transcendence, but as contagion. The neophyte is washed and daubed in white, not because she is born anew and pure in any straightforward way, but because she carries the mark of the realm of the ancestors. Newness and purity, accordingly, always and already embody the old and contagious. The neophyte does not return possessing the knowledge of the ancestors, of origins; rather, she embodies the wisdom of the ancestors. Ontologically changed, she carries the spectre of the other.

These stories of swallowing or being swallowed all share a common theme: that these intertwinings produce monstrous forms – part human, part whale. Whether gulped down into the black belly, plunged into the depths of the sea after landing on the whale's back, disappearing when tied to the whale by harpoon and rope, or photographing the whale only for the beast to surface in one's unconscious – all these stories of being engulfed remind me of Nietzsche's warning that he who fights with monsters is likely to become a monster (1973:84 no.146). As Donna Haraway notes: '*monsters* have the same root as *to demonstrate*; monsters signify' (1992b:333 n.16; also 1992a:378).

The abject horror evoked in us by stories of being consumed by monsters lies in the confusion that this incorporeal relation reveals. These stories remind us that we are always and already monstrous forms. The flesh of the consumed lives on in the flesh of the consumer, the corporeal in the corporeal. The horror of these stories of swallowing is a violent reaction against incorporation, a reaction evidenced by such bodily upsurges as vomiting (Kristeva 1982).<sup>13</sup> Thus, the whale regurgitates Jonah, just as

<sup>13</sup> I sense that this double notion of the body, imagined as both immutable substance and as monster with its unbridled contamination and irrationality, is at work within fears expressed by some feminists of a theoretical return to the body as a way of thinking difference. The quick aversion to, and ready labelling of,

Bent's illness causes him to retch, disgorging his whale meat dinner if not the beast of his hallucinations, while in Lamalera it is well-known that whale meat can only be consumed in moderation for its potency can cause upset stomachs and diarrhoea. Yet all these instances of expulsion are more than just the body ridding itself of an other as a separate entity that has gotten inside our bellies. This is the rejection of our own difference, for this other is already in relation with us. Therefore this resistance is to our own excess; these are the bodily manifestations of the desire to become one self, a single entity. Yet at the same time, the image of the insatiable whale, like that of a voracious anthropology forever feeding off the other, also speaks of a desire to consume our own difference, a difference that we consistently project outside ourselves. This act is once again an endeavour to become replete. Paradoxically, then, we return to the problem that this other is not simply gulped down, but, having entered our body, gets under our skin.

As the archetypal stories of hungry whales suggest, this is not just a question of who is eating what, but it is also to ask: what is devouring whom? (Deleuze and Guattari 1983; Derrida 1991; Kirby 1997:149-161). This is no longer to speak of the human subject, nor is this to speak of the whale and the human; this is to question the very notion of substance. Bodies of monsters remind us of the monstrousness of bodies.

The fear of the whale's overwhelming corporeality is based on the notion that the body in its material substance is immutable and that on entering this realm we will find ourselves trapped in the belly of the beast. Though we are physically repelled by the thought of finding ourselves suddenly caught in the suffocating embrace of that carnal mucosa, our fascination with these archetypal stories indicates that we are nevertheless compelled to return to the body, that we simultaneously desire to be consumed. There is a looming recognition that we are actually seduced by the body.

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feminists of the body as essentialist suggests that this is itself an abject response. On feminism, the body, and the unconscious see: Cixous (1976) Cixous and Clément (1986), Irigaray (1985a,1985b), Kristeva (1982), Butler (1993) Gallop (1988), Grosz in Gunew (1990), Spivak (1990) and Kirby (1997, 1991). I am intrigued by Anna Tsing's ethnography (1993) which consistently critiques many of these theorists, but is nevertheless drawn back to the very theorists she critiques. In this way her work embodies the very difficult relationship with essentialism that she engages with. Part of the difficulty with anti-essentialism is that it relies on a notion that cultures, people, bodies, and matter are, at some level, self-same. It is this notion that psychoanalysis disrupts, even as many of its arguments, as Tsing notes, fall back into this trap. Underlying Tsing's theory of border blurrings, for instance, is the implication that cultures are firstly separate and then blur. Although I remain inspired by Tsing's ethnography, set as it is in Indonesia, I have tried to show how my own experience of fieldwork has led me to think of ways in which cultures and people, though they are different, are simultaneously already blurred.

The jaws of the monster beckon to us; we are drawn into the chaos of the intertwining.<sup>14</sup>

All those stories which compulsively and repeatedly remind us of our interactions with whales already indicate that we sense that this body is ungraspable. Monstrous bodies indicate that this brute matter is not biologically essential and immutable. Rather, they demonstrate how we are always and already different to self. We are monsters – like whales. In the story of the white whale, Herman Melville further suggests that the whale's very colour is a monstrous hue. Thus, not only does Melville speak of the beauty, innocence, benignity, wisdom and purity evoked by white, but he also argues that there is something haunting about this colour:

for all these accumulated associations, with whatever is sweet, and honourable, and sublime, there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of a panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood. (Melville 1986:288)

Within its very purity, this colour already holds the sign of pale dread, a nameless terror. This is the colour of phantoms 'all ghosts rising in a milk-white fog' (Melville 1986:292). Whiteness is the sign that distinguishes the phantom whale Moby Dick as simultaneously all things and nothing. As Melville explains:

in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors...a dumb blankness, full of meaning...a colorless, all-color (Melville 1986:295-296).<sup>15</sup>

Or as Victor Turner's research indicates, white is the sign of the nature of relationship: the delicate and intricate intertwining of power and vulnerability, where one is held within the other. And as the anthropologist describes, this is also a relation with the ancestors. The dead are dependent on the worship and remembrance of the living, while the living depend on the dead for 'long-term health, happiness, fertility, and good luck in hunting'. The ancestors are believed to have power to withhold these blessings. Thus, Turner notes, it is necessary for all the congregation to be at peace and in agreement with one another if they are to be blessed by the ancestors. 'This harmony

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<sup>14</sup> On the notion of the chiasma and the inextricable relations of this intertwining, see Merleau-Ponty (1968). Similarly, Bataille's notion of the seduction of death can be read as a desire for annihilation of self-certainty, for the chaos of relation. See Bataille (1986).

<sup>15</sup> I am reminded here of Merleau-Ponty's reference to Valéry who spoke of the secret blackness of milk, which is only accessible through its whiteness (1968:150). On the invisible which is always held in the visible, see Derrida (1999), Turner (1967:95-96), and Irigaray (1993).

between living and dead and among the living is represented by white' (Turner 1967:75-76).

In Lamalera, during the time of the ancestors, if there was disharmony in the village and boats were unsuccessful in catching whales, the elders and the Lords of the Land would call all the clans of Lamalera: those of Tėti Lefo and those of Lali Fattâ. The clans would sit on their respective halves of the beach facing each other. Here at the mid point of the beach stood the *Ikâ Kotâ*, the temple of the fish heads (sperm whale skulls), where the respective Lords of the Land would meet and sew together two pieces of white cloth to restore harmony between the parts of the village and between the living and the dead. With order restored, the *téna* could be prosperous in the whale hunt.

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The study of anthropology – the study of human ways of being – has always included the study of peoples with animist practices, peoples whose cosmology includes not just humans as subjects but also the spirit of animals, of ancestors, and of things. Rather than being swallowed up by an imperialist and orientalist anthropology which would remain unaffected by this incorporeal relation, the animist world continues to speak itself through the very ethnographies that investigate animist practices and beliefs. Anthropological stories are not pure and separate; even in our most disciplined texts and critical narratives this animist world is alive and present.

And yet anthropology continues to be conceived as a discipline dedicated to the study of the *anthropos*, the human. No matter how cultural theorists try to battle with notions of power and subjectivity, with debates about self and other, masculine and feminine, subject and object, the very basis of subjectivity is itself rarely questioned. It is automatically assumed that the human is the only subject in our stories (Derrida 1991, 1978:278-293; Kirby 1997:149-161; Irigaray 1985a; Merleau-Ponty 1968). In Lamalera, however, it was not just people – whether Lamalerans (living, dead, in the village, or outside) or tourists or researchers – but also whales who infused experiences of daily life and research. It was this complex intertwining that created tensions and harmonies that made life in Lamalera, quite simply, so alive.

According to customary belief (with this belief being intricately and delicately interwoven with Catholicism), it is not just people who have a soul (*tubâr*) and in death

become spirit (*kefoko*). All animals and plants and things have *pung alep*, a spirit – whales and all the creatures of the land and sea, all plants and boats and dwellings and places. The sperm whale's spirit is especially sacred in the context of Lamaleran subsistence hunting practices. The spirit of *koteklema*, like that of humans, is located in its skull. The skull of the sperm whale, along with the meat and blubber of part of the head of the whale, is the gift of the catch that must be given to the two clans of the Lords of the Land, Tufaonâ and Langofujjo, the original custodians of the land of Lamalera. When the first settler clans of what is now Lamalera arrived from the east, the Langofujjo clan granted them permission to settle in Lamalera on the condition that the skull of each whale and some of its flesh was given to the two autochthonous clans. Tufaonâ receive their gift from the clans of Têti Lefo (Lamalera A) and Langofujjo from those of Lali Fattâ (Lamalera B). Previously all the skulls of the sperm whales were gathered at the midpoint of the beach. The sacred site of *Ikâ Kotâ* (fish heads) marks the point of union of Têti Lefo and Lali Fattâ. Today the small *Kapela Santu Petrus* (Chapel of St. Peter) stands at this spot, while whale skulls can be seen scattered at either end of the beach. However, quite recently a sculpture made up of a row of whale skulls has been erected at the eastern end of the beach forming a rather haunting and beautiful 'gateway'.

Although the ceremonial centre of the beach is today marked by the patron saint of fishermen rather than the skulls of whales, the spirit of the whale still exerts an influence on daily human activity. As a way of demonstrating this continuing influence – and thus the ties that hold humans, both Lamalerans and other, and whales in fragile interrelations – several people referred to the episode of the whale skull that was sold to the captain of a tourist ship.

The account I retell here was related by Ama Mias Bala Wujon (Fujon). I met Mias when he came home to Lamalera on holidays from Java where he was doing his practical work for a certificate in tourism. He hoped one day to return to Lamalera and open a 'Homestay'. The episode of the whale skull remains particularly vivid in his memory as it was for him a lesson in the traditional ways of the *tana alep*, the ceremonial lord of the land – the position Mias will inherit. Before Mias left the village to resume his work and studies, he presented me with a handwritten history of his clan of Langofujjo (Wujon 1995). In the notebook, he included the following story:

*Cerita Kesalahan Dua Desa Menjual Tengkorak Ikan Paus pada Sebuah Kapal Pesiar 'Asmara Lumba-Lumba'.*

The Story of the Mistake of the two parts of the Village when a Skull of the Sperm Whale was Sold to the Tourist Ship 'Asmara Lumba-Lumba' [Dolphins' Passion].

*Sekitar akhir juni atau juli 1989 Kapal Asmara Lumba-Lumba datang membawa segerombol turis ke Lamalera. Saat pulang Kapal itu memuat sebuah tengkorak ikan paus. Saya tak tau apa-apa karena masih kecil. Pulang ke rumah langsung saja saya melaporkan pada Bapa Bye (Lewoleba) dan Bapa Tinus (Tuan Tanah). Bapa Bye kebetulan waktu itu ada di Fukaléré karena liburan. Langsung saja Bapa Bye merontak dan akupun sempat heran. Saya sendiri kebetulan ada di kapal (main-main). Langsung saja Bapa Bye pergi ke Tufaona dan marah di sana karena tengkorak ikan yang dijual dengan harga Rp. 700,000 itu berada di wilaya barat. Menurut adat: ikan paus yang kita tangkap itu tempat akhirnya adalah di pante Lamalera jadi tak bole di jual kemana-mana. Daging dan isinya bole di jual tapi tulang belulanganya yang besar itu, disinilah tempat akhirnya.*

Around the end of June or the beginning of July, 1989, the tourist ship Asmara Lumba-Lumba arrived at Lamalera bringing a group of tourists. As the ship was about to leave, it loaded on the skull of a sperm whale.<sup>16</sup> I didn't understand why as I was still young. I came straight home and reported to Bapa Bye [lord of the land working in Lewoleba] and Bapa Tinus [lord of the land]. Because it was the holidays, Bapa Bye happened to be home in Fukaléré<sup>17</sup> at the time. Bapa Bye immediately jumped up, much to my surprise. It was just by chance that I had been near the ship (playing). Straight away Bapa Bye went to the clan of Tufaonâ<sup>18</sup> and there an argument ensued because the skull of the fish [sperm whale] which had been sold for the price of 700.000 Rupiah was located on the western region of the beach [Bapa Mikhael Sogé Tufan is the custodian for the western half of the beach. The argument was over whether he could sell the skull even if it was from his section of the beach]. According to traditions, the final resting place of the sperm whales we catch is the beach of Lamalera. Therefore they may never ever be sold. The meat and guts and oil may be sold, but for the large bone [skull], this is its final place.

*Keesokan harinya Bapa Bye kusung ajak saya dan pergi ke gunung, ke tempat-tempat pembuatan acara/ceremony penangkapan ikan paus. Bapa Bye*

<sup>16</sup> In Bahasa Indonesia there is only the general term *ikan paus* for whales (literally, pope fish). In Lamalera many species of cetaceans are named and identified. In this context it is the skull of *koteklema*, the sperm whale, which forms the centre of this story. The use of metaphors of fish and whale for sperm whale is of course not limited to Lamalera culture. These categories are always metaphoric, permeable.

<sup>17</sup> Fukaléré is the section of Lali Fattâ (Lamalera B) that sits on a plateau part way up the Labalekan volcano which rises directly behind the beach. This is where the Langofujjo clan, the clan of the Lords of the Land for Lali Fattâ and also the senior Lords of Lamalera, have their clan house and the *Korké Ikâ*, temple of the 'fish'.

<sup>18</sup> He went to see Bapa Mikhael Sogé Tufan, the head of the Lord of the Land clan of Tufaonâ. Tufaonâ inherited the position of lord of the land when, in mythic time, a girl child was found under a *Tufa* tree and adopted into the clan Lamamau which was the original clan of lord of the land for Têti Lefo [Lamalera A]. When Lamamau died out, the descendants of the girl, that is Tufaonâ, became the *tana alep*. The Langofujjo clan has a senior position as Lords of the Land and carries out the ceremonies for the village.



*menutup jalan ikan paus dengan menggunakan bahasa adat yang belum sempat dimengerti oleh saya sendiri.*

Immediately the following day Bapa Bye summoned me and went to the mountain to the places where the ceremonies for catching the whale [calling the whale] are performed.<sup>19</sup> Bapa Bye closed the way of the *koteklema* with the use of ritual language which, at that time, I did not understand.

*Ikan pauspun tak pernah ditangkap lagi, padahal waktu itu ikan paus lewat terus. Orang Lamalera sudah tak mau anggap lagi Wujon sebagai Tuan Tanah. Kami orang Wujon juga tak mau repot banyak kalau sudah dibuat demikian. Tapi kami tetap berpegang teguh pada adat dan tradisi dan juga tidak meninggalkan agama.*

Whales were not caught again, even though whales constantly passed by at the time. The people of Lamalera did not consider the Langofujjo clan as the Lords of the Land any longer. And we, the Langofujjo, did not want the many difficulties such as had already occurred. Nevertheless, we persisted in firmly holding on to the traditions and customs, and likewise did not depart from the religion.

Mias notes that after closing the way of the fish, Bapa Bye returned to his work in the town of Lewoleba where he stayed for a long time. However, in Lamalera the drama continued.

*Setiap hari mereka mengejar ikan paus selalu saja putus, padahal ikan tidak merontak. Malahan saat di kejar, kotokelema itu tidak lari. Utusan dari orang Lamalera datang terus ke rumah besar Wujon tapi kami tetap pada pendirian. Jawaban yang kami berikan adalah Kami bukan Tuan Tanah lagi. Kamu tidak anggap lagi kami jadi kita hidup menurut kehendak masing-masing.*

Every day they chased whales, and every time the whale broke away even though the fish did not struggle. In fact, even when chased, *koteklema* didn't run. Repeatedly delegates from the people of Lamalera arrived at the *lango bélâ* (ceremonial house) of Langofujjo, but we remained resolute in our convictions. The response we gave was: we are no longer the Lords of the Land. You no longer respect us [the traditions], therefore each shall live according to their own desires.

*Puncaknya saat itu hari Jumad 14 juli 1989 ada 10 perahu yang mengejar ikan paus. Ada 6 perahu tikam satu-satu sedang 4 perahu yang lain masing-masing dua perahu satu ikan. Saya lagi santai di depan rumah besar kebetulan waktu*

<sup>19</sup> The ceremonies to open the way for the whale, referred to as 'calling the whale', are carried out at the beginning of the *léfa* season (the whaling season when the *téna* go to sea regularly everyday, except Sundays). They are performed on the first day of May when the Lord of the Land and his delegates visit the four sacred sites on the Labalekan mountain. These sites include Fato Koteklema, sperm whale rock. The next day, the Catholic ceremony of blessing the boats and sea is carried out with a mass on the beach in front of *Kapela Santu Petrus* (the site of *Ikâ Kotâ*, the sperm whale skulls).

*itu tidak jauh mereka tikam. Sempat saya ketawa dan memang benar semua ikan itu putus dan langsung hilang ke dasar laut. Semua perahu pulang dan esok hari sabtu tak satu lagi perahu yang ke laut karena semua perahu kehabisan tempuling (kave) yang sudah di bawa ikan paus.*

The climax came on Friday, 14 July 1989. There were ten boats which gave chase to whales. Six of the boats harpooned one whale each while of the four other boats, two boats each caught one whale between them. Again, I happened to be resting out the front of the large house [the 'white house'] not far from where they harpooned the whales. I happened to laugh and, it is true, those fish broke away and immediately vanished into the depths of the sea. All the boats returned, and the next day, Saturday, none of them went to sea as the boats had all run out of harpoons (*kaffé*) which had been taken by the whales.

Ama Mias goes on to give details of how, on the Sunday after church, a fight broke out between the people of Tėti Lefo and Lali Fattâ in front of the office of the *Kepala Desa* for Tėti Lefo (Lamalera A). Blood was shed and the *Kepala Desa* hid in his house. From that time onwards no whales were harpooned. Many delegates arrived at the *lango bélé* of the Langofujjo clan, but the Lords of the Land remained indifferent. On the 17<sup>th</sup> July, Mias left for Lewoleba to join his father Bapa Bye and start senior high school.

Delegations continued to arrive at the *lango bélé* of the lord of the land but without result. Then the different clans of Lamalera asked the Bedionâ clan to help them to approach the Lords of the Land. Bedionâ has a ceremonial tie with Langofujjo because, in mythico-historical times, Bedionâ protected one of the princes, Gesi Gua Wasa, when there was a misunderstanding between one of the settler clans, that of Lefoléli (with whom most of the other allochthonous clans sided) and Langofujjo, the original inhabitants.<sup>20</sup> With the aid of Bedionâ, delegations from Lamalera also sought out Bapa Bye in Lewoleba.

Mias continues his story:

*Akhirnya setelah beberapa bulan utusan terakhir adalah Bapa Jou Bataonâ didampingi Bapa Abel Beding. Saat itu Bapa Jou sampai menangis di rumah Bapa Bye atas nama dia desa ini.*

Finally, several months later, the last delegation was Bapa Jou Bataonâ accompanied by Bapa Abel Beding. When Bapa Jou arrived at the house of Bapa Bye, he burst into tears on behalf of the village.

<sup>20</sup> The myth tells of how Lefoléli, after a dispute, sold Gesi Gua Wasa into slavery in Timor. Since that time the clan Lefoléli has continued to die out after losing most of its sons. In 1994 Bapa Petrus Koli Lefolein undertook to rectify this mistake with Langofujjo and a large ceremony was held. Bapa Koli has now also passed away, but is succeeded by his son Gregorius Sola who is about the same age as Mias.

*Bapa Bye waktu itu hampir tak mau juga, tapi saya yang telas merasa iba dan kasihan pada Bapa Jou apalagi Bapa Jou sudah sangat tua sampai menangis memaksa Bapa Bye untuk membuka jalan bagi mereka. Lama baru Bapa Bye mau membuka jalan. Mereka bicara pake bahasa adat, akhirnya malam itu juga Bapa Bye memberi sebotol air dan berperan ajar besok selasa saat turun dari motor Bapa Jou berkat semua perahu kita (Kapela ke arah timur).*

Even so, at the time Bapa Bye almost didn't want to reconcile. But I already felt mercy and compassion for Bapa Jou, especially as he was already very elderly, and thus his crying compelled Bapa Bye to open the way for them. It had been a long time since Bapa Bye wanted to open the way. They spoke using ceremonial language. Finally, that same evening, Bapa Bye bestowed upon Bapa Jou a bottle of [holy] water and instructed Bapa Jou in how to use it. Two days later immediately upon arriving back in Lamalera, Bapa Jou blessed the *téna* (from the Chapel in the middle of the beach eastwards).<sup>21</sup>

*Sebelum pamit Bapa Jou sempat, cerita bahwa tadi siang saat kami berankat dari Lamalera ada 'Baleo'. Bapa Bye langsung jawab: besok pagi bapa mereka sampe dia sudah ada di pante, yaitu satu ekor ikan paus.*

However, before taking his leave, Bapa Jou told this story: 'earlier in the day as we departed from Lamalera there was a *Baléo* call.' Bapa Bye immediately responded: 'tomorrow morning when you all arrive at the beach, there will be a whale.'

*Dan memang benar, hari senin itu satu ekor berhasil di tangkap dan selasa pagi masih bulat di pante Lamalera.*

And indeed it is true, on that Monday one whale was caught. And on Tuesday morning the whale's body was still there on the beach of Lamalera.<sup>22</sup>

*Seminggu kemudian baru Bapa Bye ke Lamalera tuk seremoni dari gunung Labalekan dan perahu mulai tangkap ikan seperti biasa.*

A week later Bapa Bye arrived in Lamalera to perform the ceremony at the places on Mount Labalekan. And the boats resumed catching fish [game] as usual.

This modern myth speaks of how the selling of the whale skull to the captain of the tourist ship causes the daily life of Lamalera to enter a period of liminality. This is a space both of emptiness, for the men return empty-handed from the hunt, and full of

<sup>21</sup> It would appear that at this stage Bapa Bye only opened the way for the boats of Lali Fattâ which are situated on the eastern half of the beach.

<sup>22</sup> That is, the whale had not vanished overnight but was still on the beach the next day when the men went to butcher it.

disorder, where arguments ensue, a fight breaks out after church, blood is shed, and one of the government appointed heads of the village hides in fear. No longer can the new values of the village prevail; only a return to tradition can return harmony to the village. In the meantime, there is continuing disharmony between the lord of the land clan of Langofujjo, who are the ceremonial lords of the whale hunt, and the clans of Lamalera. No longer is there a community but, as Langofujjo declare, each shall go their own way and live according to their own desires. A reconciliation eventuates only when the Lord of the Land is touched by the tears of an old man. It is Bapa Jou's passivity that moves Bapa Bye to mend the breach between the two halves of the village. Metaphorically, the village is sewn together with a blessing of holy water.

What I find so compelling in this story is the inextricable intertwinings of power and vulnerability. The story does not simply speak of an imperialism which devours the traditional practices it encounters, whether this be in the form of Western tourists, an Indonesian ship captain, or government appointed heads of villages (the *kepala desa* who hides). Rather, imperialist practices are here engaged in ways that, despite being problematic, also work to contribute to the empowerment of traditions. The mistake of selling the skull of *koteklema* reminds Lamalerans of their ancestral beliefs and their obligations to the whale. Tourism is an integral part of this story, yet it is not the central concern here. To suggest that tourism is the downfall of the village would be to presume a greater status to tourism than the story gives it. Tourism is, in the end, only marginal to the story, the tourist ship sailing out of text, leaving the skull of the sperm whale and the negotiation of Lamaleran relationships to it as the central concern of this story. In fact, it is the mistake that demonstrates the continuing importance of *koteklema*, and its representatives in the form of the senior Lords of the Land, to what it means to be Lamaleran. Thus, cultural categories such as Lamaleran are never immutably fixed. Lamalerans remain in relation and therefore are always engaged in processes of becoming.

Similarly, this intertwining of relationships, this between, paradoxically enables us to speak of 'the whale' as an entity. However, whales are not immutable; they carry the traces of these relationships. The whale, whether in Lamaleran mythology, biblical stories, environmental discourse, science or fiction, is never one thing.

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In the early 1970s, the over-exploitation of whales and a growing fear of the imminent disappearance of several species led environmentalists to take up the whale's cause. However, the issue in this debate was not just a matter of the biological survival of whale species but became a concern for individual whale rights. Save the Whale campaigns stress that the whale is unique, and, despite arguments that all animals are equal, whales are 'more equal' than other animals (Einarsson 1993:73).

In this image of the whale as unique there is a notion of oneness and wholeness. Whales are harmonious creatures, at one with nature and with each other. One of the most beautiful descriptions of this nurturing whale occurs, surprisingly, in *Moby Dick*. The whaling boats suddenly find themselves in a nursery pod, surrounded by young whales and a wondrous peace and harmony. The whale hunters are touched by the sacred stillness of this scene.

we glided between two whales into the innermost heart of the shoal.... Yes, we were now in that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every commotion.... Like household dogs they came snuffling round us...till it almost seemed that some spell had suddenly domesticated them. Queequeg patted their foreheads; Starbuck scratched their backs with his lance.... Some of the subtlest secrets of the seas seemed divulged to us in this enchanted pond. (Melville 1986:495-498)

This sublime image of the whale, when used in environmental discourses, makes the killing of these gentle giants immoral and depraved. As an example of the response to contemporary whale hunting and culling, Niels Einarsson, a Scandinavian anthropologist who did fieldwork in the Icelandic cod fisheries, which argues for whale culling, quotes a letter from an American child to the Government of Iceland:

I am a twelve year old who has seen what you do to whales. I cannot call you sir as I should for you are worse than godless beasts. You are lazy savages who do not wish to work at other things but prefer to kill innocent creatures. You make civilized children sick. I am sure God hates you all. (Einarsson 1993:73)

In this twelve-year-old's argument, fishermen who hunt whales are equivalent to beasts. The horror of their deeds makes civilised children physically ill. Whale hunting, in this American child's mind, is a monstrous act.

Environmentalists consistently point out that there is no *humane* way in which to kill whales, thus paradoxically reinstating the notion of animals as brute beasts as opposed to civilised human beings. The very articulation of this argument itself disrupts the image so vigorously promoted in environmental campaigns of whales as nurturing, intelligent

and gentle. It would seem that whales are not animals, after all, but are another form of human. Yet, in this invocation of the anthropomorphism of the whale, while whales have become like us, so, too, have we become like whales. Humans who hunt whales are savage beasts – in a word, monsters.

Again it is the body of the whale that conjures up these images of the sacred and the monstrous; this bulky beast catches our imaginations. It becomes uncertain whether it is we – as whalers, adventurers, eco-tourists, environmentalists or as repulsed twelve year olds – who desire to capture whales, or whether the whale's body captures us. Stories of whales are repeatedly compelled to speak of the sheer size of this body.

'And God created great whales' (Genesis in Melville 1986:78). 'A whale's very size nearly defies belief' (Cousteau and Paccalet 1988: jacket). 'Big isn't a big enough word to describe the blue whale, the largest animal ever to inhabit the planet. Not even the largest prehistoric dinosaurs matched the blue whale in size' (Nicklin et al. 1994). Whales are majestically huge. They can indeed be imagined as a royal animal, as was twice decreed by an act of Edward II. The whale was said to be known to the Byzantines as *porphyrius*, meaning purple and suggesting the imperial fish (Melville 1986:745, 795). Twenty-five grey elephants make up a blue whale; its heart is a metre across; 'its tongue alone weighs as much as an elephant' (Cousteau and Paccalet 1988:7). However, it is not simply that this animal has an enormous mass; its body summons a sense of the divine. As Melville writes of Mr Flask, the third mate of the whaleship *Pequod*:

So utterly lost was he to all sense of reverence for the many marvels of their majestic bulk and mystic ways; and so dead to anything like an apprehension of any possible danger from encountering them; that in his poor opinion, the wondrous whale was but a species of magnified mouse (Melville 1986:214).

Both the marvel of the whale, and its monstrosity lie in its ability to consistently defy our attempts at its categorisation. It confuses. The problem is not just that it crosses boundaries – as if our schemes of categorisation are things that can be cut and separated. Monstrous whales demonstrate that our categories are always and already breached. It is not simply that this body is immeasurably large; this grotesque size can only hint of the incalculability of the body which always holds its own difference within it.

The whale, a magical creature both metaphorically and in the flesh, is a giant mammal that remains in the sea. Although it did once walk on land, the whale returned to the

waters. About sixty million years ago whales were members of the *mesonychids*, an early mammalian family. 'They had four legs and a tail, were furry, carried their foetuses until birth and nursed their young. Some lived along the shores of swamps and estuaries' (Nicklin et al. 1994:34).<sup>23</sup> Eventually some of the *mesonychids* returned to the sea.

In this relation between beast and elements, the *mesonychids*, through their relation with the sea, are changed to become the whales. Not all the ancient *mesonychids* returned to the water, though; some stayed on land to become the modern *ungulates*.<sup>24</sup> Instead of fins, they developed hooves. These are the horses, pigs and cows, the buffalo and hippopotami. And yet the fluid domain of metaphor and myth already indicates this. Hence, porpoises are the pigs of the sea, from the French *porc-poisson*. There is also the imaginary 'boar whale' which appears as an engraving in the 1555 treatise by Olaus Magnus.<sup>25</sup> 'Pig' is furthermore traced to the Romany *baulo*, meaning swine, which is connected to the English bowl and belly, and also with the French *baleine* – whale (Lewis 1995:87).

This metaphoric connection to the hoofed mammals continues. In the Lamaleran evolutionary myth, the whale was originally a buffalo that walked down the Labalekan volcano and waded into the sea, where it began to swim and was turned into a whale.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in one traditional song called *Koteklema*, which is sung by the crew of the *téna* as they row, towing the sperm whale to shore, the men use ritual language to refer to the sperm whale as an elephant-tusked buffalo.<sup>27</sup> *Soro tarang bala tara lefo rae tai* [Elephant-tusked buffalo go ashore at our village].<sup>28</sup> In Lamalera, during the traditional rituals carried out to open the way of the 'fish' at the beginning of the whaling season, the Lord of the Land must perform ceremonies on the Labalekan volcano. Located at one of the four sacred sites on the volcano is the *Fato Koteklema*, Sperm

<sup>23</sup> As part of my research on this theme of the whale, I undertook a couple of days of fieldwork in the whale watching centre of Hervey Bay in Queensland. The guide for the tour I was on described the *mesonychid* as resembling a wolf.

<sup>24</sup> The *ungulates* or hoofed mammals are divided into *artiodactyls* which are even toed, and *perissodactyls* which have an odd number of toes. *Perissodactyls* include horses, tapirs and rhinoceroses.

<sup>25</sup> Olaus Magnus *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* 1555 in Cousteau and Paccalet (1988:53).

<sup>26</sup> Personal interview with Bélé Martius Gulé Fujon and Mama Feronika Osé Fujon, Lamalera 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Melville (1986:200) uses the metaphor of white ivory tusks of a huge elephant to describe the whaleship as it sets out on its voyage. The editor notes the hybrid form of this ship which is very like a whale and strangely elephantine (1986:741). The white whale is also compared to the white bull Jupiter (1986:656).

<sup>28</sup> Song sung by Bélé Terong Tapoonâ, translated from Bahasa Lamaholot into Bahasa Indonesia with the help of Ama Mias Wujon (Fujon), Lamalera 1995.

Whale Stone. This stone is said to be one of the buffalos that was trying to get to sea but turned to stone as it was caught by the dawn rays of the sun.<sup>29</sup>

All this knowledge of the whale that comes from myth and metaphor is conventionally treated as fantasy, but if this supposed divide between the real and the fantastic is stretched very thin, we begin to see the fiction of science and the realism of metaphor. We begin to see the one in the other. A clue to this technique lies in science fiction where metaphor is taken literally (de Lauretis 1980:163). The whale, in this vision would literally be a pig or buffalo. This would be to unveil worlds of wonder – but such worlds are already here.

According to molecular phylogenetics (the comparison of the molecular structure of organisms to ascertain their relationships), the hippopotamus is the closest extant relative of the whale. Meanwhile other *artiodactyls*, such as camels, cows and pigs, and *perissodactyls*, such as horses, are not too distant.

It appears that the whales and the artiodactyls are more closely related than the artiodactyls and any other land mammal. The analysis shows that the hippopotamus and the whale share 90% of their molecular sequences, whereas a hippopotamus and a horse, the next closest relative in the mammalian family to the hippopotamus, share no more than 80% of their sequences (Nicklin et al. 1994:34).

Thus the river horse becomes the hippo of the sea, while that hoofed ship of the desert doesn't sail too far behind. From the watery realm of the fantastic, we enter the land of science.

Perhaps it is that final bridge between the land and the sea that makes the hippo/whale divide so unbridgeable for those that doubt magic. But the whale is no ordinary sea creature. Despite its incredible adaptation, it still remains out of its depth in the depth of the oceans. It is, after all, a social, air breathing, live birthing, suckler, not a cold-blooded, scaly fish. Yet there are species of whales that mock our categories. The Pygmy Sperm Whale, *Kogia breviceps*, and the Dwarf Sperm Whale, *Kogia simus* (Carwardine and Camm 1995) have false gills, they must nevertheless surface to breath.

It is all the more amazing, then, that some whales are such incredible deep sea divers. There is evidence to suggest that the great sperm whales can dive beyond 3,000

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Bélé Martius Gulé Furon and Mama Feronika Osé Furon, Lamalera 1994.



metres.<sup>30</sup> Humans have only recently made this journey, but we do it inside a whale-like vessel, whose claustrophobic, sweltering hot interior, resembling an abdominal space crammed with intestine-like piping, reminds us of that other belly.<sup>31</sup> And in those dark watery depths we meet the animal that so inspired our designs for deep diving.

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Haunted by the hallucinations of a malarial tourist who found the monster he sought inside him, I have travelled a long and wandering course via the whale's belly, encountering along the way many events and stories that helped me think of ways in which the motif of swallowing speaks of relationality. As the psychoanalyst Carl Jung explains, if we can face the peril of the shadowy realm of the unconscious, we may, in this liminal realm, begin to heed thoughts that have not been allowed to voice themselves before, and we may reflect upon dreams or seemingly insignificant occurrences. In this vulnerable state, the collective unconscious can go to work.

The necessary and needful reaction from the collective unconscious expresses itself in archetypally formed ideas. The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door is, surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is the world of water, where all life floats in suspension; where the realm of the sympathetic system, the soul of everything living, begins; where I am indivisibly this *and* that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me. (Jung 1968a:21-22)

However, there is one thing that still stands out in my experience that varies from this insight which formed much of Jung's thinking. As the stories of whales demonstrate, and as Jung's work so often points towards, this is no longer about *who* I am, but rather about *how* I am – how I exist in the relations of the world.

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<sup>30</sup> See Dalton and Isaacs (1992:55); Carwardine and Camm (1995:88).

<sup>31</sup> I refer here to my experience of a visit inside the Russian Foxtrot Submarine *Podvodnaya Lodka* which is a 641 Design Pacific fleet diesel submarine. I would like to thank the Australian National Maritime Museum for allowing me free admittance to this submarine whilst it was on display at the museum in 1997.

# Bronze Age Whaling Boats

The ship may well be a symbol for departure; it is, at a deeper level, the emblem of closure. An inclination for ships always means the joy of perfectly enclosing oneself, of having at hand the greatest possible number of objects, and having at one's disposal an absolutely finite space.

Roland Barthes *Mythologies*

In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.

Michel Foucault *Of Other Spaces*



The whaling boats of Lamalera are of an ancient design. Guidebooks and magazines consistently note that they are made entirely of wood, use dowels instead of nails, and are propelled by paddles and oars and a woven palm-leaf sail.<sup>1</sup> The same features are also described in specialist literature where they establish the motive for the documentation of the boats. The specialist texts, notably Horridge (1992), Barnes (1985, 1996) and Dwyer and Akerman (1998), identify the Lamaleran *téna* (or *plédang*, *pelédang*)<sup>2</sup> as one of the last extant examples of a plank-dowelled<sup>3</sup> lashed-lug technique.

This technique involves a construction sequence whereby the hull is built first, working up from the keel by fixing planks edge to edge with internal dowels. The planks are carved individually from split logs using hand adzes, and are shaped in three dimensions leaving projecting lugs *in situ* on their inner surfaces to form transverse rows inside the boat's shell. Ribs are then lashed to these projecting lugs. Additional features of the Lamaleran *téna* that mark this design as particular to an ancient style of craft include: the quarter-moon shape of the hull which curves up at either end; a pivoting bipod mast which supports the rectangular palm-leaf sail; and, curiously, a long-handled oar with a round blade the size of a large dinner plate (see Horridge 1985, 1982, 1979, 1978; also Hornell 1946; Scott 1981).

It has been the documentation of the evolution of this style of boat that has inspired many of Professor Adrian Horridge's numerous texts on the watercraft of the Austronesian region and has gained him recognition as the leading authority on this construction principle (1978; 1979; 1982; 1985; 1995). He expresses great fascination in the lashed-lug design, especially since:

this method of construction...was also characteristic of the early Scandinavian boats and it persisted in a modified form through the first period of the development of the Viking ship.... [W]e have here a very early and

<sup>1</sup> For instance: Cummings (1990); Dalton (1983); Ellis (1988); Ives and Moore (1995); Mellefont (1999a, 1999b); Miles (1998-1999a, 1998-1999b); Moore and Ives (1995); Muller (1992); Wahyudi (1989b).

<sup>2</sup> In Lamalera both the terms *téna* and *plédang* or *pelédang* are commonly used. In ritual situations, the whaling boats are referred to as *téna laja* (boats with sails) or *téna lama faij* (boats with places for oars). *Plédang* is used when speaking Indonesian and could possibly be a little-used east Indonesian word.

<sup>3</sup> The sewn-plank, or laced-plank design is considered an earlier technique than the plank-dowelled (Horridge 1995, 1982; Scott 1981; Hornell 1920, 1946; McGrail and Kentley 1985). Horridge argues that a metal gouge is necessary for dowelling and therefore dates the technique in the Bronze Age. Manguin (1985) gives an example of the transition from sewn-planked to plank-dowelled methods. As his example demonstrates, however, the two methods may also exist simultaneously. Before being rebuilt in late 1994, the Sika Ténâ used a double lacing of copper wire as well as dowels to hold a section of repair plank (*baffa*) in place after the top plank had been damaged by a whale.

sophisticated way of building boats that was evolved in the long period of the Bronze Age (1985:52-53).

Horridge sums up his reaction upon first seeing the Lamaleran whaling boats as follows:

The amazing feature of these boats is that when you look inside you see the traditional lashed-lug design in one of its perfect forms (1982:51).

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As the boating expert peers inside one of the *téna*, he sees the manifestation of the technique he has sought via museum models; in historical, ethnographic, and archaeological documents; and through numerous fieldtrips. What he sees then, is not just the material embodiment of this technique, a static 'perfect form', but also the very form that supports his own search for perfection.

Horridge's texts on the lashed-lug technique are, in one respect, about collecting. As the Professor explains:

In 1980 I discovered that the *pledangs*, the whaling boats in the isolated whaling village of Lamalera...are part of this widespread and barely surviving ancient tradition....

It is high time that this ancient method of boat construction is displayed in museums and finds its way into texts on the history of technology.... Certainly it is time that examples of the lashed *prahu* [boat] be collected for the major museums before it has entirely vanished, as it is likely soon to do. (1985:53-54)

There is here a desire for fullness, preservation and completion in this story. Likewise, this sense of plenitude is displayed in Horridge's writing. There is a sense of contentment and containment in his narrative; while his words speak of a desire for enclosure and a nostalgia for the traditional, they also speak of a desire for being surrounded by things, and of the possibility of always discovering another specimen. This is a story that speaks of creating the perfect collection:

*Prahu*-chasing, like bird-watching, is a sport that grows on you, so beware. You never tire of finding out more about the familiar kinds. To spot a new one, and especially to find the last surviving example of an old traditional type, you will endure hours in a *bemo*<sup>4</sup> on a bumpy road, hours waiting in the hot sun on a small boat for a *prahu* [boat] to come by under sail, days haunting fishing

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<sup>4</sup> The *bemo* is a vehicle for transporting people, comparable to a mini bus.

villages to catch the right combination of tide and light for a photograph. To seek them being built is like searching out the rookeries of some rare sea-bird. Almost always you find the boatyard on an almost inaccessible island, with nowhere to stay the night except in the house of the local police chief, but at the end of the effort you look back on your collection with pride. (1985:xvi)

In this narrative there is something about the vessel itself which suggests the very containment that the voyage seeks (see Susan Stewart 1993:159). This is the same desire discussed by Roland Barthes in his analysis of Jules Verne's novel, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1992 [1869]). Captain Nemo, in the womb-like enclosure of his submarine, has made a world all his own. As Barthes points out, this enclosure is suggestive of the author's unconscious desires:

Verne had an obsession for plenitude: he never stopped putting a last touch to the world and furnishing it, making it full with an egg-like fullness. His tendency is exactly that of an eighteenth-century encyclopaedist or of a Dutch painter: the world is finite, the world is full of numerable and contiguous objects. The artist can have no other task than to make catalogues, inventories, and to watch out for small unfilled corners in order to conjure up there...the creations and the instruments of man. (1973:72)

This sensual fullness is also examined by Merleau-Ponty in his book *Sense and Non-Sense* where he discusses the paintings of Cézanne. As the philosopher sums up: 'Expressing what *exists* is an endless task' (1964b:15). These words suggest that fullness is not a 'thing' held in the conclusion, but is a tenuous feeling which is alive in the present. This is the delicate process described by the anthropologist James Boon, who notes that for Merleau-Ponty perception itself is message (1977:125). Boon quotes Merleau-Ponty as the latter argues that this interrelationship is true of the processes of viewing something – whether a painting or the lashed-lug technique. It is impossible to say, then, where or what it is that one looks at:

For I do not look at it as I do at a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I see it. (Quoted in Boon 1977:125)

The object, whether a painting or boat, is not a thing fixed by a gaze, but is inextricably entwined in relations of becoming. A similar relationship is at work in collecting: the collector brings alive the object at the same time that the object gives birth to the collector. Horridge is thus originated as the expert on the lashed-lug technique through and with the boats. Boat construction experts do not simply write the story of boats that pre-exist the text; rather, the lashed-lug design and author are born of each other through the performance of writing (see Barthes 1986).

It is this notion of endless intertwining that opens up the practice of collecting to further analysis. Collecting is both about the attempt to encompass or trap everything and so conclude the passage of the story, and it is also about acknowledging that the world cannot be brought to presence, and hence that the wonderful sense of momentary fullness felt in these stories is held in the intricacies of these relations of boats and construction experts and writing and reading, and cannot be extracted from them.

As Baudrillard has argued, the collection is not initiated in order to be completed; rather, 'the missing item in the collection is in fact an indispensable and positive part of the whole' (1994:13). To secure the last item of a collection would mean that the subject would 'cease to be the living and passionate individual he was!' (Baudrillard 1994:13; see also Benjamin 1969:60).

James Clifford also discusses the emotions involved in this enterprise, stating that 'collecting is inescapably tied to obsession, to personal recollection' (Clifford in Stocking 1985:236; Clifford 1988:218-219).<sup>5</sup> From the rational gaze of scientific endeavour, collecting bleeds into impassioned accumulation, into the all too irrational realms of obsession, opulence, and over-eager curiosity. Paraphrasing Clifford, it is as if the collector had stepped into a tabooed zone, along a path of too intimate fantasy; the vision of a personal forbidden woods – exotic, desired, savage (1988:217).

Horridge, aware of the passions of his discourse, light heartedly excuses the excesses of his own texts. In the preface to his book on the traditional craft of Indonesia (1985:v), he begins by stating:

I digress so easily that you will find passages about the way of life of the sailors or boatbuilders, comments on the uses of words or the engineering aspects of construction and rigs, snippets of history, hints for tourists, notes on the boats in surrounding areas, and especially a thread running through concerned with the impact of western technology on the strong local boatbuilding traditions.

Horridge's texts stand out in discourses of boat construction, openly exhibiting his passion for his subject. His manuscripts are sensuous, almost tactile, overflowing with

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Stewart suggests one difference between the souvenir and the collection is the way they evoke memories. 'While the point of the souvenir may be remembering, or at least the invention of memory, the point of the collection is forgetting – starting again in such a way that an infinite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie' (1993:152). This is an important point but the delineation seems overly stated. Benjamin's (1969) essay suggests collecting shares characteristics with the souvenir.



enthusiasm, as evidenced through detailed descriptions of boats and their evolution, and through copious asides referring to travel and places, as well as to people, histories and cargoes. Thus the desire to collect as a desire for self-conscious control and stasis lies dangerously close to getting out of control, of turning into impassioned curiosity. In the words of Nicholas Thomas:

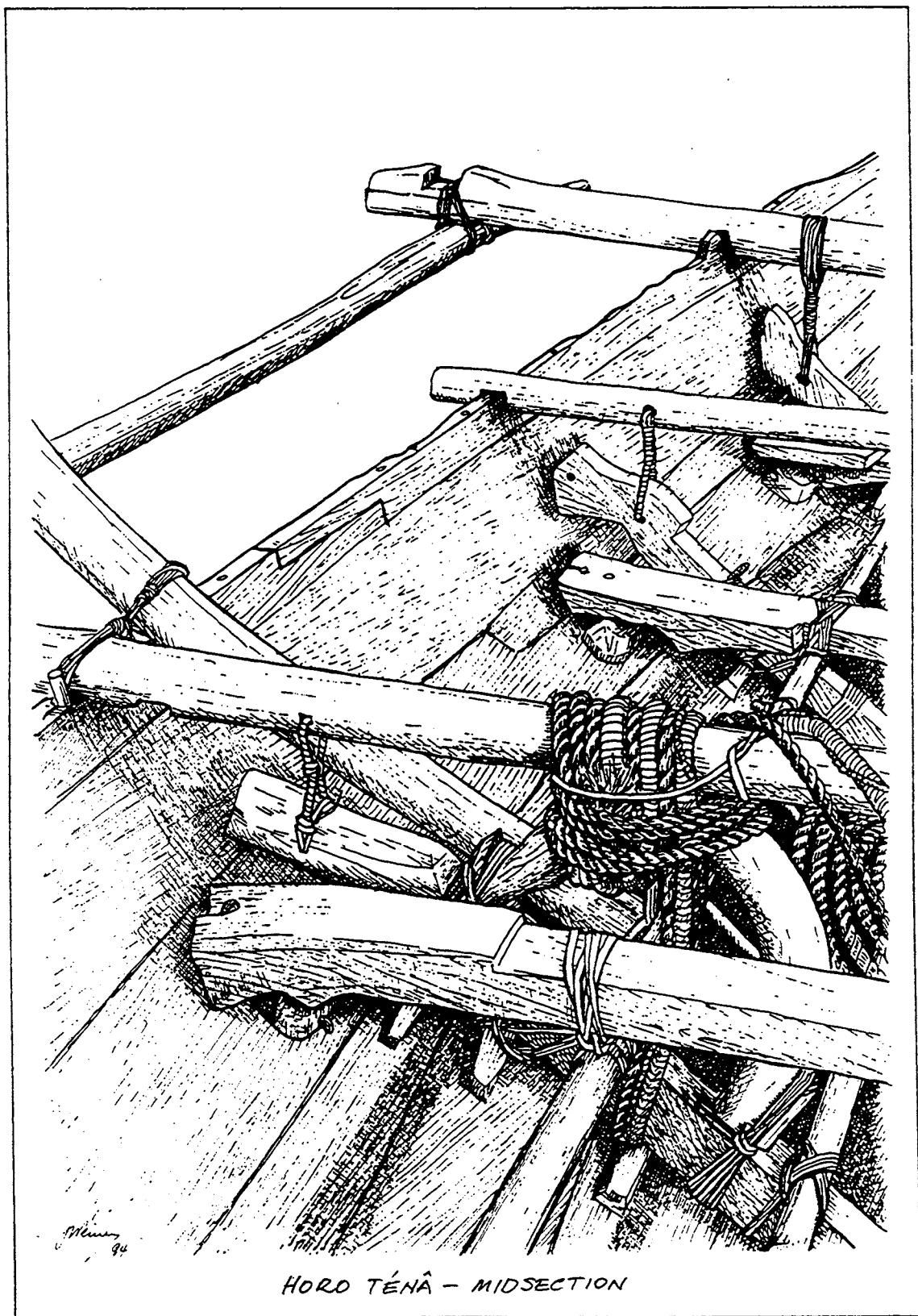
Even in its more legitimate aspect, where it directly prompts the pursuit of knowledge, curiosity peculiarly blends laudable and negative attributes.... [T]o be curious is to be 'addicted to enquiry'. Enquiry may be a proper and essentially masculine activity, but addiction, like the impassioned desire for a novel commodity, or an extreme instance of passionate attachment, entails a complete or partial surrender of self-government before an external object or agent; it is certainly an anxious, restless and giddy condition. (Thomas 1991:125-128; repeated in Elsner and Cardinal 1994: 124).

Too much curiosity – too many divergences, too much eagerness – does not speak of the cool collecting of the rational mind. Rather, it is suggestive of the body and unconscious – of lust and passion, seduction and desire. Horridge's anxious, restless and giddy texts evoke images of that which always escapes, that which cannot be tamed, that which interrupts closure and stasis (see Cixous and Clément 1986; Irigaray 1985a). Horridge's texts are vivid and alive, sensuous, and pregnant with possibility. These are passionate discourses which speak of a pleasure in digression and a joy in forever moving.

Thus it is possible to see a double moment in collecting, including the collecting of ancient boats. As the sociologist Ann Game writes: 'while the talk of former modes of travel...might be read as nostalgia, it might be that there is simultaneously another moment in this: not a nostalgic desire but a positive desire – to feel, touch, smell, move' (1991:166). Game encourages a thinking of the antiquarian object not just as the salvaging of an origin, as if origin(s) are things that lie neglected somewhere in the past, but as creating origin stories here in the present (see Eliade 1989).

Horridge's narratives of the search for the lashed-lug technique are clearly origin stories – created in the present. They speak of the sheer adventure of collecting. He tells the tale of the journey that the boats take him on as he wanders through the eastern archipelagoes. It is not just a story of collection as possession; Horridge's tale always holds out a promise of something more – there is a mood of expectation (Benjamin 1969:59). 'The world of the ark' as Susan Stewart comments, 'is a world not of nostalgia but of anticipation' (1993:152).





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Horridge doesn't just write about boats; he invites the reader to climb aboard and sail the seas on an adventure in search of the treasure of the lashed-lug technique. And like the adventurers who sail before him,<sup>6</sup> Horridge, too, is destined to meet with many perils along the way. His story tells of near encounters with sea monsters, savages, marauding pirates, slaves and head hunters as he wanders through exotic kingdoms full of luxurious riches guarded by barbarous customs. Starting in Lamalera, we join him on a journey that will take us through various islands of the Indonesian province of Maluku and on into the Philippines, until miraculously emerging in ancient Scandinavia.

The encounter with the Lamaleran *téna* thus speaks of only one of the Professor's adventures, but this boat is nevertheless an integral part of the tale. Horridge describes the whale hunt in considerable detail, for it is, after all, a whaling boat that can sustain the imagination on this long journey. The *téna* proves that this ancient design 'could have been effective, watertight and remarkably strong...even when regularly dragged along as a sea-anchor by wounded whales'; it is a boat that 'men could confidently trust at sea' (1982:53). And it is a boat that can bear Horridge and his readers on a voyage to far flung islands where a few examples of the lashed-lug design survive alongside 'old animistic beliefs in isolated places' – sacred places that are, in turn, all 'difficult to reach except by prahu [boat]' (1985:81).

It is evident that the lashed-lug design seen inside the Lamaleran whaling boats has already become for Horridge merely a remnant example of a 'perfect form'. The desire thus becomes one of searching for the source of this design:

Reviewing the evidence, the pledang is not peculiar to Lamalerap.... Boats of this common design, conforming to the engineering principles outlined, must have been widespread perhaps as far back as 500 BC.... Many survived into this century in isolated islands (Hornell 1920) and we are fortunate that a few examples survive intact as the pledang of [Lamalera] and the prahu belong of the Aru Islands (Horridge 1982:53).

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<sup>6</sup> There are many of these adventurers appearing throughout history, but I am also reminded of the myths of St Brendan and the monks (see Severin 1977), of Jason and the Argonauts, and of Sinbad the Sailor, as well as Verne's story of Captain Nemo in the *Nautilus* (1992 [1869]).

Thus, having battled with whales, the voyage continues. From Lamalera the story can be read as travelling back in time as it sails to the Aru Islands, farther to the east, into the Indonesian province of Maluku (the Moluccas). The Aru Islands are of legendary renown as a veritable treasure trove for adventurous traders and naturalists. From here come birds of paradise feathers and exotic butterfly specimens. It is Alfred Russell Wallace who best describes the overwhelmingly romantic allure of Aru. Here he recaptures the scene as he sets out to sail the monsoon winds with the notorious Bugis traders from the port of Makasar in Sulawesi. His story, like Horridge's, bursts with sensuous detail, the very words calling up the romance of adventure, whisking the reader away to fantastic lands:

I was in one of the great emporiums of the native trade of the Archipelago. Rattans from Borneo, sandalwood and bees'-wax from Flores and Timor, tripang from the Gulf of Carpentaria, cajuputi-oil from Bouru, wild nutmegs and mussoi-bark from New Guinea.... More important than all these however is the trade to Aru, a group of islands...inhabited only by mop-headed savages, who yet contribute to the luxurious tastes of the most civilised races. Pearls, mother-of-pearl, and tortoise-shell, find their way to Europe, while edible birds' nests and 'tripang' or sea-slug are obtained by shiploads for the gastronomic enjoyment of the Chinese.

Even by Macassar people themselves, the voyage to the Aru Islands is looked upon as a rather wild and romantic expedition, full of novel sights and strange adventures. (Wallace 1906:309-310)

Horridge is not drawn to Aru by the magnificent and rare specimens of nature that Wallace sought. What he discovers, and metaphorically collects, is the *belang*. As he makes clear, the importance of these boats, like the Lamaleran whaling boats, is that they 'are one of the few surviving examples with the primitive internal lugs carved in situ' (1978:24). The *belang*, he notes, is another rare example of a style of boat construction that has 'almost disappeared from the world' (1985:51). He reinforces this point with reference to the boat's ancient links.

This account of the previously undescribed prahu *belang* raises again the whole question of convergence between the Moluccan construction method and that of the early Scandinavian ships. (1978:28)

Here recurs that detail of a similarity between the Austronesian and Scandinavian design. Horridge calls this a convergence, implying that the designs meet and merge. While his writing suggests an evolutionary convergence – and at other times a diffusion – of techniques, his descriptions entice the reader to follow this trail further back through the islands of Maluku, unravelling as they go the causal links of this narrative, with their corresponding connection to evolutionary time.

As Horridge explains, the *belang* of Aru probably originated from the Kei islands, where boat-building is a specialty. One of the styles of boat that continues to be built there today is the *kalulus* (also *kalulis* and *kulis*), and although its construction has changed considerably, its ancient features are still discernible.<sup>7</sup> But here it becomes evident that Horridge's story of the evolution of boat construction has strangely converged with the origin story of the first Lamaleran ancestors. The boat *kalulus* is evident in the name given to the boat owned by one of the subclans of Bedionâ: the Kelulus. I am also reminded of one of the clans of Lamalera called Atakéi, meaning people of Kei. On the side of their boat, Muko Téna, is written *Bao lau Key dai* (Sail from Kei arrive), indicating their distant connection with the Kei islands. As with the Lamalera *téna*, Horridge advises that the *kalulus* of the Kei Islands would have risen sharply at either end, they would have once used a tripod mast and square or rectangular sail, and they would have had projecting lugs on the inside of the carved planks to which ribs would be lashed (1978:31). For a description of the *kalulus*, Horridge again turns to Wallace: 'From some unknown causes these remote savages have come to excel in what seems a very difficult art.' Their boats, Wallace continues:

are...built of planks running from end to end, and so accurately fitted that it is often difficult to find a place where a knife-blade can be inserted between the joints. The larger ones are from 20 to 30 tons burthen, and are finished ready for sea without a nail or particle of iron being used, and with no other tools than axe, adze, and auger (Quoted in Horridge 1978:31).

Going on to search for the origins of this boat, Horridge quotes a passage from a c.1544 Portuguese treatise on Maluku by António Galvão who lists the many types of boats of the region, including the *kalulus*. However, it is the larger and more ostentatious boats mentioned by Galvão which continue to inspire the majority of the writings on ancient boats of Southeast Asia. As Horridge remarks: 'the most conspicuous of the large boats were those adapted for carrying many men and used for raiding. Hunting parties went to other islands by boat, new lands were regularly colonized by boat; slaves were brought home at the paddles' (1982:35). Horridge is speaking here of the famous *korakora*, whose design corresponds with the plank-

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<sup>7</sup> In 1990 a student expedition from Oxford University (Aglionby 1990) went to Kei to document the construction and preservation of a *perahu Kalulis*. When the team arrived they found the boats they had ordered were being made in the 'traditional' style. The boat builders hadn't built this style of boat before and were working from their memories of having seen them built many decades before. Two boats were made, one for the Museum Siwalima in Ambon and the other for Exeter in the U.K. The lashed-lug *kalulus* at the Siwalima Museum which I viewed is without ribs and in this respect appears incomplete and unseaworthy.

dowelled lashed-lug construction, but with additional platforms adapted for its specialised use.

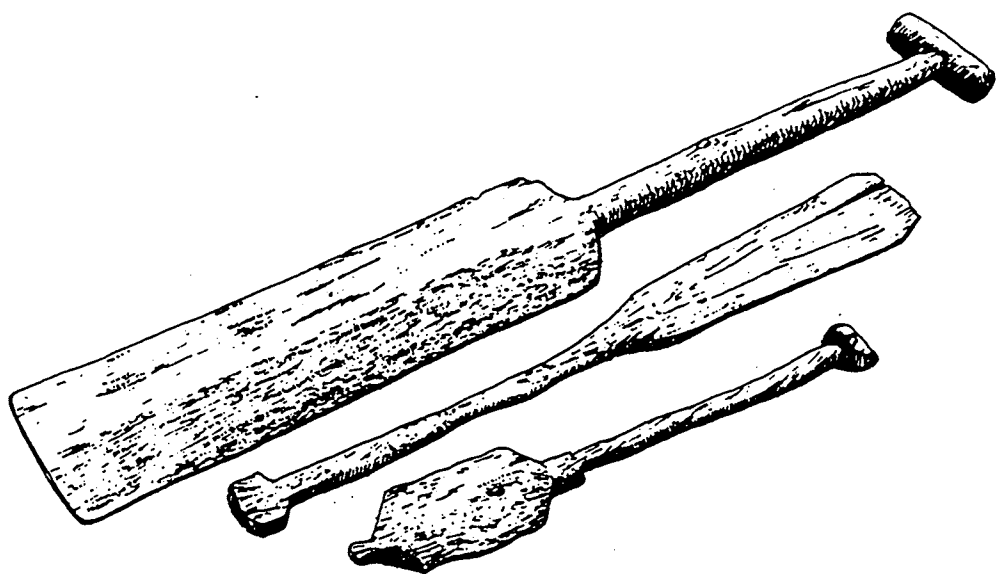
The kora kora had floats on both sides and several outrigger booms. A superstructure of platforms was raised over the hull for the fighting men, and other platforms were stretched across the outrigger booms for the men at the paddles; in the largest there were four banks of fifty men on each side. A tripod mast supported a tilted rectangular sail.... [T]he ends of the boat were curved up to high stem- and stern-posts decorated with streamers, and in the earlier days with the heads of defeated enemies. (Horridge 1985:5)

This last feature of the high stem and stern posts resonates, once more, with the image of the Viking ship. In another document, Horridge again describes the *korakora*, elaborating upon this archetypal image with a detail from Galvão's description:

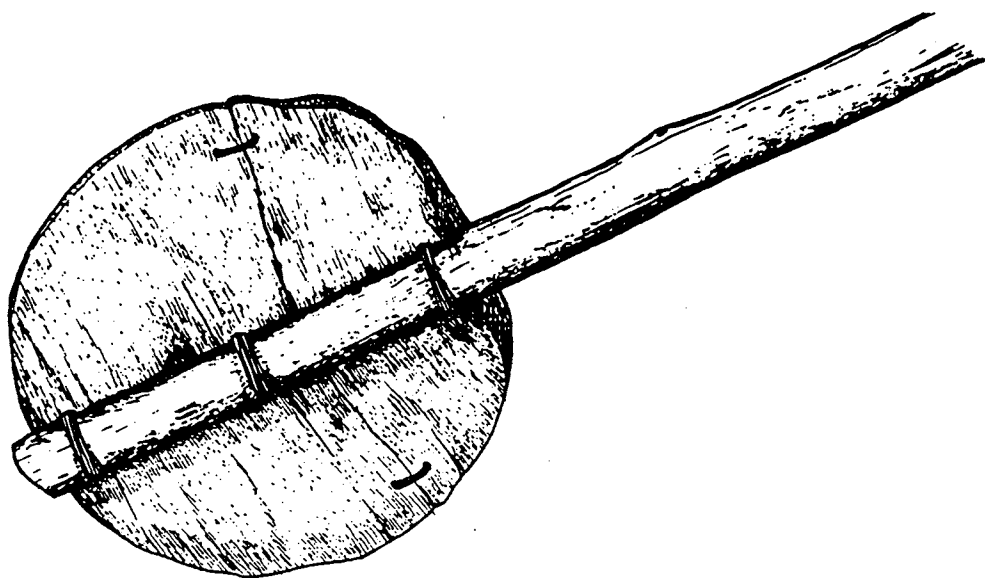
in the middle they are egg-shaped and at both ends slope upwards....At the prow they insert a high snake's neck with the head of a serpent and the horns of a deer. (Galvão quoted in Horridge 1978:9)

Further details of the *korakora* come from a manuscript written by the Jesuit priest, Father Alcina, who worked in the Philippines. The 1668 *Historia de las Islas y Indios de las Bisayas* is one of the most valuable and precisely detailed documents to describe the construction of the plank-dowelled lashed-lug technique. Alcina describes a range of boats built in the eastern Visayan Islands in the 1600s, but translations of his work have given considerable attention to the *korakora* (Scott 1981; Horridge 1982). As the Alcina manuscript notes, rowers face forward when using the paddles, beating a rhythm as they go. But they also have long oars with which they face backwards to row. These oars are comprised of 'flat round blades larger than dinner plates' (quoted in Horridge 1982:26; see also Scott 1981:16; Nooteboom 1932:plate 97; Paris 1841:90). These distinctive and now extremely rare oars, along with masts and rectangular sails and the plank-dowelled, lashed-lug technique, are what Horridge saw when he looked inside the Lamaleran *téna*. And what is more, the distinctive sound of paddles beating a rhythm against the hull of the boat recalls the sound of Lamaleran men rowing and chanting as they tow a whale to shore.

These characteristics so clearly displayed in connection with the Lamaleran *téna* are read by Horridge as a remnant of this once widespread design. Horridge notes the disappearance of the *korakora* and the way of life it supported, stating that in the past '2,000 years or so the slow progress of civilization spreading across the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagoes has pushed back the deeply ingrained Australo-Malay custom of marauding by sea' (1985:4). Likewise the rituals associated with these



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traditions of pirating and slave raiding have gone the way of the boats. Again Horridge turns to Alcina for a description of the blessing that would have once been carried out in order to ensure the safe return of the men who put to sea:

There is a special ritual when they launch a boat for war or for their thieving expeditions. All the way down to the water they put rollers...on which the boat will slide, but instead of the last roller they put a prisoner of war. As the ship passes over him he is squashed into a pancake, and the sacrifice ensures that the ship and all who sail in her will be feared by the enemy and valiant in taking captives....They believe that the boat will be more formidable by the power of the blood that is shed. What a barbaric Godless lot they are! (Horridge 1982:24-25)

There is a recurring motif of blood and sacrifice in Horridge's story. Like the consistent repetition of details that hint that this story of the evolution of boat design is also a personal story about the desire for one's own origins, the mention of blood conjures up the blood of birth itself (see Irigaray 1985a:25). Horridge goes on to document the last vestiges of these fast disappearing rituals. They are no longer the human blood sacrifices of Alcina's time, but they nevertheless carry out the same sacred role of ensuring the safety and success of the boat and all the men who sail in her. He describes the launching ritual of the modern plank-dowelled Bugis *pinisi* of South Sulawesi (similar to the type Wallace sailed in to the Aru Islands):<sup>8</sup>

All...night they prepare for the launching ceremony. Before dawn the beating of drums brings from the surrounding districts hundreds of men who will lift and pull the prahu. There are banners and baskets of rice, music, food and drink. A goat is sacrificed and in the path of the prahu it is burnt in a fire made from offcuts from the prahu. An early Spanish account describes how in the Philippines a human prisoner was crushed under the advancing prahu to increase the strength of its spirit. The pushing and heaving of the prahu by the crowd of men is likened to the birth process, and they chant appropriate songs....

Intense ceremonies such as these are found among boatbuilders, sailors and fishermen in many parts of Indonesia...but they are scarcely documented. The whalers of Lamalera...now use holy water instead of chicken's blood to consecrate the boat before a whale hunt (1985:79-81).

Horridge implies that these are barely surviving rituals, found only in isolated places. However, as he goes on to argue, these rituals – even in a sanitised form – are

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<sup>8</sup> On boat construction and rituals of South Sulawesi, see: Pelly (1975); Macknight and Mukhlis (1975); Horridge (1979); Burningham (1987b); Wahyudi (1989c).

essential to boat construction. Here he suggests that the rituals preserve traditions, offering re-searchers portals into the past. Thus,

the ceremonies have been effective in keeping alive the importance of following the ancestral methods and of avoiding offence to the spirits of previous generations. The religious aspect supports the routine work and ensures that detail is faithfully carried out. Boatbuilders everywhere are extremely conservative; those of Indonesia spend long apprenticeships copying exactly the methods of the [master builder], with the result that the surviving boats of Aru and Lamalerap could be examples from the Bronze Age. (1985:79-81)

However, ethnographic observations, even in the form of historical documents, can only take this journey back so far. Continuing his search for the origins of the plank-dowelled lashed-lug design, Horridge finally turns to archaeology. In 1976 porcelain hunters in the Philippines uncovered an ancient boat, a second midden being discovered nearby a year later. Planks from the two finds have been dated at 13-14<sup>th</sup> century and as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Horridge 1982:32; Scott 1981:1). These planks bear the classic features of the plank-dowelled lashed-lug design, including a short piece of transverse ribbing which was still lashed to the lugs of several planks (Scott 1981:1-3; Dwyer and Akerman 1998:125)

In his manuscript *The Lashed-Lug Boat of the Eastern Archipelagoes* (1982), Horridge details this archaeological find in the context of his other evidence which includes the whaling boats Lamalera, various boats of Maluku, the *korakora* of Indonesia and the Philippines, and the ethnographic manuscript of Father Alcina. The importance of 'first contact' and archaeological information is summed up in the foreword to the manuscript where the Chief Archaeologist of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich notes that:

A knowledge of precisely how boats were being built and used at about the time of this first contact, before any European influence, is...of high priority in historical research. If this state can be established it will form a baseline from which other research may extend our knowledge back into the prehistoric period. (McGrail in Horridge 1982:v)

However, this desire to extend knowledge, by travelling back in time in order to unearth the source of this boat construction method, is never ultimately fulfilled. The wonderful adventure of the lashed-lug technique is interrupted by a gap in the story. Although Horridge's detailed documentation has consistently pointed to a link between the Austronesian boats and those of early Scandinavia, this link cannot be found. Concluding his argument on the evolution of the lashed-lug technique of Austronesia



and Scandinavia, Horridge notes that the two designs are 'astonishingly similar' and again suggests their common origin.

Projecting lugs as a way of fixing each plank to a flexible rib and internal framework were well established in the pre-Viking age Hjörtspring boat of 350 BC.... Hornell (1935, 1946) suggested that the internal lugs...are directly related by cultural diffusion with those serving the same function on the early Viking ships. The problem is that nowadays there is no strong tradition of internal lugs in the intervening regions, and it is a very difficult matter to copy such a design without a long apprenticeship....

In my view, the internal lugs survived in the two extreme outlying areas of what was a very ancient Indo-European technique, and I expect that they will appear in archaeological finds, possibly in lake boats, in the intervening areas. (1978:28-30)

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In this intricate discourse of boat construction, it is as though the coincidence of the lashed-lug design occurring in both Austronesia, and in the Bronze Age and early Viking Ships of Scandinavia – but not in the intervening spaces – is not a lack to the story but rather its excess. It is this wonderful mystery that holds the tale and moves people to its adventure. This same coincidence likewise compels me to follow this story, for I am reminded of that far away and exotic land from which my own ancestors and relatives hail, but which I have never seen.

This is not the first time I have felt the echo of this mysterious coincidence between Lamalera and my Scandinavian origins. There is the small detail of how my father had worked in Borneo in the 1950s before settling in Australia – something that often made me feel as though, in undertaking research in Lamalera, I was somehow treading in his footsteps, despite obvious differences between Lamalera and Borneo. There is also the fact that Norwegian culture has an ancient history of whale hunting – hence Norway's involvement in the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation's Freedom from Hunger Campaign in the 1970s which attempted to modernise Lamaleran whaling, a project that proved completely unsuccessful (see Barnes 1984).

Another tenuous link is a number of references to Scandinavia in *Moby Dick*. Melville credits his own tale with an ancestry that goes back to Alfred the Great, who took down the words of a 'Norwegian whale-hunter of those times' (1986:207). While Ishmael reminds me that his whaling voyage is never far from that 'wild Scandinavian

vocation' on which he had 'so abandonedly embarked' (1986:218). And as the book's editor comments: 'somewhere at the mythological roots of *Moby-Dick* there lurk memories of pagan Scandinavia with its rock carvings, or drawings, of ships and sun discs; runic knots and interlacing patterns; dancing men and men in procession with great erected phalluses; ocean quest and boat-burial.' As he sums up, *Moby Dick* may be read, in part, as Viking Saga (1986:733).

But more mysterious still is this strange resonance between the Lamaleran whaling boats and the early Viking ships. Like Professor Horridge, I desire to find a link that will bridge the gap between the Austronesian and Scandinavian lashed-lug designs – as if, in making this link materialise, I would magically be united with my own heritage and become complete through the conclusion of this story. Taking up Horridge's search – which has all along also been mine – I wildly seek out clues with which to span this gulf. But instead of searching in boat construction discourses, I am now drawn to the mythology of Scandinavia.

However, this quest likewise proves unredeeming, and having given up all hope, I pick up in despair a children's book (Gregory 1978). It is the story of Ragnarøk, the Viking myth, taken from the ancient *Voluspá* poem,<sup>9</sup> that describes the death of the gods, the giants, the monsters and humans, the destruction of the world – and its rebirth. Doomsday, the story says, will be ushered in by disharmony among people, and the very earth will tremble with mighty earthquakes. All the monsters that were fettered by the gods will break free from their bonds: the wolf devours the sun and a dark winter will last for three years; then Jormungandr, the serpent that was cast into the sea where it lay circling the earth, emerges from the depths causing the waters to rise and engulf the land. Launched on the flood is the ship Naglfar, a vessel made from the nails of dead men. It carries a crew of giants who travel across the rainbow bridge to Asgard, the land of the gods where the final battle is fought. Thor, the venerated god of thunder, is pitted against his old enemy Jormungandr, the world serpent. All the gods fall and the monsters are destroyed with them. Thor kills the serpent only to be overcome by its venom. Then fire is cast over the whole world so that the race of men perishes along with the gods, giants and monsters; everything is finally engulfed in the sea. But later, the earth will arise again from the waves – cleansed and fertile. A man and woman who sheltered from destruction in the world tree will come out to repeople this

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<sup>9</sup> The *Voluspá* (soothsaying of the volva, a seeress) is a poem that describes the end of the world and its rebirth. The Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson (c.1179-1241) collected poems and stories of the Viking myths in a book known as the *Prose Edda*. He used the *Voluspá* as the basis for his story of Ragnarøk (see Davidson 1964).

regenerated world. And a new sun will shine from the heavens giving light and warmth to the earth.

The drawings that accompany this story depict men – blonde or redheaded, bearded, heavily built, warrior Vikings. The few women are likewise fair and some are warriors. In stark contrast to these pictures appearing throughout the book, the scene for the dawn of the new world features two towering volcanic-shaped mountains stretching up and curving inwards towards a large full sun. At the base of the volcanoes lies a lagoon of cool water; clumps of palm trees frame a man and woman walking hand in hand from the water across a meadow of long grass. The couple have black flowing hair; the man has no beard and they are unarmed.

This final image fills me with an uncanny sense of recognition. It is not just that the illustration resonates with the biblical story of Genesis and its edenic landscape and couple. More striking, is that this picture suddenly reminds me of Lamalera – the details of volcanoes and that huge sun, the water and palm trees. It makes me ponder this magical journey that has whisked me away in search of Bronze Age Scandinavian origins tenuously connected to whales and ancient boats, only to end up back in the sun-drenched volcanic, palm-strewn land of Lamalera via a story in a children's book that tells of the demise of the Vikings. It is as if I have travelled in the boats of Lamalera back to my ancestry only to find myself taken up on the back of Jormungandr, the world serpent, to be returned from my nostalgic reveries to Lamalera; as if, never having left, I am woken from a dream, to find myself once again reading those lines from Horridge as he looks inside a *téna* and sees that 'perfect form'.

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The experience of being returned to Lamalera and to the beginning of my story via the illustration from the myth of Ragnarøkkr speaks of a very different sense of time to that of the evolutionary passage of Horridge's story of boat construction. Instead of a line with beginning and end, this time curls back on itself. However, whilst in one respect this alludes to cyclic time, in another sense, time has remained still. This is suggestive of time as eternal, the notion of the present as simultaneously moving and 'standing now' (Loy 1988:223).

Yet again, there is also the suggestion of another sense of time, that of synchronicity. Jung used the term 'synchronicity' to explain a significant coincidence as a form of non-causal linkage. Jung was attempting to make sense of the experience of connections which traverse causal time and which therefore cannot be explained in causal terms (see Proffoff 1973). The gap in the narrative, where a causal link cannot be made between the Austronesian and Scandinavian lashed-lug traditions, implies that this coincidence is acausal. Similarly, my experience of a coincidental links between my Norwegian heritage and Lamalera suggests that, despite there being no bridge connecting Lamalera and Scandinavia, there is something significant in this – if only because of its persistent recurring resonance. As with stories of Lamaleran boat construction, the repetition of this coincidence of the lashed-lug demands that we take this story itself as a link, but one which is not evolutionary. This notion of acausal time is, in turn, suggestive of relations that are likewise acausal.

Horridge's evolutionary story is based on causal time and relations: one moment comes before the next and effects it. In this story, time becomes the space of a line which is divided into equal periods of time – centuries, years, days, seconds – which all exist as separate entities that can be added up. As Henri Bergson has pointed out, according to this calculation, time is not conceived as duration but as space. Separate and enclosed capsules of time are set alongside one another in a continuous chain. Like counting a rosary, each period of time is a bead that remains behind even as it is succeeded by the next (1913; 1950). Thus, Horridge's notion of evolutionary time enables an ontology and epistemology that supports his practice of venturing out to find remnant examples of a disappearing tradition, tracking back in the time capsule of the boat in order to uncover origins. One theory of evolution – one that is especially strong in Horridge's earlier texts – is that of diffusion. This theory puts forward the notion of a single origin with remnant aspects of this 'perfect form' radiating out from the centre to be found in isolated cases at the periphery. However, Horridge also mentions the notion of a convergence of techniques, suggesting that there is, within this evolutionary story, another experience of time and space. Convergence theories allude to different causal lines that meet and merge into each other, either flowing together to form one line of evolution, or remaining as separate lines that mimic each other. This offers an evolutionary story that is more complex than the diffusionist argument. In a later publication (1986), Horridge, in fact, vehemently criticises the diffusionist theory, though his rather violent rejection of diffusionism suggests an abhorrent reaction to a theory his own work has been

implicated in.<sup>10</sup> This denial itself indicates that Horridge, while he senses a problem with these causal theories, nevertheless maintains a notion of causality as the only possible reality, and thus searches for a story that will adequately reflect this perceived truth.

In the meantime, it remains that none of these evolutionary or causal stories can bring the tale to a satisfactory conclusion. The story itself points to an acausal relation whereby two lines, even though they do not meet, are nevertheless experienced as somehow connected. Rather than cause and effect, it is now this mysterious gap that holds the story and makes it seem so alive. Instead of the story ending, the gap holds it open, allowing the continual movement of both the story and its readers.

These various temporal explanations, as they emerge from the encounter with the story of the lashed-lug design, indicate an ontology of time as embodied and relational. We are not outside of time, and neither are we immersed in an endless undifferentiated flow, as the philosopher Bergson often argues, for this paradoxically would also give no sense of time; it is the relation between flow and stasis that allows us to experience time. The notion of a ceaseless and undifferentiated flow of being in time itself becomes strangely static (see Game 1991; Lennie 1999:92). As Bergson demonstrates, it is necessary to disrupt the description of time in spatial terms. However, to privilege time over space, or flow at the exclusion of stasis, only reintroduces the hierarchy in its reverse form: time is experienced in relation to space. David Loy, in interrupting the stasis-flow opposition which is apparent in both Western and Eastern philosophies of time, writes:

Consider a solitary rock out of an ocean current, protruding above the surface. Whether one is on the rock or floating past it, it is the relation between the two that makes both movement and rest possible. (1988:217)

Loy's quotation suggests that time is not one thing, but a multitude of experiences which may occur simultaneously.

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In re-reading Horridge's words as he looks inside the *téna* to see that 'perfect form', there is a sense of both movement and stillness; the words suggesting a moment of revelation. The lashed-lug design comes to life as it meets his gaze. This is no dead

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<sup>10</sup> Horridge concludes his paper by saying: 'Let me give a final kick at the diffusionist-inspired theories which no one else seems to have bothered to refute' (1986:99).

fossil from the past, but rather the archetype made flesh. Here the lashed-lug technique holds the traces of all those other boats, not as evolution, but as eternally now. What this suggests is a very different experience of time to the causal one that Horridge attributes to it, where the 'perfect form' resembles some remnant preserved in aspic. Implied here, instead, is the idea of eternal time and of acausal relations, which is to speak of the interrelation of rock and water that enables a sense of time as both movement and rest. This same interrelation is furthermore experienced through another inherent design detail of the Lamaleran whaling boats.

According to Lamaleran boat building practices, the *téna* itself is never statically 'perfect', never outside the duration of time. The implementation of the boat's design is in a constant state of change even though the construction of the boat must follow the exact procedures as handed down by the ancestors. These procedures include: design principles; correct deportment of boat builders, and members of the cooperative who own the boat, and of all the people of the clan or subclan identified through the boat; a series of ritual ceremonies;<sup>11</sup> and the consumption of special foods. The signs of this paradoxical situation are visibly embodied in the *téna*. Several lines inscribed on the hull of the boat mark 'the traditional' design. Of these markings, those called *guâ gaté*

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<sup>11</sup> There are six main ceremonies that mark stages in the building of the *téna*. The ceremonies vary slightly for the origin boats. The *Pau Laba Ketilo* (feed the chisels and dowels) is held before construction gets under way. This ceremony is for all *ata molâ* (shipwrights) and boat builders, and the members of the boat corporation; it is held in the boat's *lango bélâ*. The Kebako Pukâ has a separate ceremony *Toto Menula Kolé* (party for the keel) when the first strake (*arrâ blikâng*) is laid either side of the keel. For other *téna* the first two ceremonies may be combined to form one ceremony at the laying of the keel and first strake. The next feast is called *Toto Arrâ Bélâ*. It is held when the fifth strake (*arrâ bélâ*), the second to last, is fitted to the hull. Then follows the *Odo Maddi*, a series of ceremonies that mark the completion of the *téna*. These consist of the *Geat Knika* (removal of the chock under the boat), attended by the *ata molâ* (shipwrights). In the morning the *téna*, complete with its *maddi* (stern piece), is pushed (*odo*) from the boat hut to the beach. In the afternoon is held the *Toto Téna*, the public ceremony for the boat. That evening is the *Ballé Faffé Koteklema* (pig and sperm whale), a ceremony where the *téna alep* (lord of the boat) holds a piglet while the *ata molâ* pretends to cut it, as if dividing up shares of the sperm whale. The *téna alep* then touches parts of the hull of the boat with the piglet after which it is let loose to become the property of whoever can catch it. Bapa Fransiskus Olle Bataonâ, whom Jean interviewed, described the ceremony *Ballé Téna* as being 'like the bathing of a new born child' because the boat is born. This ritual, he says, is similar to a baptism, but like 'one before the time of the missionaries.' In the middle of the night the new *téna* is taken to sea and stays there until the middle of the next day. The *téna* is then returned to its *najâ* for a few days until the ceremony of *Belu Lagâ Knifa* or *Groi* (old language). A woman (*knifa*) pours water on the *téna* whereupon it goes to sea with its crew as well as women who continue to pour water on the boat. In the case of the Kebako Pukâ and the Bui Pukâ (the unfinished boat that travelled to Lamalera in the origin boat Kebako Pukâ), the *téna* sail to Fulandoni to swap fish for fruit and vegetables. In the case of other boats they stop at the beach near the hamlet of Ongaonâ; there they have a picnic and the women pour water on passers by. The final ceremony is *Pau Soru Nakka* (feeding of the wedge and the adze). This is like the first ceremony and is attended by the all the *ata molâ*, the boat builders, and the members that make up the boat corporation.

stand out as particularly important.<sup>12</sup> These lines are inscribed on both the inside and the outside of the hull in order to show the theoretically correct plank pattern of the *téna*. Invariably each *téna* will deviate from this pattern as planks are carved shorter or longer according to the size of available timber. If the *guâ gaté* are not inscribed into the hull, the *koteklema* will see that the boat has deviated from the ancestral design and will strike it at the point. These lines are such an integral part of the construction of the *téna* that they are carved on model boats sold to tourists; such lines also appear on the model *téna* which forms part of the collection of the Australian National Maritime Museum.<sup>13</sup>

It is through the *guâ gaté* that the sperm whale is in direct relation with the *téna*. Thus, the *koteklema* maintains the traditions of the ancestors through protecting 'the traditional' design of the boat. These lines not only visibly demonstrate the inherent relations between whales and boats and ancestors and Lamaleran people, but they also indicate that these connections are in movement, constantly being created in the present. The boat is not a thing that can be divorced from these intertwinings to become a 'perfect form' – separate, static and past – nor can the boats be divorced from Horridge's and other researchers' stories about them.

Similarly, this relationality also reminds us that the *téna* and the stories they inspire are likewise never merely an inanimate projection of researchers' desires. When specialists such as Horridge, Barnes (e.g. 1985:345), and Dwyer and Akerman (1998:123), along with Lamaleran and Indonesian commentators (Oléonâ 1992; Tim Expedisi 1991), consistently precede discussions of the design and construction of the Lamalera *téna* by mentioning the sperm whale and its hunt,<sup>14</sup> they are, in fact, reiterating the structure

<sup>12</sup> Though the *guâ gaté* are spoken of with more reverence, nevertheless all marks must be present on the *téna* before it can be considered complete. On the inside of the hull are the following marks: in the middle of the boat is a line called *kepur* which runs from the top plank to the keel and the navel of the boat. In the first third of the boat a similar line marks the drain hole (*umâ*). On the keel there is also the mark called *fâjar*.

<sup>13</sup> Jean and I commissioned a model of each of the four types of boat in Lamalera at a scale of 1:10. The model of the *téna* was made by Selsius Sari Tapoonâ (Bapa Sesus), while the models of the *béro*, *sapâ* and *jonson* were made by Ignatius Serâ Blikolollo (Bapa Nasu Blikololong). Model making assistants were engaged in making sails, harpoon and rigging. Jean was engaged in advising on model proportions and measurements. All the models form part of the collection of the Australian National Maritime Museum.

<sup>14</sup> This whale hunt is defined as the most traditional in the world because of the technology used (e.g. Akerman 1999). In a personal communication, the photo-journalist Tom Ives compared the Lamaleran hunt favourably against the less traditional Inuit hunt. See also Miles (1998-1999a, 1998-1999b). Mellefont (1999a, 1999b) compares the Lamaleran hunt to those of Eskimos, the Bequians of the Caribbean and the Makah Indians of the USA, all indigenous groups that are permitted to hunt whales. The same point was made in the exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum (1998-1999). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Grant McCall for forwarding a series of updates on the controversy over the Makah whale hunt.

already inscribed through the *guâ gaté*. In so doing they also repeat the interrelations inherent in this animist belief, according to which both things and time – whales, boats, people, ancestors and traditions – are intertwined in relations that cannot be reduced to a uni-directional line.

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When researchers write about boats they are, in fact, simultaneously writing through boats. The words of boating experts, and of ethnographers of boats such Professor Robert Barnes, cannot, in practice, maintain the distanced observation that many of their texts would suggest is their desire. The documentation of boat construction involves intricate relations of telling stories which simultaneously create the world they speak of.

Thus, as Barnes documents the construction process of the Lamaleran *téna*, his texts simultaneously ride on the structure of the boat building process (see Taussig 1992:150-152). Just as the boat is pieced together, from the laying of the keel and the edge dowelling of planks to form a hull, and the decoration of the stem and stern posts, to the addition of ribs lashed to the lugs and then the introduction of thwarts and stringers and a mast and sail, then completed with harpoons and ropes and all the gear of the hunt – so too does Barnes's story gradually build up to give a sense that the boat is fully known and that the discourse of its construction complete. In his final description of this construction sequence, Barnes notes that:

The boat and all its gear as well as everything to do with it are indicated in Lamalera by a compound term made up from the word for boat and that for sail, *téna-laja* (1996:203).

The sense of wholeness indicated by the term *téna laja* is reflected in Barnes's writings on the boats. In reviewing the three papers Barnes has written about the *téna*, culminating in several chapters and appendices of his book, it can be seen how this final description builds on the foundation already laid down in a previous paper specifically on boat building (1985), which in turn adds to, and corrects, certain imperfections of his first introductory paper (1974). The circle of Barnes's writings on boat construction itself feels complete. Like the *téna laja*, it speaks of the entirety of the boat, its rig, and all its equipment.

As Game and Metcalfe (1996:68) have commented, the basic structure of such narratives is sequential: and then, and then, and then. Barnes's narrative halts the flow



of time; his is a measured time like a measured and carved plank, and hence is bound up with a notion of space. The succession of the plank by plank description is like the succession of minutes ticking by – one set alongside the next. The story unfolds in naturalised time, supporting the documentation of boat construction as a given reality which is merely re-presented through the description. In this description time disappears in order to underpin the story and present it as real, and in so doing, it acts to bring boat building to presence. However, rather than a representation of given reality, the story is simultaneously constructing the vessel it speaks of in a way that structures time. It is as though time is contained in the very vessel being written. The story of boat construction appears as outside of time, as complete and static. Barnes's story is about being bounded and ordered, allowing us as writers and readers to likewise feel contained.<sup>15</sup>

However, as Dwyer and Akerman imply through their own story of boat construction, the description of the *téna* can never be complete and whole, and, therefore, neither can time be contained by the boats. As much as Dwyer and Akerman's discourse likewise suggests a desire for completion and stasis, there is also inherent in their story the notion that small gaps or imperfections are consistently opening up which require constant mending. Thus these researchers, following Barnes, are quick to point out several imperfections in Horridge's description of plank-dowelled boats. One point that is taken up is Horridge's statement that such craft cannot be caulked. Dwyer and Akerman point out that not only are joins luted<sup>16</sup> with palm fibre during construction of the *téna*, but state that when out at sea they 'regularly saw crew caulking leaking boats' (1998:128). Similarly, these experts also find a small leak in Barnes's description of the *téna*, which they proceed to fill in with their own story.

As Barnes's writings provide detailed descriptions of much of the boat and hunting technology from an ethnographic perspective, our aim here is to present the lines of a pelédang and provide technical data about the craft and the manner in which they are operated. Illustrations provided by Barnes are very schematic and it was our intention to recast the technical details of the pelédang with attention to the relevant proportions. (1998:124)

<sup>15</sup> On the experience of order and its relation to time, see Lennie (1999).

<sup>16</sup> 'Luting' is the placement during construction of absorbent material (in the Lamaleran case palm fibre called *rappo*) between the plank edges to render the joints waterproof. 'Caulking' is the waterproofing of joints by inserting absorbent material after construction is completed. I would like to thank Jeffrey Mellefont of the Australian National Maritime Museum and Jean Weiner for their clarifications of these processes. It should be noted that Dwyer and Akerman appear to have mis-read Horridge 1982. Luting is evident on the model *béro* commissioned from Bapa Nasu Blikololong and now held in the Australian National Maritime Museum collection.

Their task becomes one of amending the schematic drawings of the anthropologist through clean and mathematically precise diagrams. There is here a notion that fine adjustments and additional information will give the full and ordered picture of the Lamaleran *téna*. This is an epistemology based around gaps as error and thus the 'filling up of holes'. As Luce Irigaray notes, such stories are about a 'surfeit, being stuffed full, and stuffed up: immobilised' (1981:62). It is as if time could seep through these fissures and reveal that this isn't, after all, the natural time of real events, but rather is story time. However, to acknowledge this story time would be to admit that boat construction discourse is not merely about the translation of facts. Thus, although the gaps in Horridge's and Barnes's stories in turn enable Dwyer and Akerman to move, to write about the Lamaleran *téna*, this movement is paradoxically only towards whole and stasis.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, in a review of Horridge's book on the traditional sailing craft of Indonesia (1981 [1985]), Nick Burningham, another boat construction expert, states that Horridge demonstrates a prejudice (shared by other authors) against the more common and utilitarian types of boats plying Indonesian waters (1987a:154). Burningham's argument certainly carries substantial evidence. This bias towards more exotic craft could similarly be levelled at the research undertaken in Lamalera. After all, although there are several types of lashed-lug craft in the village, to date it is only the larger and more romantic *téna* that has received attention in either general literature<sup>18</sup> or specialised texts about boat construction. Yet it is not simply that the privileging of the whaling boats is an inappropriate oversight; nor would research of less 'glamorous' craft such as the *sapâ*,<sup>19</sup> the remains of the *béro*,<sup>20</sup> or the modern *jonson*<sup>21</sup> fill an imagined gap in

<sup>17</sup> Again this desire for stasis is interrupted: it is also paradoxical that Dwyer and Akerman's paper contains numerous small errors and should be read with considerable care.

<sup>18</sup> In a book about his adventures in search of *Moby Dick*, the climax of which is set in Lamalera, Tim Severin states that the *téna* is so archaic in appearance that it looks like something out of the stone age (1999b:151). Given Severin's interest in boats, this statement is particularly striking – even more so, as he has a paper (discussing the reconstruction of the boat made for his Sinbad adventures) published in the same conference proceedings in which Barnes details the design and construction principles of the *téna* (see McGrail and Kentley 1985).

<sup>19</sup> The Lamaleran *sapâ* or sampan is a different construction to the various *sapa* of Ende in Flores which are described by Burningham (1990).

<sup>20</sup> Barnes briefly mentions another type of canoe used in Lamalera during the 1970s and early 1980s called the *kelaba* or *béro kelaba* (1996:171-172). His description of the sides of the canoe built up with a woven palm-leaf wash strake resemble a feature of the canoes of the nearby village of Lewopenutung, where the palm leaf wash strake is sewn.

<sup>21</sup> The *jonson* is also referred to as *sekoci*, designating a foreign design. The first *jonson* was made by Mr Paul, the Norwegian master fisherman, resident in Lamalera in the 1970s as part of a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation project to develop the whale hunting practices of the village. The design was again taken up in the 1980s to make a *jonson* for Pater Dupont. In 1994-1995 there were seven *jonson*. They are most useful for rescue missions of *téna*, for transportation of large quantities of goods, and for taking out documentary film-makers and professional photographers.

the documentation of watercraft in Lamalera. Horridge is not incorrect in intuiting the romance underlying boat construction discourses. And even though Burningham's critique suggests that there is a biased nostalgia for boats of a bygone era, which does not reflect the reality of modern times, this desire for the traditional, the rare, the ancient and the romantic can in fact be levelled at aspects of Burningham's own work where he authenticates his research by alluding to the 'finest craft' and the 'most traditional' (1992:205). Indeed, in the same review of Horridge's book, he concludes by invoking the classic trope of the disappearing. He sums up by saying that, despite certain inaccuracies (presumably these include prejudices), Horridge's book is 'an attractive, comprehensive and concise guide to one of the last remaining but fast disappearing fleets of merchant sailing vessels' (1987a:155). His words call up the idea that these traditional styles of boat are running out of time, implying that the past is a separate space to the present.

As the words of boat construction experts consistently reveal, the ethnography and archaeology of maritime material culture *is* involved in the collection (on paper, or otherwise) of the ancient, the rare, the traditional, the romantic, and at times, the exotic. Yet the same discipline is simultaneously concerned in distancing itself from these intuited aspects of its practice. There is a certain sense of denial at work in this nervous need to cover up what is, in effect, an integral component of the discipline's epistemology.

In stark contrast to the specialised literature on boat construction with its call for completeness, measured precision and order, the writer Alison Moore expresses through her observation of the *téna*, a space that is a mess of intertwinings:

At first glance a *pelendang* [sic] appears to be an improbable craft, its ability to make its way through water nothing short of miraculous.

After remarking that the boat looks as if it is pieced together like a 'puzzle in a pre-Viking, lashed-lug design', she continues:

The scene inside a *pelendang*'s hull looks wildly chaotic – coils of rope, some woven of palm frond, some of coloured nylon, some a combination of both, appear to have no beginning or end. Tree limbs crafted into narrow seats at intervals throughout the hull feel more like perches, and a jumble of small baskets that hold tobacco are tied to anything above the water that collects in the bottom of the hull. (1995:103)

Moore's story of the whaling boat suggests that the *téna* is never in a 'perfect form', but rather, like the lines of the *guâ gaté*, hints of a complexity of time in which traditional and

modern features occur simultaneously and where there is no beginning or end. Her description, like the materially embodied inscriptions on the hull of the boat, also speaks of the inter-relations that researchers are embroiled in while setting out to write disciplined stories of the Lamaleran *téna*. No matter how measured and objective we may desire our discourses to be, our unconscious desires still manifest themselves on the surface of our page. Rather than plugging up these ruptures in our stories, I am interested in what is at work in these nervous slippages, just as I am interested in those excesses of boat construction discourse, as evidenced through Horridge, that provoke a call for the Professor's work to be more objective.

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It was Jean who followed the boat construction as part of the processes of fieldwork in Lamalera. His eye for detail, combined with architectural training and artistic skills, have made his journal of the construction of three boats, the Mnula Blolo, Sika Téna and Kebako Pukâ, a delightful reference source. It is not only informative and technically precise, but it is full of sketches of tools and boat parts – as well as numerous interesting asides.

It was one of these asides that caught my eye. In a bracketed comment under a drawing of the *ketilo olla* – the old style of chisel bore – Jean notes:

(women take shavings away for firewood for cooking of food for men)

In the long labour of adzing away split logs in order to gradually carve out planks in three dimensions (*arrâ*) complete with lugs (*kélik*), and in shaping keels (*ié*) and solid ribs that will be lashed to the lugs, and in boring holes for hand-made dowels (*ketilo*), it suddenly became obvious that this construction necessitates the constant falling away of shavings of wood. These off cuts, now collected for use as firewood to cook the ceremonial meal for the boat builders, are, in fact, part of the planks...and keel and lugs and ribs. They are part of the story of the design and construction of the *téna*: the not-planks that allow the planks to be.

And yet stories of boat construction are never about these no-things. These piles of shavings are the excess to the law of structured texts. Shavings are like biographical notes, the private asides that have inspired researchers to write, but must disappear in order to allow stories to appear objective and linear. Finally I come to understand

something of the moving joyousness of Horridge's story of the lashed-lug technique: his interest in boat construction began as a hobby for this professor of neurobiology at the Australian National University. These traces are thus never entirely discarded; they are incorporated into the story, swallowed up by the story even as the story becomes the manifestation of these asides – just as in Lamalera the shavings disappear in order to become the fire that cooks the ceremonial food to sustain the boat builders while simultaneously sustaining the traditions that build a *téna*.

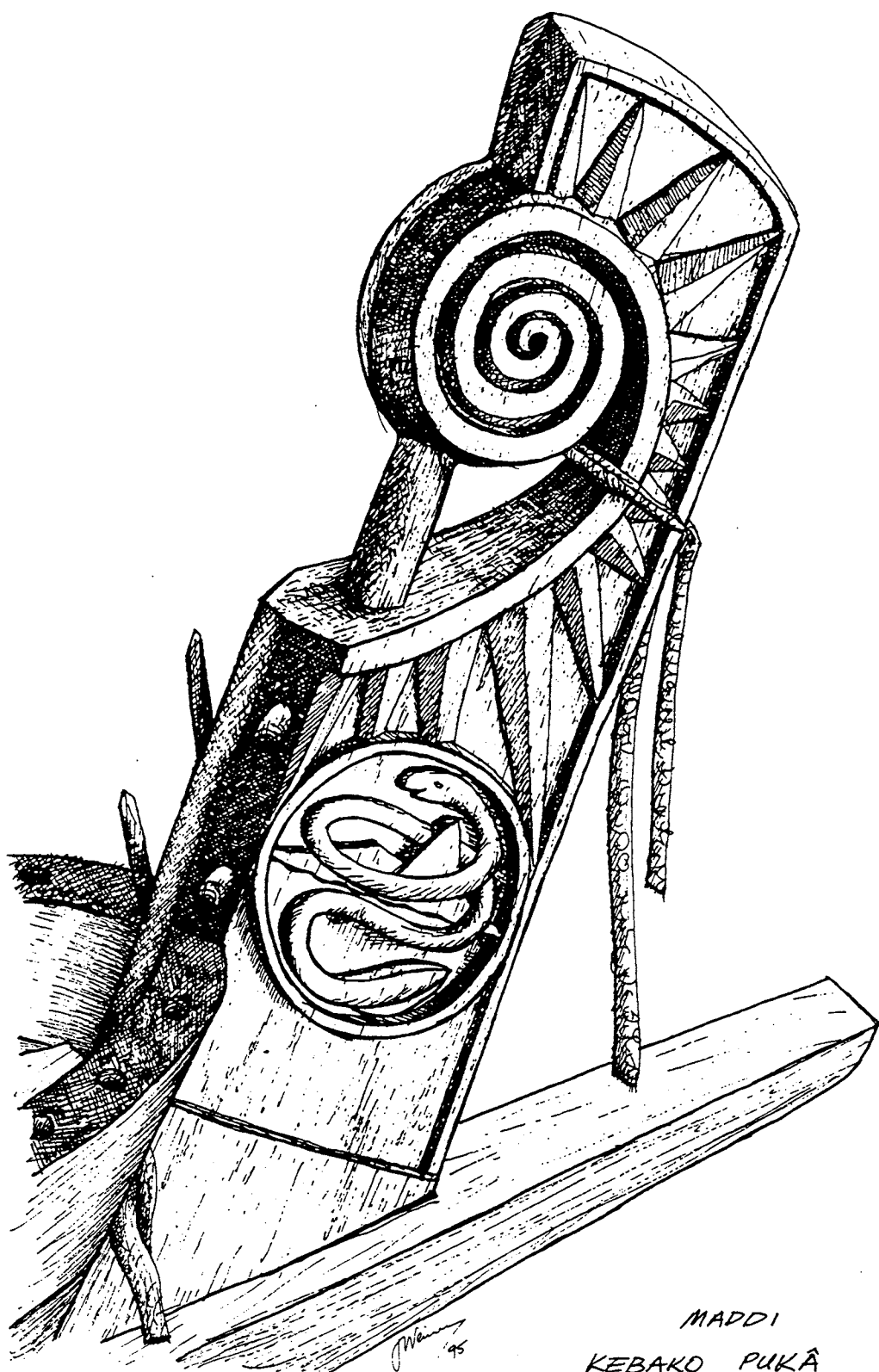
## Origins of the Ancestors

**The monotonous fall of the waves on the beach,  
which for the most part beat a measured and  
soothing tattoo to her thoughts...at other times  
suddenly and unexpectedly...made one think of  
the destruction of the island and its engulfment  
in the sea...**

Virginia Woolf *To the Lighthouse*

**Like a snake changing its skin, the old myth  
needs to be clothed anew in every renewed age...**

Carl Gustav Jung *Aion*



MADI  
KEBAKO PUKÂ

Carved into the tailpiece (*maddi*) of the Kebako Pukâ is a cameo relief of an island entwined by a giant serpent. The topography of the island is divided into two distinct landscapes suggesting separate yet connected lands. The western land consists of a gentle slope slowly ambling to an unimposing crest. Lying slightly in the background, this unassuming terrain sets the scene for the dramatic eastern land, for here the viewer is confronted by a mountain that rises steeply to a sharp peak like a volcano jutting straight out of the sea. Curling up from the east to loom over the island is a sea snake. The monster's head hangs poised above the space that divides the two landscapes, while its body loops around the entire island before the tail descends to the west, curving down into the sea.

At first glance, the overwhelming size and position of this sinuous body appears ominous. And yet the space between the flesh of the serpent and the landmass around which it folds also suggests a certain tenderness. It is as if the serpent's presence holds the lands together, bridging the gap of their divide. The monster's body now appears to guard the island, protecting it on all sides, from the high mountain in the east and low ground in the west, and from the land and the sea. This sense of the redeeming nature of the serpent is also enhanced by the way the scene is bordered by a ridged circle which gives the feeling of a womb-like enclosure. Akin to the circular borders that were often drawn around Western maps of the earth,<sup>1</sup> the scene has the impression of being a world unto itself, a moment held suspended in time.

Perhaps because of this sense of momentary completeness, the design all at once appears tremulous, as if this delicate composition hovers on the verge of ruin. And now the balance of the design – the way the island and its asymmetric landscapes occupies the upper half of the circle while a vast ocean of water fills the lower half – suggests that at any second this equilibrium could collapse and the island fall into the sea. The slightest movement of that monstrous sea snake could cause the violent rupture of this paradise.

There is something incredibly compelling about this design, a sense of the sacred at work. It is not simply that the carving depicts one of the stories from the origin myth of the journey of the ancestors; it does more. It brings the myth to life. Time and space falter, and for an instant, the viewer is there and the ancestors are here. And this ability of the cameo to transport the viewer into sacred time graphically demonstrates how the origin is not some thing that lies in the past; rather origins are created in the present

<sup>1</sup> Exhibition of Rare Maps, Queen Victoria Building, Sydney: 1-16 April 2000.



(Eliade 1989). Even though the cameo is no ancient design – it was inscribed when this boat was rebuilt in late 1994 – it nevertheless retains its sacred ability to originate the ancestral story. And this ability is still present even through this relief was commissioned from an artist of another culture: it was designed by Jean (Bapa Jek).

The magical significance of this modest cameo is that it graphically demonstrates how the inscription of the myth *is* the myth. It illustrates how the myth is constantly at work speaking itself through the various texts of its many admirers.

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For most of the year that Jean and I lived in Lamalera, the Kebako Pukâ, along with the Kelulus, remained lost at sea. In their place under each boat's *najâ* stood a makeshift bier on which lay two old planks.<sup>2</sup> A whale oil lamp hung from the rafters above. At night, the lamp's vague light could be seen peering out towards the horizon as the *najâ* kept a vigil, waiting (Bachelard 1969:3).

Thus, although not physically present, neither were the missing *téna* ever absent; they retained a spectral presence. This is the same presence that Kathleen Stewart contemplates in her encounter with the ruins of a building.

Objects that have decayed into fragments and traces draw together a transient past with the very desire to remember. Concrete and embodying absence, they are confined to a context of strict immanence, limited to the representation of ghostly apparitions. Yet they haunt. They become not a symbol of loss but the embodiment of the process of remembering itself; the ruined place itself remembers and grows lonely. (1996: 92-93)

Like phantoms, the disappeared boats returned to haunt the everyday practices of life and research in Lamalera. The Kelulus reappeared as the *téna* bearing the name of the boats built in the Kei Islands, the *kalulus*, mentioned in stories of boat construction; while the Kebako Pukâ returned whenever men down at the beach pointed to the boat's *najâ* as they suddenly diverted a conversation to explain that this was the hut of the origin boat. Although visibly empty, this *najâ* nevertheless held the haunting presence of the *téna* that brought the first ancestors to Lamalera. And the very persistence with which the name Kebako Pukâ was repeated suggested that the physical absence of the boat made its sacred presence all the more immediate. The 'empty' place of the *najâ*

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<sup>2</sup> Spare planks from each boat, or the boats' former incarnation, are stored in the *najâ* for purposes of repair.

was itself expectant, a space that enabled a story (see Berger 1984:21-30; Boon 1982:234).

Just as the sacred story of the journey of the ancestors spoke through the space of the *najâ*, so, too, were the members of the Kebako Pukâ's subclan involved in remembering the story as they performed the funerary ritual for the lost boat: firstly throwing spare planks from the *téna* into the sea, and then enacting their recovery so that the planks could be placed on the bier.<sup>3</sup> The myth was also reborn through the gestures of the men who pointed out the *najâ* so they could better tell the tale of its boat. Even though many of the men who were engaged in repeating the origin story were not of the boat's *lango bélé*, the great house of Ola Langu, and while many were not descendants of the first ancestral clans<sup>4</sup> and therefore had different origin stories, all were nevertheless engaged in recreating the myth. In these reenactments, the myth continues to live. This same process is also performed in the rewriting of the myth.

Similarly, as Theorila Clara Krova (clan Tanakrofa) writes of the origin myth and practices of her village in a social anthropology essay submitted for her senior high school certificate,<sup>5</sup> she is inspired to call upon the ancestors. And in so doing, she places her ethnography in their midst:

*Berbagai keunikan akan kita jumpai dalam tulisan sederhana ini, yang mungkin dengannya dapat membangkitkan niat dan hasrat kita untuk menghargai warisan budaya nenek moyang kita.*

We will encounter various unique phenomena in this humble text, perhaps through it can be resurrected our intention and desire to appreciate the cultural legacy of our ancestors. (Krova 1992:1)

Theorila Clara's gracious words highlight the ways in which researchers' stories are never divorced from their studies. Researchers, whether Lamaleran or other, do not merely transcribe sacred stories; they are engaged in bringing the sacred to life. Their inscriptions and actions give life to the ancestors, even as the myths and practices of

<sup>3</sup> This is similar to the ritual which is performed when a person is lost at sea, in which case a nautilus shell is thrown into the sea and then found and retrieved. Full mortuary rites are then carried out using the shell.

<sup>4</sup> The first ancestors were Korohama, Lamanudek and Tanakrofa. Korohama was the hero, Lamanudek was the boat architect and Tanakrofa was the lord of the land of Lapan Batan who lost this primary position during the journey. Korohama had three sons: Blikolollo, Bataonâ and Lefotukâ. Bataonâ came down from Têti Lefo (village above) in order to guard the *téna*; with him came Ola from the clan Lamanudek, the boat architects. Ola was adopted into the clan of Bataonâ to form the ceremonial house of Ola Langu (Ola's house). Bataonâ had five sons, three of whom created great houses (Kélake Langu, Kifa Langu and Jafa Langu) and two who became the clans of Bedionâ and Batafo. The clan of Sulaonâ left the house of Jafa Langu. Thus eight of the current clans of Lamalera are directly related to the ancestors who arrived in the Kebako Pukâ: Blikolollo, Bataonâ, Lefotukâ, Lamanudek, Tanakrofa, Bedionâ, Batafo and Sulaonâ. The other twelve clans have different origin stories – as does the autochthonous clan of Langofujjo.

<sup>5</sup> My thanks go to Mama Maria Kedofil Krova for bringing this essay to my attention.

the ancestors are gifts that give life and meaning to our academic texts. In turn, it is this relationship that enables the production of dissertations which give a sense of making 'an original contribution to knowledge'.

Hence origin stories are not about a past that lies far away and before, just as ethnographies can never ultimately achieve a desire for 'being there' – as if a place exists as an inert thing (de Certeau 1984:118). Rather, myths and ethnographies, are created in the processes of their telling; and in this act they give a sense of presence.<sup>6</sup> As John Berger notes: 'every theory of origin is a story invented to describe the experience of being here' (1984:91).

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The Lamaleran origin myth consists of two voyages held together by a sojourn on an island. The first story tells of the ancestors leaving their land in Sulawesi and of sailing in an arc through the province of Maluku, stopping off at different places along the way, until they settle on the mythic-real island of Lelan Batan.

This myth forms the introductory account written by Guru Yosef Bura Bataonâ in his notebooks on the history of Lamalera based on the 1939 recital of the village's sacred stories. In the first notebook, the stories of the adventures of the ancestors are pre-positioned by a poetic synopsis which consists of an itinerary of directional indicators and parallel placenames.<sup>7</sup> Here, the directions indicate the movement of the ancestor, while the named places announce the journey's pauses (Taun 1977:6). I paraphrase the first part of the poem in brief (see Bataonâ n.d. 1:2; also Ruth Barnes 1988:114):

*Lau Luwuk – lau Belu*

*Téti Séran – téti Gorang*

*Téti Abo – téti Muan*

*Hauk téti Vato Béla bako*

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<sup>6</sup> And this also offers a way in which to reread the 'ethnographic present' – a reading that not only recognises the desire for the other as timeless exotic totality (that is, ethnographies as origin stories), but that can imagine how the other haunts ethnographic texts (see Fabian 1983; Hastrup 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Such poetic itineraries are well noted in Eastern Indonesia (Fox 1977, 1997; McWilliam in Fox 1997). James Fox suggests that these poems function as a form of topographical genealogy – what he terms 'topogenies'. Fox's discussion thus opens up the notion of itineraries and genealogies to further analysis, such as is taken up by Sandra Pannell in the same volume. Since the notions of itinerary and genealogy imply an origin story, the challenge remains to take up Fox's opening in order to creatively engage in rethinking the constraints of these categories.

*Hauk téti Krokotawa – Triagéré*  
*Hau kiangk téti Lapan – téti Batan*  
 Go to sea from Luwuk – from Belu  
 Towards Seram – towards Gorong  
 Towards Ambon – towards Moa  
 I arrive there at Watubela  
 I arrive there at Keroko – Tria  
 I arrive here at Lapan – at Batan

The itinerary described by this poetic synopsis of the origin myth has likewise been acknowledged by Ruth Barnes as the basis for her articulation of the history of Lamalera (1988:114). However, as she proceeds with her analysis, it becomes apparent that the notion of movement evoked by the term 'itinerary' is de-emphasised. The intellectual tradition that Ruth Barnes follows suggests a concern with interpreting the poem as a list of fixed locations. Accordingly, directions become merely the marks that indicate a line connecting one place to another. They act to confirm the location of these places – and in so doing, also confirm the ability of this chart to delineate the myth. As she points out: 'When the route taken from Sulawesi to Lapan Batan is checked against a map, the journey as described has a feasible sequence' (1988:115).

In this reading of the myth, the itinerary becomes inert, anchored between the parallel placenames Luwuk-Belu and Lapan-Batan. In turn, these placenames become abstract locations: they are fixed signs appearing on a chart, which itself implies an immutable reality (de Certeau 1984:117-121; also Pannell in Fox 1997:165). As de Certeau explains, itineraries and maps invite very different ways of knowing, and likewise, ways of experiencing the world:

The organisation that can be discerned in stories about space in everyday culture is inverted by the process that has isolated a system of geographical places. The difference between the two modes of description obviously does not consist in the presence or absence of practices (they are at work everywhere), but in the fact that maps, constituted as proper places in which to *exhibit the products* of knowledge, form tables of *legible* results. (1984:121)

Although Ruth Barnes's rendering of the itinerary as a map immediately appears to engage in an exhibition of inscriptions as 'products of knowledge', it is also apparent in her discussion that these 'things' are simultaneously involved in a far more complex story, for these marks are envisaged as coming *before* her discussion. Here it is assumed that the world is a pre-given space external to the viewer (Merleau-Ponty 1962:154). Thus, this map has already been disengaged from the journeys that were

the condition of its possibility – the map conjures up the image of places that exist prior to the actions of the people and events that made the particular chart possible (de Certeau 1984:120). No longer do the ancestors create a journey as they venture out on a voyage into the unknown and meet with otherness along the way; and, likewise, no longer do researchers recreate the journey through their acts of charting. The map now comes before the ancestors who made the journey, the people and events that were encountered, and the researcher who plots the journey onto the chart. It is suddenly the map that miraculously produces the myth as a ‘feasible sequence’. In turn, it is this same map that then verifies the researcher’s story as she appears to follow a path between a series of places in order to write her analysis. Here, the time of history has been conceived as a fixed space, while this space is envisioned as surface (see Kathleen Stewart in Marcus 1992:257). And in this transformation, the researcher becomes a mere voyeur who is imaginatively positioned outside this space and time, peering at a chart in order to ascertain the truth. Yet, it is this same amazing exposition of names and marks on maps as being real and preceding the researcher that also suggests the highly creative aspect of inscription that lurks within Ruth Barnes’s story.

As she states early in her discussion, there are certain difficulties in performing an historical interpretation of myth; her concern is that ‘we are dealing here with an oral tradition rather than precise historical documents’ (1988:115). It is clear from her comment that the philosophy informing her analysis is based on a notion of interpretation which privileges inscription as the truth that can test the tales told about the ancestors. Whether the inscriptions she reads are marks on maps – or, as in the case she now refers to, written words – her task as a researcher remains one of verification. Yet, significantly, the renditions of the myth upon which she bases her own story are, in fact, from written documents: two separate sets of notebooks penned by Guru Yosef Bura Bataonâ and Bélé Petrus Bao Dasion (clan Lefotukâ) (1988:114).<sup>8</sup> Thus, Ruth Barnes’s words intimate that the concern she faces is not simply with the written word *per se*, but that there are different sorts of words and documents which hold varying degrees of truth. Hand-scribed words in notebooks appear, according to this pervasive schema, to be less valid than ‘historical documents’. In an inversion of the common and often simplistically held belief that anthropology privileges the position granted the voice and the ‘first hand’ accounts of indigenous peoples,<sup>9</sup> Ruth Barnes, with profound

<sup>8</sup> The notebook written by Bélé Petrus Bao Dasion (clan Lefotukâ) was specifically penned for Ruth and Robert Barnes and is retained by the researchers.

<sup>9</sup> The notion of who are indigenous people is problematised through Lamaleran history. Those clans defined as Lamaleran are, in fact, allochthonous – their indigenous history is based not on the notion of place, but rather on the journey performed by the ancestors. The autochthonous ‘Lamaleras’ are the clan of Langofujjo, the original lords of the land who are, strictly speaking, not Lamaleran but of the village of Lama Manuk. The second lord of the land clan of Tufaonâ are, like other clans of Lamalera, allochthonous.

insight, demonstrates the inherent underlying notion that these 'original' accounts are only of real value once they have been certified via Western knowledge practices. The researcher's job is thus already prescribed: she must set out to prove the myth.

Ruth Barnes's words also suggest why this proof is required. For, according to her criteria, the problem with the 'oral tradition', based as it is on the reciting of myth, is that the notebooks are necessarily written after the 'fact'. The term 'myth', in this sense, implies that the story teller can never be present at the event of the origin. In the case of the Lamaleran origin myth, it is also relevant that the myth's scribes did not record the myth at the time of its recitation – their stories stem from their recollections of an earlier ceremonial recital. This culturally perceived gap between event and inscription leads to the interpretation that the words of these notebooks must be inherently lacking. Thus, it is this same gap that sets the scene for Ruth Barnes's analysis. The gap, in fact, is the problem that provides the space for the researcher to move. For this space conjures up a belief in an origin which always precedes the telling of the story, and thus the researcher engages in tracing back through the space of the gap, venturing into the past, to miraculously uncover that which comes before.

In this magical tale, the conception of inscription upholds its own mythology. But such a mythology imagines the researcher as divorced from the story. Thus, in order for this to work, it is necessary that during the course of this story, the reader<sup>10</sup> forgets that Ruth Barnes creates the map that she then follows in order to write a history of Lamalera. And in this forgetting, readers neglect the important point that researchers and their stories are produced in the same instant. Just as researchers, in their capacities as authors, cannot come before their words, similarly history does not in any straightforward way come before its telling. This is the point Adrian Vickers invites through his study of the island of Bali (1989). His investigation of documents ranging across history, anthropology, mythology, film, and tourism literature, demonstrates how history is always creative. Vickers' history describes the complex processes of how the past is originated through the present of its inscription.<sup>11</sup>

In the same way, Ruth Barnes's words are actively engaged in creating the history of Lamalera, and furthermore, creatively involved in the production of the chart which enables the story. This is no longer an 'empty' geographical map with meaningless,

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Tufaonã are the descendants of a baby girl found under a Tufa tree. The baby was adopted into the former lord of the land clan of Lamamau. When this clan died out, Tufaonã inherited the title.

<sup>10</sup> This includes Ruth Barnes as the reader of her own text. We never just write, but are simultaneously readers – even as we are writers while we read (see Barthes 1986)

<sup>11</sup> In this way Vickers' project disrupts the totalising discourse of history. See Gayatri Spivak (1987).

objective marks. It has come alive as the very treasure map that will guide her and the researchers who follow in tracing the journey of the ancestors to prove the myth's basis in truth (and thereby, also, the truth of these practices of research). But again, this tracking is also more than this. Ruth Barnes doesn't just follow the myth of the ancestors; she reads the myth backwards. Even as she traces the journey from Luwuk-Belu to Lapan-Batan, she is simultaneously concerned with retracing the story back to a point before departure.

Yet this quest to find the origin, and thereby establish the reality of the myth, always remains ruptured. The very notion of inscription as truth and certainty – whether in the form of marks on a map, or written words – is disrupted by the myth. For the place Belu, which forms a parallel pair with Luwuk, cannot be found. And just as the location of this place is unable to be fixed on the surface of a chart, it likewise becomes apparent that the word Belu cannot be translated as having one fixed meaning.

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The myth of the ancestors is elaborated in considerable detail through the lyrics of a ceremonial song which comes from the clan of Bataonâ (see Oléonâ 1992).<sup>12</sup> Again, the first section of this story tells of the ancestor venturing out from the ancestral land; sailing across seas; travelling a great distance towards the province of Maluku; of anchoring and going ashore at particular islands, at Seram, Gorong, Ambon, at Moa and the small group of islands of Watubela; of boarding another boat; later changing sails; and finally drawing towards an island rich in gold and silver, and trees of tamarind spice.

*Feffâ bélaka Bapa Raja Hayam Wuruk,*

*pasa-pasa pekâ lefuk lau Luwuk.*

*Fengi bata Gajah Mada lali Jawa,*

*hidâ-hidâ hiangkâ tana lau béllu.*

Command from [large mouth] King Hayam Wuruk,

compels me to leave my village of Luwuk.

Powerful Gajah Mada from Java,

obediently I cut my ties to the land.

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<sup>12</sup> Oléonâ translates the Lamaleran text to Indonesian. The translation that appears here varies in places from Oléonâ's and is the culmination of Lamalera language and myth research done under the guidance of my friend and mentor Mama Maria Kedofil Krova.

*Géri téna, bua-bua laja,  
kai lullu téti Sérâ.*

*Gafi léfa Halmahéra,  
kai kébongkâ téti Gorâ.*

Board a boat, travel under sail,  
I go rolling towards the island of Seram.  
Go past the sea of Halmahera,  
I go and anchor there at the isle of Gorong.

*Géri téna narang Téna Sérâ,  
sapék téti Abbo, téti Moâ.  
Hékka lajak diketebu koli méâ,  
sigak téti Nua Fato Bélâ.*  
Board a boat named Ténâ Serâ,  
I stop at Ambon, at Moa.  
Change my sail of red lontar palm,  
I rest at the island of Watubela.

*Hauk téti Keroko Tafa Teria Géré,  
talé kaffé heppâ dikeroko.  
Honék téti, lefuk téti Leppâ,  
fanik téti, tanak téti Bata.*

I arrive where *keroko* grows and *teria* rises [ the place called Keroko Pukâ],  
make rope and harpoons from *heppâ* and *keroko*.<sup>13</sup>  
I live here, my village at Lepad  
I live here, my land at Batan.

*Leppâ leffu lodâ goi tobi,  
Bata tana isi diselaka.  
Allah tao tasik lau lébo géré,  
Tuâ lifo tana raé mété hau.*

Lepad village is rich in gold and trees of tamarind,<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Heppâ* is brazil wood. *Keroko* is *biduri* or *widuri* in Indonesian, and in Latin is *Calotropis gigantea*. The importance of these plants is that they supply the materials for harpoons and rope for fishing.

<sup>14</sup> Oléonâ translates this phrase with use of the term 'rich' and thus conveys the sense of the sacred. The tamarind tree not only supplies a spice but its wood is particularly good for making weaving swords (*huri*).



Batan's soil is filled with silver.

The Lord impels the seas to swell and rise,  
the Lord induces the land to be inundated.

The song tells of how the ancestor, at the command of King Hayam Wuruk, left the village of Luwuk during the time of General Gajah Mada's expansion outwards from Java.<sup>15</sup> The place called Luwuk is considered by Lamaleran commentators to be the town situated on the eastern arm of central Sulawesi (Bataonâ n.d.; Oléonâ 1992).<sup>16</sup> However, the placename Belu which occurs in the poetic synopsis of the myth which appears in Guru Yosef Bura's notebooks, is recorded in the song as *tana lau béllu*. Rather than a place, this term now refers to an act: to cut (*béllu*) one's ties with the land (*tana*) and go to sea (*lau*). In his translation of the song, Bapa Ambros Oléonâ, also indicates that the term *béllu* connotes the emotional heartache involved in this process of leaving (1992:3). The song thus suggests that the controversial placename Belu may equally refer to an action – one full of emotional complexity, and one which is ultimately of significance to the ways in which the myth is read.<sup>17</sup>

In order to take the poetics of this term seriously, it is evident that the reader must now be able to think of Belu, a place, and of *béllu*, the action of cutting or leaving, as existing simultaneously. It is not a matter of trying to prove which is the correct interpretation of the word – such a reading would be to cling to the notion of origin as a place where only one meaning can exist at a time. The poetry requires that the reader be able to delicately hold together both the verb (*béllu*) and the proper noun (Belu).<sup>18</sup> Thus, Guru Yosef Bura Bataonâ and Ruth Barnes are correct in their intuition of Belu as a

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Woven cloth is necessary not only for subsistence but also is a form of wealth essential in marriage prestations.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the history of General Gajah Mada and the mythology that surrounds his expeditions, see Vickers (1989). One of the myths that he relates is a particularly beautiful story about the power of *krisses* (a type of dagger). In Lamalera, a *kris* forms one of the treasured heirlooms of the Bataonâ clan (kept by the eldest clan house of Kelaké Langu). According to its mythology, the *kris* was given to the first ancestors by General Gajah Mada.

<sup>16</sup> Ruth Barnes (1989) puts forward the argument that Luwuk is, in fact, Luwu an ancient kingdom in south Sulawesi. Although her theory is not current, it nevertheless remains interesting in itself. For rather than 'finding' the site of the origin, her words suggest a breach. Her story vividly displays an origin that can never be reduced to one.

<sup>17</sup> According to my notes *bélo* means cutting and *bélu* (*béllu*) is to cut. I have also noted the term *belo*, to go out. However, as my teacher Mama Maria Kedofil Krova consistently explained, Lamaleran terms are also used metaphorically.

<sup>18</sup> Like other examples in the song, a description, whether of actions or things, in the poetic language of speaking in parallel pairs, may be readily condensed into a name. For instance, the line in the song: 'I arrive where keroko grows and teria rises'. These plants, identified as such in the song, are abbreviated in the poetic synopsis to appear as the location *Krokotawa-Triagéré*. This location is also sometimes referred to as the place Keroko Pukâ (see Keraf 1978:228), where this place may refer to the island of Alor. In the song, however, Keroko Pukâ is synonymous with Lapan Batan.

placename, but the point is, as Keith Basso argues, that placenames are more than just locations. He is critical of the commonly perceived idea 'that proper names, including toponyms, serve as referential vehicles whose only purpose is to denote, or "pick out", objects in the world' (1992:224). As Basso elaborates, poets and songwriters are engaged in a complex use of language that calls for an economy of expression whilst retaining the quality and force of aesthetic discourse. In this regard, placenames are particularly evocative. In the anthropologist's words:

placenames provide materials for resonating ellipses, for speaking and writing in potent shorthand, for communicating much while saying very little. (Basso in Marcus 1992:224)

The term *béllu* thus requires that we cut ourselves from the moorings which hold us fast to the term *Belu* as only a placename. And in so doing, the place is free to come alive as the space which tells the story of how the ancestors left their lands: with heavy hearts they cut their ties in order to venture out into the unknown – to go to sea. The placename as poetry, as poesis, is creative – moving.

It is significant that the structure of the story begins with this cut. For it is only in letting go that movement begins, and thus the story likewise begins. Our stories continually repeat this structure, whether it is the evolutionary story of the Big Bang or the biblical story of Genesis; life begins with movement. Genesis is generation. To desire an origin prior to this movement is thus to desire to be before, and therefore outside, the story. And yet, as the structure of the story itself connotes, there is nothing before this action of the cut. This very movement allows a story. Letting go the mooring ropes we are able to venture out.

This is not a cut as another form of distance and a desire to be outside the story. Rather, this separation also allows for connection, which is maintained through the consistent reenactment of the myth. Thus the myth invokes the notion of both separation and connection – it holds a relation. And in the poetic synopsis of the myth, this relation is even more precise. Here the connection and the separation are held in the very word *Belu*, a term that is also *béllu*. Thus, just as there is nothing outside the text, likewise there *is* no-thing. Poetry, not fixed by narrative time, allows for a relation with eternity where past, present and future are held simultaneously.

The relation of the terms *béllu* and *Belu* implies that the verb *béllu* offers movement, while the proper noun *Belu* allows a pause. Even though the story requires movement, it is also necessary that the voyage has places at which to rest. It is precisely this notion

of resting at these names that seems so important in indicating a way of being which enables the myth to begin to work its magic. It is necessary to pause at *Belu* in order for this term to come alive simultaneously as *béllu*. To search for this placename as a fixed location before the cut is not to pause –this frantic desire for stasis is unable to rest. The itinerary that appears in both the poetic synopsis and the song is not simply a geography of places to be re-traced on a map. Rather, each named place itself holds an event that is reactivated through the repetition of the placename, each place thus enfolds around the sacred space of a story. These are not places as things to be pinned down and known, but are like gateways that open as story tellers enter and wander within the myth of the journey of the ancestors (see Fox, Pannell and McWilliam in Fox 1997).

The people, events, landscapes, boats, plants, technologies, minerals<sup>19</sup> and catastrophes which are encountered in the song are held in the poetics of this itinerary as places waiting to be brought to life by a new reader who wanders along this path. This understanding of events as resting, and waiting to be reawakened, is beautifully expressed in a poem by John Berger (1984:90-91).

#### DREAM

In a pocket of earth  
I buried all the accents  
of my mother tongue

there they lie  
like needles of pine  
assembled by ants

one day the stumbling cry  
of another wanderer  
may set them alight

then warm and comforted  
he will hear all night  
the truths as lullaby

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<sup>19</sup> On the importance of the elements and the notion of treasure islands, see Primo Lévi's wonderful description in his anthropology of chemists and elements (1986:90-91).

Berger's words allow an imagining of memories that are brought to life through wandering a path and stumbling upon a place that, in the instant of this letting go, opens into the space of sacred stories. In *A Remembrance of Things Past*, the novelist Marcel Proust, also writes of the sensuality of remembering, and he likewise invokes memories through the metaphor of stumbling.<sup>20</sup> It is in this moment of falling that there is a meeting between the present and the past, a moment which enables a story to begin (1983:898). In Proust's book, the character who stumbles is an author who cannot write. It is only in this moment of losing himself that the author can finally begin to write. And with this beginning comes the end of the book.

It has been commented by Kathleen Stewart that such stories, which involve an embodied remembering of events, are a form of 'unforgetting'.

Far from reducing remembered events to illustration of ideas, it uses them to interrupt the very progress of master narrative codes and to displace the certainty of concept with a densely textured interpretive space (1996:80).

Thus, the reciting of placenames in the poetic synopsis is a way of gently holding a memory – the events come alive through the structure of the story. Accordingly, the reader is offered a way of journeying that wanders and pauses, and that happens upon stories already held within the narrative. The recitation of the journey of the ancestors, whether through the poetics of a ritual itinerary or through the singing of a song, now becomes a rite of passage; its reenactment *is* the origin voyage.

In order to undergo this wandering voyage, the myth necessitates that the narrator enters into the story to become the ancestor moving through these spaces and resting at certain places. This way of being in the story, of being simultaneously narrator and ancestor, is suggestive of ways of knowing that do not privilege the word as truth, but invite stories as ways of being.

The myth of the ancestors – as it occurs in ceremonial recital, poetic synopsis, song, or the rewriting of these – is always recited in the first person. Thus the speaker-writer, like the listener-reader, becomes the ancestor. In this way, to hear the myth is to perform the journey; likewise, the story teller cannot stand outside the narrative, but must follow its directions as they become the living ancestor. And this process

<sup>20</sup> Proust evokes several senses in connection with remembering, in particular: taste, smell and touch. See Game (1991).

indicates different ways of knowing which arise from these intricate relations of being both narrator and ancestor, of being simultaneously here and there.

The purpose of the enactment of the journey is thus not to locate the places mentioned, but to live these spaces (Stewart 1996:85, 1992:252; Pannell in Fox 1997:165). Such an ontology is invited by performance, where the very ability of the narrator to become the ancestor by entering into the place and setting of the story thereby allows a moment of knowing that actualises the myth. In so doing, the story teller evokes the space of the sacred (Taussig 1993:44). Keith Basso has noted that 'whenever the members of a community speak about their landscape – whenever they name it', or whenever they are moved 'to tell stories about it', they are also speaking about how they know themselves to be in the world around them. He advises that 'the landscape in which the people dwell can be said to dwell in them'. This is to speak of a 'being-in-the-world' where inhabitants are simultaneously inhabited by their surroundings 'in the timeless depth of an abiding reciprocity' (Basso in Marcus 1992:222-243).

The myth which reenacts the journey of the ancestors similarly necessitates an embodied space. The story teller must move within the space of the landscape and the myth; they must place themselves in the space of the ancestors as they perform the story and undergo the mythic events. This is a phenomenological relation:

The fact is that if we want to describe it, we must say that my experience breaks forth into things...because it always comes into being within the framework of a certain setting in relation to the world which is the definition of my body.... Any perception of a thing...refers back to the positioning of a world and of a system of experience in which my body is inescapably linked with phenomena. But the system of experience is not arrayed before me as if I were God, it is lived by me from a certain point of view; I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception. (Merleau-Ponty 1962:303-304)

Such an ontology of space is reinforced by the directional indicators used in Lamalera and other areas of eastern Indonesia (see Bubrandt in Fox 1997).<sup>21</sup> Lamalerans do not refer to space set in cardinal points, but rather, are themselves located in a space which is embodied. Space is thus not fixed, but moves simultaneously in relation with the body moving within it. In the song, the directional indicators refer to movement in relation to the person singing who then becomes the ancestor leaving their land in order to go to sea, travelling out towards the direction of distant islands, later journeying

<sup>21</sup> Nils Bubrandt, in turn, cites the work of Robert Barnes on directional indicators.

away from a particular direction, and finally drawing towards Lelan Batan where the ancestor settles for a long time before a catastrophe strikes the island pair and the journey must begin again.

The main directional movements in this song are: to or from the sea; toward or away from land; toward or away from the upwards direction (cardinal east); and toward or away from the downwards direction (cardinal west). A local example neatly describes the complexities involved in this sense of space. The village of Lamaleran is divided into two sections, *Téti Lefo* and *Lali Fattâ*. The term *Téti Lefo* consists of *téti*, above or up, and *lefo*, village. Thus the name describes this part of the village which sits up on the hill. However, *téti* as the upward directional indicator, also refers to the direction of the east which is considered to be in an upwards direction, and is readily remembered as such because it is the direction in which the sun rises. Nevertheless, the part of the village named *Téti Lefo* lies in the western half of Lamalera. Thus, this directional indicator cannot simply be translated as cardinal east. The directional indicators remain dependent on where a person is in relation to the local topography as well as to a distant place. A similar intricacy occurs with the name *Lali Fattâ* which means below at the beach. The term *lali* indicates the downward direction and is associated with the west. *Lali Fattâ* is, however, located at the eastern half of Lamalera. Thus the directions depend on the surroundings in which the speaker is located and cannot be reduced to fixed cardinal directions, and as such, they cannot readily be translated onto the surface of a map.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Lamaleran directional indicators are difficult to understand if they are considered through a perspective that privileges cardinal directions and Euclidean space, they become more comprehensible when considered from a phenomenological perspective. Such a perspective reflects the everyday negotiation of inhabited space. Thus, in daily life, from my perspective as an inhabitant of Surry Hills in inner Sydney, I refer to Lamalera as upwards (northerly); when in Lamalera I refer to Sydney as downwards (towards to the south). I can also go up to the Blue Mountains (which lie to the west of Sydney) and down to Bronte and Bondi beaches (in the east). Even in global terms this embodied space is retained. Thus, I go overseas when taking a long journey to another country, and readily recognise my own country of Australia when people talk about 'down under'. This is an extraordinary complex set of directional indicators, and yet is it guided by precise rules and appears totally practical and concise when considered from a lived perspective. But such a description necessitates that the

<sup>22</sup> Robert Barnes (1996) includes a diagram of directional indicators used in Lamalera.

speaker – and likewise the imaginative reader – is located *in* a particular landscape, rather than outside it. Just as the story teller is located in the landscape of the ancestor.

Thus the story of the myth begins as the ancestor heads to sea from the village of Luwuk (*lau Luwuk*). The song mentions the influence of General Gajah Mada who comes from the downward direction of the island of Java (*lali Jawa*). Cutting his ties with the land, the ancestor heads off (*tana lau béllu*) on a long voyage. As he travels in the boat he continues to move in an upwards direction. Up towards Seram (*téti Serâ*) and Ambon (*téti Abbo*) and Gorong (*téti Gorâ*) and Moa (*téti Moâ*) and Watubela (*téti Fato Bélâ*). All these islands lie upwards (cardinal east) of both the old homeland in Sulawesi and the new home in Lamalera. Finally the ancestor arrives at Lepad Batan. However, it becomes apparent at this juncture of the story that the ancestor is already positioned on the island pair. The story thus speaks of how the ancestor journeys from the upward direction and draws toward (*téti hau*) the island where he is already pre-positioned. All these prepositions that appear throughout this story are the very matrix which holds the journey and ancestors and islands in relation (Serres 1995:129). Arriving on *Leppâ* and *Bata* the ancestor lives comfortably, complete with riches of gold, silver and spice.

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The haunting presence of Lepad Batan is held in that combined term *téti hau*, for the words imply that here at this place the ancestor meets with himself. It is this sense of a meeting that evokes the sacredness of the island, a momentary feeling of fullness. The origin in this story is not in some place that lies in the past and outside the story, but is suddenly encountered along the way.

This small detail of the story also suggests that the ancestor is being called forth (Merleau-Ponty 1968:137), as if moving towards something that gently beckons. As the ancestor nears the island he watches himself drawing closer. It is not that the ancestor finds this land; Lepad Batan is not lost but is there waiting for him. And when he gets there part of his self is already waiting. This scene speaks of a notion of self that is not whole and complete, nor ever entirely separate – a self that is in relation. It also implies that in journeying into the unknown we may meet with our own difference; there is a recognition.

But this meeting, which so strongly alludes to a self which is always in relation, also indicates that this island is never permanently fixed. This encounter implies a form of knowing that can never be reduced to knowledge of the other. A meeting with the other, including the other of the self, already suggests movement and change.

On arriving at Lepad Batan, life is briefly held in perfect harmony, suggesting eternal or archetypal time. This pair of islands which contain a wealth of gold and silver, and trees of tamarind, suggests a beautiful and harmonious existence – a garden of Eden.<sup>23</sup> But, like that other mythical garden that lay in the east, this perfect space is not an immobile state. It already holds the potential for another journey – which enables another story; and another meeting.

The story of the change that overcomes the paradise of Lepad Batan is described by Professor Gregorius Keraf in an interview with Bélé Gabriel Blido Keraf (clan Lamakera) (1978:228-231). The following is an extract from the transcription of the interview and retains the halting feel of a story in the process of being called into memory as it is spoken out loud. The interview was conducted in Lamaleran and translated into Indonesian.

*Ketika mereka berdiam di Lepad Batan itu, seorang nenek tua pergi berkarang. Ketika ia berkarang itu, ia menangkap seekor belut. Dia tidak mempunyai seorang anak. Ia lupa memanggang belut itu, malah menyisipkannya di atap, dan membiarkannya dalam tempurung, juga tidak membunuhnya hingga mati.... Kemudian, malahan ia merendamnya dengan air laut, dan mengatakan bahwa itu sebagai pengganti anak. Betapa bodohnya. Belut itu malah menjadi semakin besar, semakin besar seperti belut-belut yang besar, dan (larilah ia) masuk ke dalam (lubang) randu hutan. Ia masuk dalam (rongga) randu hutan; dan ketika orang tua anak-anak sudah berangkat mengerjakan kebun, ketika mereka kembali mereka mencari-cari anaknya. Tidak ada seorang anak. Hilang!*

At the time the ancestors lived on Lepad Batan, an old woman went looking for shellfish amongst the coral. While she was at the reef she caught an eel. She didn't have any children. She forgot to bake the eel. On the contrary, rather than killing it, she put it in the rafters, leaving it in a coconut shell.... Later, she even bathed it in sea water, and it is said that it was like a substitute child. How very stupid. The eel became larger, so large that it was gigantic, and it escaped into a hole in a forest of kapok trees. The adults left to work in the fields, on their return they looked for their children. There wasn't one child. Lost!

The parents finally discover that it is the eel which has swallowed up the children, so they follow it to its lair and wait for it to emerge. But the serpent remains hidden.

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 2:11 notes that the whole land of Havilah is encircled by water and that the land contains gold.



*Karena tidak keluar, maka mereka menyiapkan alat pemanas besi, memanaskan besi untuk membakarnya. Membakarnya hingga pohon itu tumbang sudah.... Sesudah itu air laut mendadak naik dan terjadilah semua pengungsian itu.*

As it didn't emerge, they prepared the bellows to heat a poker with which to burn it. They burnt it until the tree fell down.... Thereupon sea water suddenly rose up causing everyone to flee.

This tale of the dissolution of the world of the ancestors can only be conveyed successfully because it feels right. Somehow we already know this story. We recognise it even as we read it anew through this origin myth of the epic journey of the ancestors. Even though, as Bélé Gabriel Blido indicates, this story is not rational according to positivist criteria, we nevertheless can feel its correctness. It is an archetypal tale.

The magical story of islands sinking into the sea, of a paradise lost, of a serpent that forewarns of the demise of the world, of a great flood and a long journey in a wooden boat – these are stories that seem to live in our very being and that we are bound to tell and listen to over and over again. As Mircea Eliade has shown in his studies of mythology, it is never enough to tell the sacred stories once, we want to hear them over and over again (Eliade 1989, 1960).

Although the Lamaleran myth is specific to the origin stories of the ancestors, the myth also resonates with stories from other cultures that likewise speak of the demise of the ancestors, or heroes, or gods. Thus, in Guru Yosef Bura Bataonâ's notebooks, he explicitly states that the eel found by the old woman amongst the coral is a sea snake and that this snake made its lair in a tree that stood in the centre of the village. The use of the term snake more strongly evokes the Christian imagery which Guru Bura, and many modern-day Lamalerans, feel is archetypally connected with their animist mythologies. The effect enhances the power of this story, and yet it does not change the myth. The archetypal tale of a sea animal that is brought to land, indicating an upheaval in one of the major orders for Lamaleran spatial ontology and the sense of an impending disaster, is not diminished by its resonance with Catholic symbolism.

Again, this is not to try to imagine which story came first, or which one is true. The archetypal nature of myth requires that we sense how these myths exist simultaneously; how they write themselves in the stories we tell – and consistently retell (Lévi-Strauss 1969:12-13).

While the stories of the serpent of the garden of Eden and of the great flood called up by God can be recognised in the origin myth of Lamalera, the myth also resonates with the story of Ragnorøkr, in which Jormungandr, the world serpent who lives in the sea and coils around the earth, rises up from the ocean causing the flooding of the land. These myths in turn reverberate with the story of Indra and Vrtra from the Hindu mythology of the Rg-Veda. Indra smote the serpent in his lair, his thunderbolt cutting off his head. Vrtra the serpent had confiscated the waters and was keeping them in the hollows of the mountains; with his death the waters were released (Eliade 1989:19-20).

The myth of the flood of Lèpan Batan speaks of the dissolution of the world of the ancestors. The world has grown old, like the barren old woman,<sup>24</sup> and thus the serpent brought to land ushers in the end of this world. But at the same time, this deluge is formlessness, the unstructured realm which holds the potential for a new beginning. Three ancestors flee in their boat, the Kebako Pukâ, and they begin the epic journey that, after many adventures along the way, finally gives birth to another land, that of Lamalera.

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The Lamaleran notion of direction suggests a relation to space which in turn acts to place us in the world. In other words, just as we can only feel a sense of place in relation to the space around us, likewise, the myths of the ancestors speak us, even as we are involved in the processes of speaking them (Lévi-Strauss 1969:12-13). And as the restless speculations concerning the veracity of the origin myth already suggest, myths are not truths with the sole purpose of tracing an origin – rather, origin myths are about the present. The sacred stories are told anew in every renewed age (Jung 1968b), and every new generation can only originate itself through enacting the founding myths of the ancestors (Eliade 1989; Game and Metcalfe 1996).

As Theorila Clara Krova intimated in her school essay, while we write the stories of the ancestors we are also involved in recreating the origin. The repetition brings the myth and ancestors to life even as it originates those people who speak and hear the story. Similarly, the design of the *maddi* on the boat, the Kebako Pukâ, remembers the ancestors and in so doing originates the present.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Carlyle relates the story of the Norse god Thor's trials in the land of the giants. In one test he must wrestle an old haggard woman. But he cannot defeat her, for the Old Woman is Time (c.1840:54).

When Jean drew the design of the cameo for the *maddi*, he was both remembering the myth that he had heard and he was also considering the brief given to him by the boat cooperative. And yet as he began his sketch, the design also came alive and drew itself through his hand.

As Jean finished the design he discovered that he needed to somehow connect the cameo with the spiral (*ué*) that is carved into the top section of all tailpieces (*maddi*) of the *téna*. He chose to draw a series of sunrays centred around the spiral or disc, in this way evoking a sense of the place Lamalera, the name itself meaning the disc or place (*lama*) of the sun (*lera*). On showing the sketch to the men of the Kebako Pukâ, they were pleased with the overall design. Then one of them started counting the sunrays. By chance, there happened to be fourteen, the same number as the members of the boat's cooperative. Suddenly the design felt so right.

In this small and seemingly insignificant event, there is that same feeling of arrival as expressed in the myth when the ancestor describes himself approaching the island of Lapan Batan, and there is that strange sense of recognition invoked by the archetype as we read the Lamaleran tale. It is this same sense of recognition, a sacredness, that I feel as I look at the design carved on the *maddi*. I somehow already know this picture, this pair of islands with the snake coiling around them. It feels right because I recognise it – as if I am meeting it again.

That sacred snake wrapping itself around the island is the Uroboros, the snake that coils over to bite its own tail. The enclosing Uroboros gives the sense of protecting this sacred treasure, this balance and harmony. This is the notion of relationality that Merleau-Ponty allows me to feel when he writes: 'this circle which I do not form, which forms me, this coiling over' (1968:140, also 114). The Uroboros is the myth of the eternal return, the myth that writes me even as I write it. The snake that bites its own tail has no beginning and no end, it is eternal. The Uroboros gives a sense of this holding. It describes those moments of peak experience when we feel as if held in the world's light embrace. It is the sense of self in relation with the world and not separate from it.

The design on the *maddi* of the Kebako Pukâ not only speaks of the origin myth, it simultaneously speaks of the very act of its performance. The origin is not in the past, but is alive in this performance enacted by the artist in residence and technical assistant to a neophyte anthropologist, being invited by the cooperative of the Kebako Pukâ to do the design for the origin boat of Lamalera. The design holds this relationship. And if we rest with this small cameo, this wondrous and delicate relation comes alive.

SEVEN

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# The Gift of Exchange

**One belongs to others and not oneself.**

Evans-Pritchard in Marcel Mauss *The Gift*

**Now, scholars...provide a lot of information. It is just that there is Something More, and that Something More is what life is really about.**

Benjamin Hoff *The Tao of Pooh*





I lower my head slightly to avoid eye contact with three little boys who stand a small distance away on the beach. The boys huddle together whispering. In their hands each grips a chunk of fresh whale meat, occasional drops of blood falling to the sand. Once or twice the boys shyly glance towards where our group of women sits in the shadowy entrance of one of the *najâ*. A few women give almost imperceptible nods to encourage the children, but the subtlety of these gestures highlights the fact that none of us may directly attract the children's attention, for this would be to break an unspoken prohibition of this exchange. So I sit there, sedately displaying in front of me *tebako* (tobacco) and *susu* (fried rice flour and banana cakes<sup>1</sup>). The *tebako* I had bought off Bapa Bertolomeus Jou Bataonâ earlier in the day and Mama Maria Kedofil had arranged the small wads so they were neatly presented on a woven palm leaf tray. The *susu* aren't mine, they're Mama Lisa Lefolein's (clan Lefoléi). She has placed the enamel washbowl with these treats in front of me to 'mind', even though she is sitting next to me. Suddenly, my attention is drawn back to the beach as I hear one of the boys – little Ansel – say decisively to the others 'Mama Ani', and I hold my breath as the three children slowly come up to where we are sitting. Gently I indicate for them to put the meat on a tray as I hand each of them two *susu* from Mama Lisa's bowl. They timidly take the cakes in their bloody little fingers, and then, with a whoop of joy, run off a short way along the beach to eat their treats. A few more women nudge their trays of *tebako* and *susu* closer as we continue to chat quietly, all the while spinning cotton on our hand spindles (*keduka lelu*) and watching the activity happening on the beach. Patiently we wait for other transactions to come our way.

A short distance off, in front of the boat huts and the seated groups of women, lies the giant carcass of the sperm whale. The huge head of the animal rests on the sand while part of its body and tail trail into the sea. A long thick rope is threaded through its snout and attached to a post of the *najâ* of the Kena Pukâ. This is the *téna* that made the first strike on the whale and whose crew and clansmen are now dividing up the catch with the help of the three other boat crews that assisted in the killing. Groups of men work at carving up various parts of the carcass, the stench of the dead animal filling the air as the knives slice into the blubber, meat and guts. The men cutting up the lower carcass are waist deep in the surf which is red with blood. Their work is constantly hampered

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<sup>1</sup> The term *susu*, in Lamaleran refers to this particular type of sweet bread or cake and not to the Indonesian word *susu* which means milk. These sweet breads are simply referred to as *kue* in Indonesian, meaning cake.

by the buffeting waves which cause the animal's tail to wave about as the men try to work their flensing knives into its flesh. The constant yelling of instructions ensures that the blubber and meat is carved up according to the prescribed divisions. As a group of men carves off a massive slab of black meat, younger men gouge out a hole, tie a rope through it and then pull and chant as they heave the meat up the beach. Another group of men will now begin dividing the slab into large hunks. These hunks are then washed in the shallows before being placed in buckets, enamel washbowls, or turtle shells. The heavy loads are lifted onto the heads of women who carry them home where the meat will be cut up further and prepared for drying. In amongst this smelly, noisy and hectic work, with men wielding knives and women balancing hunks of whale flesh on their heads, and children playing together in the sand waiting for their fathers to hand them a piece of whale meat to exchange for *susu*, are two researchers, the photographic journalist Kotaro and archaeologist Temoko, assuredly wielding their state of the art photographic equipment. They weave and dart amongst the sweating bodies, flailing knives, and slabs of flesh, shooting several rolls of film, taking a few notes, and chatting jovially as they go. Their job done, they leave.

Their departure leaves me wondering why I am still sitting under a *najâ* amongst a group of women, doing nothing but waiting. Overcome by a sudden wave of guilt I feel horribly incompetent, a failure sitting here wasting time, my embarrassing little camera lying idle, along with my notebook and pen, in the basket beside me. But my shame-ridden reverie subsides as Yose approaches. I had attended this young man's wedding earlier in the year, wielding the little camera in my uncertain role of wedding photographer-cum-researcher.<sup>2</sup> Yose exchanges four pieces of whale meat for four wads of *tebako*, two for himself and two for his father, Bapa Nadus Blikololong. Quietly, with no need for conversation or undue gestures, we make our exchanges with elegant decorum. A minute later I catch sight of Bapa Nadus who gives me a big grin as he rolls some *tebako* in a strip of *koli* (lontar palm) ready to smoke.

An afternoon sitting down at the beach has procured a few pieces of sperm whale meat to show for my efforts. A little of the meat I can cook for dinner and the rest can be hung out in strips to dry so I can take it to exchange for fruit and vegetables at the market at Fulandoni on Saturday. Mama Lisa suggests that, next time, I should make

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<sup>2</sup> The most important role the camera enabled Mama Ani to perform was as funeral photographer. The tradition in Lamalera is to take a photograph of the deceased to keep as a memento. Likewise, when my own father died a couple of years later and I found myself in the role of using the same camera in order to take a photo of him to send to our relatives in Norway, I again became Mama Ani in order to be able to take those photographs that a grieving daughter could not. On photography and embodiment see Leslie Devereaux (1995).

coffee – black, hot and very sweet – and exchange one glass for one chunk of whale meat, while Mama Lisa will sit with me and exchange *susu*.<sup>3</sup> As we scheme about the next time we will sit together to trade, we know we are secretly planning a future when I will return to the village, for it is now the middle of January 1995, and Jean and I will be leaving Lamalera in only a few short weeks.

Evening approaches, and the groups of women begin to make their different ways home. As I start walking up the beach, my small tray of whale meat balanced neatly on my head, I know I have received far more than just meat for consumption and further trade. I am filled with an indescribable sense of joy, for I feel touched by the children and men who have exchanged chunks of meat with me, and by the women with whom I sat and chatted and who put their trays of wares close to mine, and also by my plans with Mama Lisa to one day repeat this ritual.

But my work is not yet complete. Arriving home, Jean helps me prepare the meat for drying. Firstly we wash it, then cut a slit up the middle of each piece and hang the slices over the bamboo pole under the verandah of our kitchen roof.<sup>4</sup> In the midst of this work I hear a shy voice ask: *Mama Ani, susu?* It is little Frans, one of the children who were our neighbours when we first arrived in Lamalera and lived in the white house at the eastern end of the beach. He has only just received his piece of meat to exchange and has come to our house in the hope that I still have some cakes. Recognising the uncharacteristic shyness in his voice, my body instantly responds with appropriately subdued gestures. I explain that I wasn't selling *susu*, but *tebako*. Mama Lisa was selling the cakes. '*Masih ada?*' 'Are there any left?' he enquires. '*Ada*' 'There are', I reply. And he runs off down the back steps from our kitchen, through the yard of the *lango b  l  * of Kelak   Langu, across the village square to Langu Lefol  i in search of Mama Lisa and his long-awaited treats.

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Like this enchanted afternoon spend on the beach, my most treasured experiences of Lamalera are those that feel as if they have been given to me. Yet, no *thing* is given; these riches are simply moments of relationality. The gift does not exist as some thing

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<sup>3</sup> The exchange of hot coffee for whale meat is not customary. Mama Lisa was actively creating this new exchange through my ambiguous role as a 'woman of the village' and as a foreigner.

<sup>4</sup> On this occasion Mama Teresia Sefai and Brigita Lou Kerat (clan Lamakera) instructed me to salt the meat to aid in its preservation during the wet weather. The usual practice is simply to hang the meat in the sun.



that can be measured: it cannot be seen, or smelt, or touched, tasted or heard. It always exceeds any explanation of the things and gestures physically exchanged.<sup>5</sup> Yet this gift is none-the-less present. Often it is said to be felt *in* one's very being – but more precisely, it is sensed as one's being. I *am* in that moment.

The imperceptible presence of the gift is, likewise, the no-thing that holds Marshall Sahlins' words as he writes this tribute to Marcel Mauss:

Marcel Mauss's famous Essay on the Gift becomes his own gift to the ages. Apparently completely lucid, with no secrets even for the novice, it remains a source of an unending ponderation for the anthropologist du métier, compelled as if by the *hau* of the thing to come back to it again and again (Sahlins 1974:149).

While speaking of Marcel Mauss's gift to anthropology, Sahlins' words simultaneously intimate that Mauss could never give this gift, as if it were a thing. Sahlins' paper implies that Mauss's gift is not so much the words he gave us, as the resonating spaces between the words which forever hint towards that which can never be articulated once and for all.

As the title of Marshall Sahlins' own paper implies, it is the *spirit* of the gift that imbues Mauss's essay. This is what gives the essay its sense of depth, despite the fact that Mauss's argument is strikingly simple and transparent, allowing even a novice anthropologist to understand the spirit of the gift. And perhaps this is the very point. To feel the endless mystery of the gift as alive and present necessitates a certain sense of openness and wonder, a certain naïveté or *unawareness*. To quest for the truth of Mauss's words would be to see only his words, only things. In this self-consciously aware state the spirit – that no-thing that holds these things in relation – cannot be received.<sup>6</sup>

Like the biblical story of the loaves and fishes, where two fishes and five loaves feed a multitude of over five thousand people and still there is left an excess of twelve

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<sup>5</sup> In this respect my interest is in the notion of 'the gift' as relation, which is a very different concept to interaction. Michael Alvard has recently mounted a large study of Lamalera concerned with measuring the interaction of people through the exchange of products. The project is publicised on the internet.

<sup>6</sup> I am reminded of Shoshana Felman's discussion (1982), following Lacan and Freud, of the impossibility of teaching psychoanalysis. Pedagogy does not require a teaching *about* psychoanalysis, but teaching *through* it. Such a teaching thus requires ignorance rather than knowledge because psychoanalysis is that knowing which is precisely *not* what one thinks one knows. The unconscious demonstrates that discourse (and being) can never be entirely in agreement with itself. Like the gift, psychoanalysis and pedagogy are not things, they are performative.

baskets, the gift remains immeasurably bountiful (Matthew 14:19-21). Anthropologists and philosophers return to Mauss's story – which is always also the Maori elder Tamati Ranaipiri's story – to imbibe of the gift again and again. Each time they are nourished by their engagement with it, and yet it is never depleted (Game and Metcalfe forthcoming). In our persistent return we may encounter some new and unsuspected value in Mauss's words, and yet this dialogue, as Marshall Sahlins remarks, 'only renders the due of the original' (1974:149).<sup>7</sup>

In this regard, the return is always a new encounter. Yet this first time can only be known in the repetition. It is the ritual of exchange itself – for this performance is inherently a repetition – that allows us to feel the presence of the sacred through which we are, in turn, originated (Durkheim 1976:417, 427-428). In the words of Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe: 'All ritual trembles with the sacred intimations of creation' (1996:52).

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It is this sense of origination that I experienced that day sitting on the beach in Lamalera exchanging *susu* and *tebako* for sperm whale meat. As I concentrated on performing the exchange by attentively mimicking the gestures of the women sitting around me, gracefully adjusting to their bodily cues, the ritual suddenly came to life. In this presence, it was no longer me performing the ritual; rather, the ritual itself held me in a state of effortless grace. As Herbert Fingarette, speaking of Confucian philosophy, explains:

It is important that we do not think of this effortlessness as 'mechanical' or 'automatic'. If it is so, then...the ceremony is dead, sterile, empty: there is no *spirit* in it. The truly ceremonial 'takes place'; there is a kind of spontaneity; it happens 'of itself'. There is life in it because the individuals involved do it with seriousness and sincerity (1972:8; see also Game and Metcalfe 1996:54).

Fingarette is interested in everyday rituals – those courtesies and greetings, the little exchanges – that allow us to feel in relation. As he stresses, beautiful and effective ritual cannot be forced, it happens miraculously. The spirit of the ritual, then, is not its

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<sup>7</sup> Thus, as Mauss wrote on the gift, he was also returning to the gift as he pondered the field notes of the explanation of the *hau* given by Tamati Ranaipiri. Other researchers who have returned to the gift – and have moved me to write – include: Arjun Appadurai (1986), Georges Bataille (1985), James Boon (1982), Hélène Cixous (1986), Jacques Derrida (1992), John Frow (1992), Lewis Hyde (1983), Marshall Sahlins (1974), Marilyn Strathern (1988), Nicholas Thomas (1991) and Annette Weiner (1992).

trappings. Only when the performance becomes transparent does it come alive and carry the participants. Graceful ritual transforms us. The magic of such rituals rests on our enacting them effortlessly without noticing the performance (1972:4-9). In fact, if these exchanges are recognised, if we think about them, the spirit of the ritual is lost and the whole encounter fails in the face of this self-consciousness.

Like everyday ritual, the very disappearance of which carries its performance, the ritual of exchange in Lamalera is, likewise, borne by an absence of spectacle. In contrast to the celebratory atmosphere of the open beach with its noisy, colourful, pungent and frenetic activity involving men, women, children, researchers, whirring cameras, and a wave-washed whale carcass, the ceremonial exchange of simple everyday goods was performed in the shadows of the boat huts, in stillness, silence, and with an air of solemnity. Even the mundane things exchanged were to disappear through this act: the *susu* eaten, the *tebako* smoked, and the meat dried to be later taken to market to exchange for fruit and vegetables (Hyde 1983:8-11, 21).

However, although this ceremonial space of exchange was marked by the absence of spectacle, it was not lacking or empty. The very subtlety of the movements, voices and looks only served to emphasise the details of these modest gestures. The huddled whispers of the children and their furtive glances, their hesitant approach towards the entrance of the *najâ* to exchange their whale meat – this unusually disciplined restraint made the very air tremble. Similarly, the composure of the women as they gave a discrete nod of the head, and the bearing of the men as they performed their exchanges with no need of greeting or discussion, added to this charged atmosphere (Hyde 1983:15). And in this sacred space my body already knew how to respond. As the little boys came towards me I caught my breath, as if that syncopated moment itself held the chunks of whale meat and children and myself in relation.

Just as this exchange is felt through the very disappearance of its tangible elements, so too is its mimetic performance most breathtaking when it goes unnoticed. Mimicry pulsates with a heightened sense of detail, the performance strung on the tiniest gesture – or hesitation. To disrupt this flow with a jarring movement, to draw attention to mimesis, would be to lose the miraculous sense of the performance.

Like the children, women and men who are changed as they enter into the space of the ritual, I am also transformed. No longer am I a novice anthropologist attired in Lamaleran clothes, trying to maintain appropriate deportment. The words I speak in a vernacular combination of Indonesian and Lamaleran, the way my dark hair is knotted in a bun at

the back of my neck, the snake bracelet around my wrist, the whale tooth ring on my finger, the sarong folded at my waist in the appropriate style for women, and my modestly covered legs curled elegantly beneath me as I sit on the sand at the entrance to a *najâ* – this is no performance; I *am* Mama Ani.

In the same way that the magic of this transformation could only come through a committed interaction with the people and the environment around me, so too could it only come about through a disciplined mimicry of social etiquette where the outward signs of this performance become invisible. This disappearance is not just to the participating onlookers: to the women, children and men, who for a year had encouraged this Lamaleran self and continued to correct faulty performances. Mimesis must disappear so that I, also, am unaware of miming but simply become Mama Ani sitting among the women down at the beach chatting and chewing a little betel nut, spinning cotton and exchanging whale meat for *tebako* or *susu*. The performance must take over. If it didn't, Mama Ani would no longer feel right – she would become artificial – and simultaneously the rich air of the performance she was engaged in would become thin and no longer able to support this new life.

Thus mimicry is a form of exchange, just as the performance of social exchange is mimetic. While whale meat and my body are the flesh that holds the performance, exchange and mimicry are similarly forms of knowing that are embodied, that emerge through flesh. Michael Taussig writes of the need for the performer to steep themselves into the sensate skin of the other. Through this relation is born a moment of knowing that actualises otherness (1993:44). In lending our form to the other, the world of the other becomes actual to us; this performance gives us an appreciation of how other worlds actually are. However, actualisation is not to speak of reality. Our knowledges are embodied, both mediated through us and simultaneously projecting us into the world. We cannot know or imitate the world as it 'really' is, but we can simulate it through mime (Game and Metcalfe 1996:50-51). It is not that we know this other and copy them – this is a moving into the unknown and unknowable. It is a sensuous othering that makes the other alive to us.

Contemplating the mimetic faculty, Walter Benjamin considered that it plays a decisive role in all our ways of knowing and being (1986:333). Mimesis enables us to live in the world; its performance enlivens our understandings of our world. Mimesis is magical. In *The Golden Bough* (1922), James Frazer wrote of magic as imitation and as contact, contiguity: the palpable connection between the body of the performer and the performed. In this embodied intertwining of self and other, imitation and contiguity coil

round each other; mimesis is relational (Taussig 1993:21; Game and Metcalfe 1996:50-51; Merleau-Ponty 1968).

Benjamin implies that mimicry is a gift, one that both produces and recognises similarities (1986:333). And like any gift, this is not something that one possesses; the gift is given, and one must be open to accepting it. This necessitates a self that is not bound up in inventing borders and quarantining itself from the contaminatory magic of the other. Accepting the gift of mimicry is itself a form of giving. The mimetic body is a yielding body, giving in to the other, allowing otherness to possess the performer.

Mimicry and exchange require relations of openness and trust, while being simultaneously involved in performing such relations. They call for an unquestioning commitment and discipline, but they also necessitate a sense of wonder and a desire to experience the world anew, with difference. Thus, mimicry and exchange cannot be calculated, one can only trust that the other will be open and accepting. Without this acceptance the performance will fail. However, to doubt this performance, to hesitate even momentarily, would be to have already fallen out of the space of the ritual.

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It was only when I asked myself why I was performing the exchange that I fell, suddenly finding myself in the body of a researcher who looked upon Mama Ani with a critical eye. No longer held by the grace of her performance, Mama Ani felt hollow – a transgressor, an impersonator (Gallop 1995; Metcalfe forthcoming).

This researcher-self demanded that I should be learning *about* exchange. This self already imagined a world full of objects, people and gestures as entities, identities and actions – a world consisting of things outside and separate to a self who was engaged in seeking them. According to this calculation, only things count – including selves as things that can be counted upon to perform their research efficiently. My researcher's body demanded that I be an active investigator. To abstain from action was unbefitting to this body (see Kipling 1987:212). There was no time to waste by sitting on the beach playing Mama Ani, there was no gain in sitting around. This researcher-self required me to perform my serious duty of collecting information: taking photographs, taking notes, getting answers. This is to speak of an economy in which everything is held accountable, and where the no-thing is worthless.

This debt economy is comprised of finite, and therefore scarce, resources. There are only things and people as things, and all are bound to each other in endless exchanges from which there is no escape. In this world of obligation, the gift is impossible, for the gift is already one that takes, precisely because we are honour-bound to return it (Derrida 1992). The gift is a fake, a phoney, a spy,<sup>8</sup> pretending to be what it isn't. Under the guise of something given, it silently steals away our freedom as it binds us in an incessant reciprocation of counter gifts (Mauss 1954).

However, as David Loy explains, this objective world is illusory. In our quest to be self-same and therefore outside relation, we project this desire onto a world that is imagined as outside the self – a world of objects, immutable and real. At the same time, this world is an introjection which enables an image of self, likewise as an object. This dialectic fails, though, when we try to become this object of desire. For, in comparing self with the things of our own projections, we find ourselves lacking (Loy 1992:133-135).

No matter how hard I tried, I seemed unable to live up to the expectations of that active and assured anthropologist-self. I could not become like the two researchers in front of me on the beach who appeared so capable as they manoeuvred their way around slabs of flesh, rocks, and people, efficiently shooting off rolls of film. Even my camera was lacking, lying limply in the basket beside me.

And yet, when I momentarily desist from this compulsion to compare myself to an other (always god-like in perfection), there is a realisation that this feeling of lack is not brought about by a guilt for something I have (not) done. It is simply an overwhelming anxiety that 'I' does not exist as a separate identity. This is not about a sense of guilt for having been discovered by my critical researcher-self enjoying myself on the beach, for this authoritarian anthropologist-self did not exist. She was an imposter, a trickster, involved in myriad lies by pretending to be an anthropologist, convincing university departments, government officials, Lamalerans, other researchers, and Mama Ani that she was real. I was faced with an ontological anxiety – an anxiety about my ultimate non-being (Loy 1992:142). My experience was not merely one of guilt for not being good enough. This recurring fear is itself an illusion, the object manifestation of a more

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<sup>8</sup> This thread which links giving, mimicry and spying curls back onto anthropology – a discipline that has a recurring association with spying. Spying, in turn, is linked to secrets, stealing and finite resources, and suggests to me the desire for a secret self – an imagined essence that can be stolen through mimicry. See Michael Taussig (1993) and Jane Gallop (1995). In the novel *Kim*, the ethnologist for the Indian Survey is a spy, who really does want to be an ethnologist, while the spy Hurree Babu also wants to be an ethnologist (Kipling 1987:174).

general and overwhelming anxiety. My researcher-self, who so desired to be identical with self, sensed that there is no 'I'.

Thus, at the root of my feelings of guilt for my inadequacies, there was this vague feeling of anxiety which I could not project out into the world and pin onto other researchers, or my camera, or my lack of performance. This was an objectless anxiety. Without some specific failing for which I could feel guilty, I was left with nothing – a formless void (Loy 1992:157).

Yet, as opposed to most psychologies and philosophies which see this void as a breakdown in the story, Jungian psychology as well as Buddhism and Taoism, view the void as therapeutic.<sup>9</sup> In order to let go of a self that desires to be outside of relation, separate and self-same, Buddha teaches abandonment of the senses. Like the ceremonial space of exchange that was held through the very lack of eye contact, speech and gesture; and like mimicry, whose performance necessitates the disappearance of its manifest signs, the void carries those who desire to let go of self. Thus, Lao-tzu writes that, rather than desiring to be always more, one must become less (1998,48).

When there is nothing else to become and nowhere else to turn, we are left with nothing. As David Loy comments, the solution to our fear of the void is so simple that it is likely to be overlooked. It is simply to realise something about the empty nature of nothing (1992:143). It is to enter into a relationship with nothing, to experience nothing, to become nothing.

When there is clinging perception (*upadane*), the perceiver generates being. When there is no clinging perception, he will be freed and there will be no being. (*Mulamadhyamikakarikas* xxvi quoted in Loy 1992:141)

Becoming nothing is not, however, nihilism. As Buddha taught, 'there has never been any self to be annihilated' (Loy 1992:139). In submitting to the nothingness I fear – in becoming nothing – I discover that there has never been lack, because there has never been an autonomous self apart from the world. The problem of desire dissolves when lack, as a terrifying abyss, transforms into a held nothingness. It is the recognition of the holding quality of nothing that allows, as David Loy phrases it, the mystic to swim in the same sea that drowns the psychotic (1992:159).

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<sup>9</sup> Jung's work, for instance, saw this rupture as the beginning of therapy (1983). Mark Epstein (1995) discusses this point from psychotherapeutic and Buddhist perspectives.

If we are filled with desire we will see only the manifestation of this desire. Letting go of desire enables us to imagine another way. It is only when we are free from desires that we can see the mystery (Lao-tzu 1998, 1; Metcalfe forthcoming; Kipling 1987).

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With the small tray of whale meat balanced on my head, I left the beach that day filled with an indescribable sense of joy. Unexpectedly and without trying or thinking about it, I had experienced the gift of exchange. It had been given to me while I was quietly sitting there, just enjoying being with my friends.

And then, my whole body knew without any doubt that the gift is gratuitous: it is quite simply given. When least expected, when I am no longer questing, but openly engaging with the world in which I am situated, the gift may come, arising perhaps through the trust of a smile, a whisper, a way of sitting, or a bloody piece of whale meat. Emerging through these relations, it fills me with the nothingness of this inbetween which always exceeds my capacity to express it.

Nothing is thus the unknowable mystery that allows me to experience the world as sacred. It is the overflowing fullness that Emile Durkheim referred to as effervescence. Writing of religious life, Durkheim described how this gift bubbles up through the very performance of social relations:

if collective life awakens religious thought on reaching a certain degree of intensity, it is because it brings about a state of effervescence which changes the conditions of psychic activity. Vital energies are over-excited, passions more active, sensations stronger.... A man does not recognise himself; he feels himself transformed (1976:422).

The spirit of communion which Durkheim speaks of was likewise expressed through Christian thought, Jesus declaring that: 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20). This effervescence or spirit is the nothing that magically transforms exchanges into holy rites.

Thus, through the presence of this resonating nothingness, the economy of scarcity, which is actualised through the imagining of nothing as an empty void, changes into an economy of excess. There is always more. The gift escapes the debt economy that



binds giver and receiver in eternal struggles of domination and obligation. In the economy of more we are not beholden, but are held in a state of grace where gratuity and gratitude are inextricably intertwined.

Hence, it is not that the gift compels me to be grateful; rather, it is only when full of grace that the gift can emerge. It was only when uninhibited, when forgetting to take note of myself, that I could open up to the world around me, and in letting go, experience the momentary wonder of belonging.

This sense of deepest belonging that we so desperately seek has been here all along. It forms out of relations. Rituals, then, are celebrations of this experience:

In the give and take of daily living, every action can become a grateful celebration of this belonging. Ritual...is an essential aspect of spirituality: a grateful celebration of life. (David Steindl-Rast in Capra et al. 1992:17)

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On Saturday morning I place the dried whale meat next to my camera in my woven basket. Lifting it onto my head, then picking up my *keduka lelu* (spindle and cotton), I set out for the long walk to the market at Fulandoni. As I cut through the yard of Kelaké Langu, I am greeted by Bélé Eta (nee Atafolo) who lives there alone: ‘*Moé mae garé?*’ ‘Where are you going?’ This greeting, equivalent to the English ‘how are you?’, is a ritual I can never quite take in my stride. Even though Bélé Eta and I have performed the greeting several times a day for the past year, I am always momentarily taken aback by the question, and because of this small hesitation, sense that I never quite manage to perform this ritual with the grace it requires. Unlike the English greeting which I seldom take literally, I don’t feel that my replies to this question are adequate, precisely because they are always too literal and therefore stilted. This is the same unnerving sensation I feel on those occasions when someone returns the English greeting by actually giving details of how they are. Aware that Bélé Eta knows that I’m heading off to the market, I seem to be stating the obvious when I answer: *Goé kai fulâ*. I’m going to the market. However, Bélé Eta takes little notice of my reply as she continues with her chores and I sense that perhaps it sounded natural after all. I continue on my way, making a mental note to bring her back some sugar.

A few steps more and I’m in the village square where I’m greeted by Bélé Lukas Sanga (clan Lamakera) and again repeat the performance of the ritual. Bélé Sanga adds to the

dialogue a request: '*Oleh oleh fua malu*'. He asks for a little souvenir of betel nut and sirih pepper. And so I walk on, heading east up the compounded rock and dirt road, past Abel Beding's homestay and the water pipe on the left, and Mama Kedofil's house which lies down the escarpment on the right, repeating greetings as I go, until I get to the family house of my friend Ana Befa Krova. I yell out for her. As Ana Befa lifts her enamel washbowl to her head, her young niece Klara brings out her baby brother Paulus to wave and say 'da'. Ana and I return the greeting several times, and then cheerfully continue up the road, joining up with other women as we make our way through the village after which we veer off onto the track that weaves along the coast for the six kilometre hike to Fulandoni.

As we walk, chatting and spinning cotton on our drop spindles, we pass particular markers – a large boulder here or a forest there – that prompt Ana Befa to remind me about our shared experiences of these places. Over there is the path to the forest where she, Agatha Jafa, Nina Keneo and I went looking for firewood, and where I took a series of photographs of old Ema<sup>10</sup> Mia hacking dried wood with her machete, bundling up her heavy load, balancing it onto her head and then carrying it back to the village. Now we pass by the spot where Ana Befa and I dug up *kloré* roots (*kloré lolo*) for dying my cotton red – part of the weaving instruction under the tuition of Mama Maria Kedofil. As we worked we also had fun: Ana Befa played anthropologist and learned how to take photographs while I learned how to identify plants and dig for roots.

These memories indicate that all these places have meaning because of these relationships – not just relationships between particular people, but also with fire wood found in one place and *kloré* roots located at another, and with machetes and a camera. These places, resources, technologies and everyday rituals of getting firewood and roots for dying, and taking photographs for research and fun, hold these relations. For Ana Befa and I, they hold the traces of our friendship. As we pass each significant place and remember the events that it marks, our friendship is enhanced as it comes alive again.

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<sup>10</sup> The term of address *ema* refers to mother, her sisters or the wives of *Bapa*. The term *Bapa* refers to father, his brothers and males of that generation. Ana Befa and I are of the same generation, as are her second cousins Agatha Jafa (whose mother is *Ema* Mia) and Nina Keneo who, along with Ana Befa, helped me with water carrying during the year. Agatha Jafa and Nina Keneo are first cousins. All of us could be referred to as *biné* (sisters). Maria Kedofil is also of our generation, and is Ana Befa's first cousin (same grandfather but different grandmothers). Because Maria Kedofil is older, through respect, I always refer to her as Mama, while she simply addresses me by my first name. As an older person of the same generation Maria Kedofil could also be addressed as *tata* (older brother or sister). Likewise, Bapa Bertolomeus Lasan, Ana Befa's older brother (whose words were quoted about the 'satan whale'), could be addressed as *tata*, or as *kaka* (older brother). For more details on relationship terminology, see Keraf (1978:99-100).

The day grows hotter as we continue the long walk. Lulled by the rhythmic beat of our steps, my thoughts begin to drift. Reminiscing about the origin myth of the epic voyage of the ancestors, I once again become aware of how each place mentioned in the myth likewise holds a relation which, like the places that bring alive my relationship with Ana Befá, also brings to life the relationship between Lamalerans and their ancestors and the people, places, events, resources and technologies encountered during the origin voyage. The market at Fulandoni is one of these significant places.

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When the waters rose and the islands of Lèpan Batan sank into the sea, the ancestors boarded the Kebako Pukâ (which also carried the beginnings of the boat Bui Pukâ) and fled across the strait to Lembata. They stopped at the villages of Riàng (Wairiang) and Roma<sup>11</sup> in the north-east, before once again setting out on a migratory journey, travelling along the east coast down the Strait between Lembata and Pantar, then around the southern coast, stopping at various places along the way as they searched for somewhere to settle.<sup>12</sup>

*Géri téna dai marangkâ téti Riâ,  
dai épitkâ téti Roma.*

*Matak noi lefuk péti, tanak lau,  
tobo naik kadé rua.*

We board a boat and arrive ashore at Riàng [Wairiang],  
we arrive ashore at Roma.

My eyes look at my village over there, my land across the sea,  
I sit and feel nervous and worried.

*Gafék lau fattâ papa Lamabata,  
sapék téti Tobi Landéké.*

*Sigak téti Fato Bélâ Bakku,  
loddó dai kabé honé hollo.*

<sup>11</sup> On this predominantly Catholic island there is a local saying that compares Roma, Lembata, and Roma, Italia. Gregorius Keraf, among others, interprets this location as the island of Romang (1978).

<sup>12</sup> For instance, at the place called Bobu, which is mentioned in some versions of the myth, Lamalerans have permission to catch reef fish. During the hot dry season of *barafâi* (October and November) when large game hunting ceases, men and women may travel to Bobu to stay for a couple of weeks to fish and trade for maize. However, not all the relationships are so positive.

I set to sea and travel along the coast of Lembata,  
 I stop at Tobi Landéké [where a tamarind tree grows].  
 I stop at the island of Fatobela [literally, big rock]  
 get down from our boats and stay a while.

*Honék karo tung pira pai hikko,*  
*fanik karo fulâ pira pai gafé.*  
*Géri téna dikenêâ Bakopukâ,*  
*olé lollo mété hau.*

Stay until several years pass,  
 stay until a month or more goes by [meaning: for some time].  
 Board the one boat, the Kebako Pukâ,  
 the east current rises more and more.

*Hau gafék lau futuk baraselâ,*  
*olé angi lau mété data.*  
*Pasa pasa kabé rugî sorakai,*  
*olé mépé rabelina.*

I try to pass the peninsula of misfortune,  
 the currents and winds become increasingly destructive.  
 Finally sacrifice the heirloom called Sorakai,  
 the currents become quiet.

*Dai marangkâ téti Luki Lefobala,*  
*géré honék téti Lefo Hajjo.*  
*Nâu tobanga buri hori téna,*  
*Alo gasuka lafé larâ tukâ.*

Arrive and come ashore at Labala,  
 I build a house up at the village of Lefohajjon.  
 A large rock mortar tips over, a conch shell is in the boat,  
 a large pestle falls across the middle of the road.

Three ancestors fled Lepad Batan: Tanakrofa, the lord of the land of Lepad Batan, Lamanudek, the architect of the boats Kebako Pukâ and the partially built Bui Pukâ, and a third unnamed ancestor. The ancestors stop at the Island of Fatobela, a rocky outcrop off Pulau Rusa [Deer Island]. Their journey then takes them further down this strait, well

known for its exceptionally strong currents. On reaching the Atadei peninsula they are nearly shipwrecked, and are forced to sacrifice one of their heirlooms – a gold chain called *sorakai* – to the seas, whereupon the waters become calm.<sup>13</sup>

They try settling in the hills above the village of Labala but there is trouble here.<sup>14</sup> The myth tells of how the senior clan of Tanakrofa accidentally kill a chick when it is crushed under a mortar. The people of Labala demand compensation for the loss of the chick, but as Tanakrofa is unable to pay, the third unnamed ancestor pays with a gold ring. As the three ancestors reboard the Kebako Pukâ to leave Labala (the pestle that lies across the road indicating the breach in the relationship), Tanakrofa indicates that the unnamed ancestor should take Tanakrofa's place in the boat, while Tanakrofa row. But the ancestor announces that he is named Korohama meaning that all clans should be equal. Thus Korohama becomes the hero of the origin myth of Lamalera.

Korohama now leads the ancestors further to the west where they manage to settle in Fulandoni.

*Hau honék téti Doni Nua Léla,*

*fanik téti Ué Ulu Mado.*

*Gélu hékka fato fakka rappâ bloddo,*

*serra ribu tali ratu.*

Arrive and live at Doni-Nualéla [the old village on the hill above Fulandoni],

live at Ue Ulu Mado [the place of Mado trees, near Fulandoni].

Exchange the tools to make earthen pots for those of steel harpoon,

all are as one community.

Here they experience very good relations with the local people and live together as a community. The ancestors give the people of Doni Nua Léla the technology for making clay pots (*fato fakka*).<sup>15</sup> In return, they receive the technology for making steel harpoons and rope from cotton (*rappâ bloddo*). Rather than being simply an exchange

<sup>13</sup> Compare: 'But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging' (*The Book of Jonah* 1:4, 13, 15).

<sup>14</sup> The trouble at Labala continues to be reflected in relations between Lamalera and Labala. Trading relations have only relatively recently been opened up, and even though the women of Lamalera now trade at Labala, there is still a prohibition on Lamalerans going up the slope of the hill and the site where the problem between the two villages occurred.

<sup>15</sup> The technology consists of round stones (*fato*) and small wooden paddles. Shaping of the clay pots is achieved through lightly beating clay against the stones which are moved around within the vessel to give it the appropriate shape. (Interview with Mama Honana Simo Lamabela, Fulandoni 1998).

of goods, these gifts of technology continue to produce a yield, an excess that is, in turn, given away through the exchange of whale meat for clay pots. The clay pots are furthermore used for the dying of cotton. The red dye, using *kloré lolo*, only takes if done in these earthen pots.

However, even though ancestral relations with Doni Nua Léla were very good, in the end, the Lamaleran ancestors moved to their present location because the *téna* would be drawn by the currents towards the little bay of Lamalera as the men returned from the sea in the afternoons. The three clans brought with them a few people from Nua Léla who formed the clan named Lélaonâ.

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To perform the exchange at the market of Fulandoni is thus to reawaken the origin story, and to relive the final part of that epic voyage which tells of the ancestral ties with Doni Nua Léla, held through the exchange of technologies: clay pots (*fato fakka*) for steel harpoons (*rappâ bloddo*). Furthermore, this is the place where, in the myth of the Dato Ténâ and the Whale, Dato and his crew stopped to announce their return from the dead and exchange whale meat for fruit and vegetables. This exchange was done without counting the costs.

The connection between these two myths of exchange is embodied in a particular ritual for a new *téna*. During the *Odo Maddi*, the series of rituals for the launching of the completed *téna*, there is the ceremony called *Belu Lagâ Knifa* or *Groi*, where the boat's cooperative arranges to have a special market at Fulandoni. This ritual is undertaken for the origin boat Kebako Pukâ and also for the Bui Pukâ, the partially build boat that was carried in the Kebako Pukâ as the ancestors fled Lapan Batan. The newly constructed *téna* is sailed to Fulandoni loaded with dried sea game which is given to the people from Fulandoni and the inland villages who gather together in order to give fruit and vegetables. During this exchange the products must be given away without regard to cost. It is significant that this gift giving ritual is held before the *téna* goes to sea for its first hunt, rather than hunting first and then offering up the yield of the sea. It is the gift, the act of giving and acceptance that creates excess. It is only when grateful that the gift of the sea will be given up to the people of Lamalera.

Like this ritual aspect of the boat launching ceremony, going to the weekly market and performing the exchange of whale meat for vegetables and other staples, including clay pots during the dry season,<sup>16</sup> is simultaneously to relive the journey of the ancestors and the heroic whale hunt of the Dato Ténâ. Through the performance of this market, these ancestral exchanges are brought to life, and in this way, these exchanges are archetypal; they are the first exchange.

Hence exchange is never just of mundane substances. The whale meat that is given is simultaneously the first whale, just as its hunt is always also the first hunt. The exchange of the products of steel harpoons for the products of the land allows the continuation of the relations between the peoples of Lamalera and Fulandoni – the ritual holds the ongoing origination of that relationship. This gift-giving relation is not only between the allocthonous clans of Lamalera and the autocthonous clans of Fulandoni and other villages,<sup>17</sup> but is also a relation between the living, and the ancestors, and furthermore, between technologies and the excess they produce through the bounty of the sea and the yield of the land and shore. This is the continuing intertwining between cultures, people, ancestors, things and substance.

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Although colourful and full of smells and texture, the ceremonial aspect of the market at Fulandoni necessitates that these exchanges are performed with appropriate decorum. There is at this market an unexpected solemnity – a tension in the air. There is also a ritual order that must be observed during exchanges that indicates where village groups gather, who stands and moves around and who sits still, and prescribes set quantities of different products to be exchanged.

As we near the market, the conversations that shaped so much of the atmosphere of the walk fall away and the women become quiet and reserved. Entering the market place we immediately assemble in loose groups at the western side of the clearing, under the huge tree that marks the middle of the square. Here we set down our baskets and enamel bowls and wait for the tax collector to whom we each give a small amount of produce in payment toward the local district tax. Once the taxes are collected the

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<sup>16</sup> Whale meat is exchanged for clay pots at the beginning of the dry season in August and September.

<sup>17</sup> Not all the other villages that now trade at Fulandoni are autocthonous. Many coastal villages that come to trade at the market are settlers, like most clans of Lamalera. However, this does not diminish the importance of these differences to the people of Lamalera and Fulandoni and their relations of exchange.

whistle is blown to signal the commencement of the exchange. Now the Lamaleran women leave their baskets and bowls and walk around with their dried sea products approaching the women of other villages who sit with their land products displayed in front of them. The Lamaleran women will offer a piece of whale meat in exchange for the product displayed; there is little need to speak as the exchange rates are known to all. Quantities of measure are referred to as *munga* or *mongnga*. In the case of fruit and vegetables this often refers to a measurement of six. Thus one piece of whale meat is exchanged for two lots of six bananas (*muko munga rua*), or two lots of six ears of maize (*fata munga rua*); or one coconut (*tapo tou*). In the organised activity of this market I am reminded of how it is always the products of the sea that circulate, while those of the land remain still. Like the exchange on the beach at Lamalera where the women with *tebako* and *susu* sit waiting for whale meat to come their way, so, too, do the myths of the epic journeys of the Lamaleran ancestors speak of this movement and stillness as embodied in the ritual exchange between allocthonous people, who came from the sea and trade products of the sea, and autochthonous people who trade products of the land.

There is very little in the way of socialising at this market. Once the Lamaleran women have procured their food supplies, they arrange their baskets and bowls so they are well-balanced, help each other lift the heavy loads to their heads, and then walk off in small groups for the arduous journey home in the hot midday sun. Although this is the hardest part of the market day, the atmosphere of the return journey has a lightness about it, as if, in having given and received, the women's very demeanour hints of the effervescence of this exchange.

This celebratory atmosphere that forms the conclusion to the performance of this ritual itself suggests that the exchange is creative: it exceeds the parts that make up its performance. Through this mundane ritual people become more – they are actualised through relations. The desire to exchange is a desire to be in relation and is a recognition that we can only be originated through relations. Lamalerans become whale hunters only through relation with others. And they become whale hunters in giving away the very gift of the hunt – whale meat.

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Although seemingly so mundane as to go unnoticed, the exchange at Fulandoni is a sacred ritual where the articles of exchange, these gifts of the land and sea, are themselves sacred. And yet, like the market itself – which, in its lack of noise and gregarious social activity is conspicuous for being, in one sense, unremarkable – whale meat likewise must similarly disappear to those who give it.

Whale meat must be given away; it is for the other. Even as it is fleshy substance, whale meat is also the no-thing, the betweenness that holds whales, people, ancestors and cultures in relation. Furthermore, whale meat not only carries these relations, it continuously creates them – it is not an inanimate object but actively produces the relations in which it is engaged. The giving away of whale flesh sustains life. To hoard this meat would be the death of social life. Hence, whale meat is suggestive of how selves and societies are actualised by things, for the flesh of the whale, through carrying these relations, originates Lamalerans as whale hunters. As Marcel Mauss states, the thing itself is not inert. Things actively engage in relations (1954:10-12).

Hence, while this exchange is a relation, in a very literal sense, this relation is also life. The ritual suggests that life will continue through this act of exchange. The whale sacrifices its life so that people may live through their relation with the body of the whale. Just as they live through the ingestion of the whale's body, so, too, do they live through the very ritual of giving it away.

In this regard the body of whale is like the body of Christ. In the ritual of the Mass, the consumption of the sacrificial flesh of Christ, through the giving and receiving of the soul food of the wafer, brings the congregation into communion, just as whale meat brings societies into communion. As with the ritual of market, I, likewise, sense the ceremonial ritual of the consumption of the body of Christ in the solemn demeanour of the Lamaleran congregation as they file down the aisles of the church to receive the host. I can feel the spirit of this sacred gift in the very air of this ritually held space.

This is the same sense of sacrifice and of holy communion I sense in the giving away of the flesh of the whale. Whale meat must be given away because it is already a gift.

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Arriving back at Lamalera, Ana Befá and I pause momentarily on the hill of Futunlolo as we enter the village. Gazing out to sea, we reminisce on how, coming home from collecting firewood the week before, we stood at this same vantage point to watch several *téna* struggling with a mighty *koteklema*. We could see that the sperm whale had already dragged one boat under, and now it continued to strike out with its huge tail. The boat Ana Befá's brothers were on was still afloat, but we had no idea which boat Bapa Jek (Jean) was in. We hurried home. The men at one of the *najâ* told me that the *téna* Jean is in is fine. But later we find out that several men have been wounded and the researcher Kotaro Kojima lost his video equipment when the Kena Pukâ was dragged under. Finally, the hunters subdued the whale enough to allow the boats to attach ropes to each other in single file and to secure the whale. The men then paused to carry out a ceremony. Removing their hats and bowing their heads, they prayed to the ancestors, and to the animist Gods *Lera Fulâ* (sun moon) and *Tana Ekâ* (land earth), and to God Almighty to forgive the people for having blasphemed against the spirit of the *koteklema* by calling it a Satan Whale the time, a year before, when the four boats were lost at sea. Then the hunters asked the whale to sacrifice its life in order that they might feed their wives, their children, the widows, and the people of the surrounding villages. Following the ceremony, the whale died.



*SHORE*

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# Write of *P*assage

**After he has read that book, his life becomes the life of a person who has read that book...now his life before that reading also assumes a form shaped by that reading.**

Italo Calvino *Mr Palomar*

**The waves broke on the shore.**

Virginia Woolf *The Waves*

As I begin the closing chapter of this ethnography I falter. Even though a second ago I was certain about what I wanted to say, how to start and where to go, as I place my fingers on the keyboard and face the blank page on my computer screen, the idea is suddenly lost. The words which had already formed in my head escape me, they seep away. Desperately I try to will those lost thoughts, that flash of a perfect whole to reappear, but the insight remains elusive.

Weary of my quest to find those illusory perfect words, my eye wanders off. Drawn to the pin board above my desk, it is held momentarily by a couple of photos of friends from Lamalera: there is little Paulus (oh how he would be so much bigger now, no longer a toddler, but a young boy) smiling as he runs naked from the water up the beach toward me and the camera. I smile back, reflecting upon how far I have travelled with people from Lamalera, how I have been changed in the process – how the relationship with Lamalera and this thesis has made me so different from myself. My eye drifts on, hesitating at a few photos of a group of doctoral friends. The photos picture the time we travelled together to a conference. I laugh as I remember how we practised for that conference in private meetings, supporting each other emotionally and intellectually in the very processes of performing being post-graduate students. My eye continues to wander, roving over several postcards and a treasured cartoon from *Hagar the Horrible* (which I secretly sense was meant just for me): a huge sperm whale has surfaced under Hagar's Viking ship, carrying the ship and crew off in the opposite direction to which they were trying to journey. Then my eye comes to rest upon a yellowing piece of paper on which, years ago, I had jotted down a few words from Hélène Cixous. Reading these words anew, I am amazed to find that for all those years they have hung there – a forgotten reminder not to be afraid, to just write. And I feel that all along these words have been waiting for me, for this moment when I need to remember them again. They tell me:

One has to get going. This is what writing is, starting off. It has to do with activity and passivity. This does not mean one will get there. Writing is not arriving; most of the time its not arriving. One must go on foot, with the body. One has to go away, leave the self. How far must one not arrive in order to write, how far must one wander, wear out and have pleasure? (1993: 65)

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With these words, I trust that I can once more begin to write. No – not just that I can begin, but that I need to write in order to begin, to feel what it is that wants to be said. I must set out, I must wander and lose my way in order to meet the words that will guide me. It is not that I have words and then just figure out a combination of ways of writing them by pressing my fingers to the keyboard of my laptop, thus making the words appear on the screen. Writing is never only mechanics. It is in the writing itself, in this very process of losing myself in words, of wallowing in them even as I am swallowed by them, that I find a thread to guide me towards thoughts that only exist as a glimmer, a hope.

And I know I cannot force these words, although at times I have struggled so hard to do this. It is not / who gives birth to these words; the words also give birth to me. I can only stand by breathing deeply and regularly, feeling my helplessness. And yet this passivity is full of concentration – it is so disciplined, and so alive. This is how writing produces itself. The words, as I write them, come to me. They are never quite mine. This relation between myself and pens and paper and my computer and words produces something far more. It is no longer just me who writes, and it is, at the same time, not not me. The question is no longer *who* am I; but it is to ponder *how* am I, for I am in relation, produced out of relation, as are these words that write themselves through me. Writing, as Lévi-Strauss noted for music, ‘always exceeds what we would have thought ourselves capable of achieving alone’ (1969:17). Writing, like Durkheimian effervescence, is excessive (1976). In the moments when I feel my writing is at its best, I feel a bubbling over – with, and through, these beatific words. This is the lived experience of writing, of writing this ethnography. It is the same experience Claude Lévi-Strauss often repeats regarding the work of myths:

I have written that myths get thought in man unbeknownst to him.... [F]or me it describes a lived experience, because it says exactly how I perceive my own relationship to my work. That is, my work gets thought in me unbeknown to me.

I never had, and still do not have, the perception of feeling my personal identity. I appear to myself as the place where something is going on, but there is no ‘I’, no ‘me’. Each of us is a kind of crossroads where things happen. The crossroads is purely passive; something happens there. (1978:3-4)

Through this quotation Lévi-Strauss hints of the activity behind passivity, a passivity which appears to me as a holding – a stillness that requires the strength of discipline. In the teachings of Confucius, it is said that the disciple must ‘labour long and hard to learn /I/, the grace of ritual (Fingarette 1972: 6). It is similarly the grace of this passivity, this openness and trust, which allows for movement. In rare moments of grace my barriers fall away allowing the archetypes to take me by the hand, guiding my words as my

fingers glide across the keyboard. In writing I feel myself disappearing. 'Writing is', Barthes warns, 'that obliquity into which our subject flees, the black-and-white where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes' (1986:49).

Thus, to speak of this loss of self, which is unbordered and therefore infinite, is to question the privileged position of the human subject (Derrida 1978:278-293), a position at once recognised in the very name of the discipline *anthropology*. Yet in my experience of ethnography (including the *graphien*), subjectivity has never been limited to the human. This ethnography has consistently been influenced by relations with animals, matter, bodies and elements, thus enabling an experience of the world's flesh (Derrida 1991, Irigaray 1985a, Kirby 1997, Merleau-Ponty 1968). Through relations, the world, including the world of archetypes, comes to life. Carl Jung's psychoanalytic theory and practice was indebted to the notion of archetypes, to demonstrating their presence in both ancient and modern thought (1968a, 1983). However, this concept still remains incomprehensible to an heroic subject forever questing for an immutable identity and self-conscious control, desiring to become a thing. As the psychotherapist James Hillman argues, such a subject

cannot imagine that these psychic presences...have autonomous substantial reality. It cannot imagine that an author, say, is driven to bear the messages of 'his' characters, that it is their will that is done, that he is their scribe, and that they are creating him even as he is creating them (1975:12).

In considering the relation between archetypes and quotations, words and myself, it becomes impossible to determine the origin of discourse, including the origin of this ethnographic dissertation. As Lévi-Strauss has been lead to write:

If it is now asked where the real centre of the work is to be found, the answer is that this is impossible to determine. Music and mythology [and surely: stories, words, ethnographies and theses] bring man face to face with potential objects of which only the shadows are actualised (1969:17-18).

Here again, I sense that there is always 'too much, more than one can say' (Derrida 1978:289). The tiniest detail or the briefest moment, when felt in all its wonder, is always beyond me. There are not the words to capture it. And when we contemplate a mundane passage from a mundane book – perhaps an entry from a guidebook – in the wonder of its detail and in the very spaces between the words, we can feel the resonances of this mystery. I recognise this same experience when I write. When writing well, I feel the archetypes reaching out to me. I do not write alone. As I sit in my study, tucked away in my own private room, the house becomes enclosed in a luxurious silence. Nothing stirs.

Nothing stirred in the drawing-room or in the dining-room or on the staircase. Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) crept round the corners and ventured indoors (Woolf 1977:138).

In this beautiful, strange space where nothing wakes up and glides through the rooms of our house, I feel surrounded by the presence of books, by the feel of my desk and chair and computer, by the paintings that hang on the walls which gently wrap around me; by words and musings. All these things are more than just the tools of my trade, or decoration, or structural material, or imagination. They live with me through the writing process; they support me and help me feel momentarily at home in these words, this ethnography, this dissertation.

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Writing is never stable. Its meanings proliferate, contaminate, escape. Consequently it is in writing itself that Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray see the possibility of a way of moving towards otherness that escapes 'the empire of the selfsame' – a way of inventing new worlds, of beginning to tell a different story (Cixous 1986:78-79; Irigaray 1985a:128-129).

Cixous and Irigaray, like anthropology, have a notion that writing is therapeutic: we must write. But instead of the desire for achieving stability, direction and wholeness – as present in many anthropological writings – their words begin to tear at the fabric of the text by recognising that which always escapes and cannot be tamed. This is to speak of a desire that never returns to the same (Cixous 1986; Irigaray 1993:74, 80-81).

This is a writing which embodies the possibility of an openness towards the other. A desire that allows such openness also allows us to begin to write fearlessly – and to write with pleasure. Rather than a desire based on lack and debt, and therefore closure, this is to think through excess and naïveté and passivity. This is to acknowledge that I am not separate, but remain in relation. Alone, I could never have been able to think this ethnography, not in the ways it has produced itself. These words are not only mine; I write by the grace of the muses – and remain grateful.

And this is to come to realise that the writing of the passage *is* the passage. It is not that we *do* anthropology: do fieldwork and then leave, returning home to simply write up. This heroic story with a beginning, a middle and a transcendent rebirthing end is not



the experience of ethnography. We do not *do*, but rather *undergo* anthropology. Ethnography is a transformative practice. I do not transcend the other, our relation, but conversely, I begin to lose myself – I become not me, and at the same time, not not me.

Kirsten Hastrup writes of this double moment. She speaks of living the role of both ethnographer and informant through the experience of a play written and performed about a Danish anthropologist: herself. In this performance she becomes not herself, but simultaneously, not not herself (1995:135; also Kondo 1990, Clifford 1988). Hastrup's personal story allows me to think about how the ethnographer is always already being ethnographised through the practices of their work: how we feel the eyes of anthropology touching the backs of our own necks; how the gaze of the other reaches out to me and enables me to begin to sense my body, to hear my voice, to feel the rhythm of my walk, to smell my skin, to see myself...as strange and exotic. Hastrup's particular experience of becoming other to herself through a play is evocative, reminding me that we are not anthropologists as stable entities, but rather we perform being fieldworkers, writers, ethnographers – others. And as with all ritual practices we are transformed in the performance of this sacred rite.

For Hastrup, the production of the play, this process of becoming different to self, was a terrifying and debilitating experience. And yet this tragic loss of self-certainty was also the very enabling factor that allowed her to return to anthropology, to return humbled, but with a conviction of the importance of this discipline, even if it is a painful enterprise. Hastrup is herself touched by another anthropologist's story of loss. She speaks of Renato Rosaldo's terrifying experience of losing his wife, his colleague, in the field (Hastrup 1995:142). Likewise, Rosaldo's experience was debilitating, and yet it was this embodied grief that allowed him to finally feel the Ilongot headhunters' rage, enabling him to write (Rosaldo in Bruner 1984). With both Rosaldo and Hastrup, through their individual rites of passage, there is produced a writing filled with an intensity and honesty – a fearless writing. In their words I sense both extreme anguish and yet a new bravery and humility. I sense a passion, a pleasure and pain; an alive passivity.

For me, the reminder of this feeling of being ethnographised emerges less dramatically through a short article written by Lestari Beding (1994), an Indonesian journalist who came to the village with her Lamaleran husband for a working holiday. Seeing the photograph and reading the words published about me in the local newspaper evoked an immediate sense of the uncanny. In the description I seem so different from myself. I'm so strangely self-assured. There I am walking to the market with a steady stride, laughing merrily while authoritatively – or perhaps the better work is pompously –

discussing the importance of the villagers using 'grey water' (left-over washing water) to grow a few fresh vegetables. I cannot relate to this me, even though I recognise here an anthropologist. What I find so important about this experience of being ethnographised is that it is this same feeling of becoming different to self that I sense in the very practices of ethnography; in the processes of fieldwork and writing I become changed. The painful risk I feel in anthropology is this terrifying abyss of loss. And yet this is not just to speak of a loss of self-certainty that comes with relations, and which is necessary for the movement, the grace, of relationality. This loss is also, as Hastrup states, 'the loss of an illusion of authority in anthropology' (1995:142).

Being written made me aware that, in my relationship with Lamalera, I become not myself and not not myself – and never Lamaleran (which, in the end, came as a profound shock). And as I write about Lamalera this feeling stays with me, allowing me to realise that this same process is at work for various people of Lamalera. In their relations with myself and other others, Lamalerans become different to themselves even as they recognise themselves (see Vickers 1989:198). And I realise the other is likewise not quite self and that this ethnography cannot give them the mirror to reflect self. I can never give to Lamalera that reflection of themselves that offers a momentary sense of self-constitution. I began, from the very first word of this ethnography, from my first day in Lamalera, from the first time I read the guidebook entry all those years ago, to fail the trial of self-certainty – for my self, my discipline, and for my hosts in Lamalera. And yet I know that in desiring to give to Lamalera an ethnography that tells them who they are, I am also – although I want to deny it – desiring my own reflection. This is my own desire to be the authoritative anthropologist.

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In undergoing the rite of passage of anthropology, in fieldwork and writing, there is this sense of loss of self. Back in Sydney, I am again reminded that I am not me. Home is no longer a homely place, for in my absence, in my becoming different to self, it has become *unheimlich*. As Michael Taussig states, anthropology is a homesickening enterprise:

To the (not necessarily unhappy) travail of the sojourns abroad with their vivid flashes of (generally unrecorded) homely memories, one has to add the very logic of its project to connect the far away with home in ways that the folk back home could understand. Sometimes this was done in a comforting sort of way, and sometimes it was not. To that you have to add that once home, the

anthropologist is likely to become homesick for that home away from home where being a stranger conferred certain powers. And so, home multiplies its temptations no less than it becomes a little sickening (Taussig 1992:149).

I still remember those dark starry evenings in Lamalera spent listening to our tiny short-wave radio, seeking a magical connection with home through news broadcast to us on *Radio Australia*. One night, there came across the airwaves a jazz tune called *Bronte Café*. Our hearts ached as we were instantly transported back to Sydney.

It is Sunday morning and, as usual, we are having our weekly breakfast at Bronte.<sup>1</sup> And just now, as I look from the café towards the sea, I catch a glimpse of a whaling boat returning to shore. Momentarily the beat of the waves breaking on the sand becomes the sound of the paddles clipping a rhythm on the wooden hull of the *téna*. Yet, in another second, the *téna* has transformed into an orange zodiac and the men have turned into bronzed life-savers. Then, on a sudden hot breeze, the scent of the clammy sea air reaches my nostrils: it is Sunday morning in Lamalera. I am cooking our rice on the kerosene stove. After breakfast Bapa Jek and I will wander down to the black sand beach, remembering, with a yearning that begins somewhere in the stomach and then grows outwards to reach my toes, the white sand of Bronte Beach and the feel of the cliff walk to Bondi Beach and back. And as we finish our breakfast and head off along those cliffs to the markets at Bondi Beach, my body remembers another walk and another market, and this time the pain begins with my legs which yearn for the rhythm of the long, hot, tiring Saturday morning walk to the market at Fulandoni.

If this sounds a little sickening, a nostalgic reverie, it nevertheless remains that this homesickening enterprise which invokes 'through mimetic magic the presence of the other home' is essential to ethnographic practice (Taussig 1992:149-150). It is through this remembering body, through this celestial flight to the other, that I am able to write. In conjuring the other home, a home immediately uncanny and yet so right, I feel both not at home and not not at home. Self is lost in this inbetween space. And yet, in these moments I sometimes feel a homecoming. This is a space of relationality, a magical space of belonging – even if it is a little giddy and sickening.

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<sup>1</sup> For many years Jean and I ritualistically had breakfast at Bronte Café on Sundays. When we returned from fieldwork we were to find that many more cafés had opened along this strip, and this overabundance of places to eat was for us – returning from a place where food is scarce – one of the most sickening aspects of home. Bronte Café, which for so many years was the only café at Bronte beach, has closed, but our ritual continues, played out in another of the cafés.



The powers of mimetic magic are a sensate reminder that ethnographic stories are written from this space of the inbetween, the shore which is neither sea or land, nor field or home. Yet the heroic imagining of anthropology insinuates that ethnographers bring home with them these sacred stories of strange, far away lands (even if, as sometimes is the case, our sites lie geographically close by). As Bachelard so aptly notes:

The sea hero always returns from distant places; he comes back from a beyond. He never speaks of the shore. The sea is fabulous because it comes first of all from the lips of the traveller who has taken the longest journey. It creates fables about what is distant. (1983:153)

Anthropological stories, like those of the sea hero, rarely speak of the shore. The exotic shore-lands of writing remain mostly veiled in silence, deleted from the text of the journey. As if these shifting sands are not stable enough to hold the mark of our prints, we prefer to imagine our words as treasures inscribed in jasper and diamond (see Calvino 1993:37).

According to this heroic tale, the anthropologist sets out already knowing the ending – which is to return, triumphantly, to the beginning. Yet the linearity of this transcendent journey is not the lived experience of ethnography – of fieldwork and writing. In setting out, there is no foretelling where the journey will lead. Journeys are not a line; they open into a space that offers labyrinthine ventures that can never return to the same beginning.

With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:151)

Because the meaning of the beginning of a journey can never be known, journeys can only ever be conceived in hindsight. We do not stride out on heroic quests, but rather seem to follow in the wake of stories. Beginnings are written after. Stories speak of what we have become. We can never tell the story of the beginning because not only can we no longer know what we were at the beginning, but we could not know if something were beginning, or what was beginning (Game and Metcalfe 1996:70).

Such a story of anthropology, one that always appears to be following itself, also suggests a very different author. In response to the notion of an author imagined as the creator of words, Roland Barthes wrote of the death of the author precisely because he sensed that a text is not a line of words. Stories are not the message from an author-God. The text is a textile; it is a fabric of quotations – myriad writings without origin (1986:53). The author does not come before words, as if feeding the book. This would be to speak of a relation of antecedence, the same fearful relation that demands that the Father comes always before the child, leaving the offspring to permanently hunt down the parent in their desire for self-constitution (Barthes 1986:52). And this is the same Hegelian relation which aspires to an anthropology that imagines itself standing separate from the other – observing from the vantage of the author-authority. But this is to forget the wise counsel of anthropology's own ancestors. As Lévi-Strauss writes:

The intention of the composer, ambiguous while still in the score...becomes actual, like that of myth, through and by the listener.... Thus the myth and the musical work are like conductors of an orchestra, whose audience becomes the silent performers. (1969:17)

These words suggest that origins, and ancestors, are not in the past but that they draw us forward. Origins are already in the present; they are always here waiting to be originated. Like the words quoted above, it is only in quoting these that they come alive, as if they are waiting there to be read again. Thus, as the quotation itself implies, it is not the author that originates words but the reader who, in opening themselves to these words, enables them to be originated. Or, as another ancestor of cultural theory writes:

Here we discern the total being of writing: a text consists of multiple writings, proceeding from several cultures and entering into dialogue, into parody, into contestation; but there is a site where this multiplicity is collected, and this site is not the author, as has hitherto been claimed, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which a writing is made; the unity of a text is not in its origin but in its destination, but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is...only that someone who holds collected into one and the same fields all of the traces from which writing is constituted. (Barthes 1986:54)

Readers are like the crossroads; they are passive, yet something is going on there. And finally, realising that this ethnography has never been solely my work, I can begin to let it go knowing that it will now live its own life, written by the audiences who read it, by markers, and by Lamalerans. This thesis which I alone do not create, but which is given to me, becomes once again a gift that can be given up – wandering off on its own journeys, borne by its readers.

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This ethnography ends with the shore, but this shore is not arrival. The shore is neither the land nor the sea yet at the same time it is both land and sea. It is the relationship of both and of neither – simultaneously everything and nothing: an inbetween. This relationship thus appears so intimate, ‘as close as between the sea and the strand’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968:130-131).

The words of Italo Calvino speak of precisely this when he describes in detail the strange magic of the shore:

The hump of the advancing wave rises more at one point than at any other and it is here that it becomes hemmed in white. If this occurs at some distance from the shore, there is time for the foam to fold over upon itself and vanish again, as if swallowed, and at the same moment invade the whole, but this time emerging again from below, like a white carpet rising from the bank to welcome the wave that is arriving. But just when you expect that wave to roll over the carpet, you realize it is no longer wave but only carpet, and this also rapidly disappears, to become a glinting of wet sand that quickly withdraws, as if driven back by the expansion of the dry, opaque sand that moves its jagged edge forward. (Calvino 1994:4)

And now, as these words fade away, I wonder if this is in fact the end. As I write these final words to this final chapter, I can feel the waves rise and wash upon the shore. And as the water seeps through the sand, even as the shore rushes down the beach to meet the waves and be washed out to sea, I am transported back to where I began. Carried again to the seas of my beginnings, I will rewrite my introduction informed by the life I have lead through this (w)rite of passage. And I ponder: when, in the processes of editing I return yet again to this end, will these words that I write at this moment be the ones with which this wandering journey finishes? Or will this thesis, as my markers read it, already have a new ending? In turn, would this ending already have written a new beginning?

And again I hear the voice of Jorge Luis Borges:

He told me his book was the Book of Sand, because neither the book nor the sand has any beginning or end. (1979:89)

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