Birthing the Anthropologist:
First Fieldwork in West New Britain

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ABSTRACT

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Going to the field to conduct research has a long tradition of being one of the critical professional markers that distinguishes anthropology from other areas in the social sciences. 'Writing up' the field experience – often months or years after the event - has tended to subsume the process of 'doing' fieldwork, perpetuating an allure of mystique surrounding how fieldworkers are able to attain their data when it is based upon relational interactions.

This thesis is a study of the process of moving through the field to gain both an insight into the Bariai of West New Britain, Papua New Guinea and to reflexively analyze the methodology used to navigate the liminal space of first fieldwork. I argue that first fieldwork serves to birth not only information and knowledge of the field but serves also as the birthing process for the transformation of student to anthropologist. This journey itself may lack a sense of authority required for the later writing up of the findings and therefore, similar to birthing, may also share a need for privileging certain memories and leaving others in the recesses of the mind or the creases of the field note. This thesis demonstrates that the experiential trials and tribulations associated with first fieldwork can be incorporated and enrich the authorial voice required to complete the gauntlet of becoming a true anthropologist.

For Madison and Morgan

who sent me off with nervous smiles

and welcomed me back into open arms.

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A Personal Mise-en-Scène

Everyone has their own set of personal myths, ways that we configure and make sense of how we arrive at today. I offer a brief summary of my journey from long ago university drop-out and under-employed receptionist to an aspiring anthropologist. As you read about this first fieldwork experience, it would seem reasonable to understand a bit about who is doing the writing.

I met Dr. Naomi McPherson, an anthropology professor at Okanagan University College in Kelowna British Columbia at my place of employment where she was a client. I was intrigued by what she told me about the discipline and fascinated with her fieldwork in Papua New Guinea (PNG). We would carry on lively discussions as she awaited her appointments; I scheduled them increasingly during the busiest times of the day in order to have time to talk with her, I must confess. When word got out that my place of employment was reconfiguring and my services would no longer be necessary, Naomi diplomatically suggested perhaps I was not being fulfilled in my present carnation and should consider returning to school. There I would have the opportunity to explore some of the ideas we discussed in our brief encounters more thoroughly. The ideas and questions, of which I had many, had remained unanswerable or unengaged in my day-to-day life as it stood. Was Elaine Morgan's theory of evolution discounted because of academic politics or insufficient data? - I had seen a show on PBS. And why did I find the book *Into the Heart: One Man's Pursuit of Love and Knowledge among the Yanomami* by Kenneth Good (1991) so fascinating yet the author morally unsettling? - I had heard him give an interview on CBC radio, and then purchased the book. A doubt, a small hesitation, some contemplation and a bit of reorganization and in three weeks, my

life changed. I began university and gained what I consider an extraordinary guide and mentor for life.

With my undergraduate degree close to the end some years later, Naomi mentioned she was returning to the field after an absence of some fifteen years. I asked if (perhaps I grovelled a bit...) she needed an assistant. After years of hearing stories, seeing pictures and hearing her speak *Tok Pisin*[1] with two cohorts[2], I knew I *had* to go with her. She told me it may be possible but only as a graduate student. After some deliberation and having recently been freed from the constraints of a 20 plus year marriage, I decided to return with my children to my natal family in Montreal to pursue a Masters degree. Concordia University seemed to be the ideal choice with its thesis-based Masters program, and Dr. Sally Cole - also from the same cohort as McPherson, Goulden and Thurston - was suggested as a good fit for my developing theoretical leanings.

Weeks prior to my children and I moving across the country I, in turn, was introduced to David and Dorothy Counts, professors emeritus at the McMaster University and Waterloo University, respectively and now adjunct professors at Okanagan University College. This professional couple had brought McPherson, Goulden and Thurston to the field all those years ago and would also be returning to PNG to conduct fieldwork in their particular village at the same time.

A Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant proposal to fully fund the fieldwork was submitted by Naomi and Dorothy which, though approved, received an A4 rating (no money left in the coffers, as I understand it) only

[1] Tok Pisin is one of three national languages in Papua New Guinea. The other two are Motu and English.
[2] Bil Thurston and Rick Goulden had done their fieldwork concurrently and in adjacent villages to Naomi. They are coincidently professors at Okanagan University College as well.

weeks before our departure. With little time to contemplate this turn of events, I thought back to my life prior to meeting Naomi. I thought back to the pivotal conversation when she responded to my weak resistance to returning to school at the ripe old age of 39. "Judy," she had said. "Hopefully one day you will be 50 years old. The question is: do you want to be 50 with or without a PhD?" That simple comment and rhetorical question, from that moment on, expanded in depth and scope into a sort of personal mantra enveloping all facets of my life. With this in mind, I forged ahead.

I will never be able to repay Naomi McPherson for her kindness, patience and mentorship. And I am grudgingly thankful for the 'gift' that can sometimes come with age, maturity and good fortune: the ability to exercise a good credit rating as a financial strategy to get to the field.

With the exception of proper names, all foreign words are italicized, and their English glosses are written in single quotes. Foreign words in the text are primarily from *Tok Pisin*, one of the three official languages of PNG or *Bariai*, the local vernacular spoken in Kokopo. Occasionally a term is enclosed in single quotes (e.g., 'big man') even though its foreign language equivalent is not given, to indicate that the term is originally derived from a non-English language. Italics are used to occasionally indicate my special or restricted usage of English (O'Brien, Denise & Sharon W. Tiffany 1984: xi).

The Voyage of Arrival

We round the corner of the point. Yes, perhaps that is what is the anthropologist does. But no, this is not the time for philosophical musings or theoretical contemplation. The moment has arrived, *this* defining point in time when the village of Kokopo, my home for the next three months and the site of my first fieldwork, finally graces my eyes.

The 'present' is a deceptively elusive reality my brain curiously and actively excludes. But my senses, the senses! They know a moment in time when they encounter one! Our faces are burnt from the sun, despite the silly hats that appear to be leftovers from the Katherine Hepburn's wardrobe in 'The African Queen', and the wind has coated our faces with an undecipherable mixture of sea salt and human sweat stinging the tongue into an awareness of this moment at hand. The eyes flicker from the glint off the backs of the tiny schools of fish, they delight in the azure blue of the coral waters and I pick out the tiny palm covered roofs of the houses neatly aligned along the coastal shores.

Moving dots come into focus as people gather on the beach in the cradle of the bay. I touch the bathtub-temperature water; feel the afternoon sun sizzle my open-sandaled toes the sun-screen had no chance to protect. We are still far from shore but they seem to know we are coming and are gathering. The ears are shocked into awareness as the outboard engine, an annoying buzz initially but transforming into a soothing drone during the past eight hours, is suddenly cut: and replaced by the sounds of men shouting directions, I assume to steer the boat clear of the jagged rocks below. I hear Naomi speaking. She is giving final instructions to me, to herself and to no one in particular. "When we land, be patient. I will be greeted by old friends. We will cry. We will cry for the time we have been apart. We will cry for all those who have died since I left. Hang in

there and be patient..." Crying, patience and 'hanging in there', amongst other things are skills I will learn and hone.

Naomi is returning to her place of first fieldwork. She is returning to this place where she too was initially brought by her professor, as she has brought me. Though she has come here to do research many times since, she is returning after more than a decade since her last stay, she is nervous for her own reasons, with her own set of questions, doubts, fears, anticipations and joys. That too is a wonderful story, but it is not mine. But I am here because of her.

Introduction

It is hard to reconcile the complexities of fieldwork from the neatly spaced lines and dissertations of most ethnographic monologues. The exegesis analyzes the dynamics most often and, if well done, in an organized and methodical pattern that may belie the process of the field experience itself. And no doubt this procedure may in fact be the case – where the field and the writing mirror one another - for the veteran ethnographer who has developed a template of self and system in the field.

But what of the initiate who possesses little more than an abstract thumbnail sketch of the pent up hopes and dreams of crossing the barrier from apprentice to practitioner? Likewise, while there has been a move to situate the ethnographer within the text, the mastery of the narrative often spills backwards into the description wherein problems and constraints of the field are (re)presented as puzzles, challenges or quests to be solved or at least resolved by the end of the text. There is a tension between the lived experience and writing up the findings. There is strain in turning from 'guest' in the field to 'host' of the ethnography and the search for creating order out of disorder.

My thesis is my tale of first fieldwork. It is the handling and the handlers of anthropology and anthropologists. It is an exploration of discovery, the development (and potential dangers of not developing) relationships and most centrally, opening up a window into the less examined space of how an embodied person comes to be able to have an at least partial picture of another culture. In this instance, my fieldwork took place during three months spent in PNG. Though the majority of my time was spent in the village of Kokopo, West New Britain, PNG with the Bariai people, where modernity,

isolation and indigenous life-ways mingle, co-exist and sometimes collide, the voyage into the village informed and moulded the research as well.

What is about to unfold here are the relationships with and to my host community as well as the process of adaptation as I search for and discover ways of inclusion into the culture of the Bariai village. In the process of negotiating a position – and perhaps more accurately, being negotiated – within a community, I begin to find out about how the community constitutes itself and its members. In the process of discovering my positioning I begin to comprehend that of others. I sought vainly to seek out a research topic that I thought would be worthy of a master's thesis – with all of the expectations and seriousness indoctrinated unto me as a student. I left Canada thinking I would study birthing in Bariai. This was not to be.

In the end, it was the lived experience, not the self-conscious data collection that offered up the most coherent analysis of my three-months of work. The data collection segment of social science research that privileges science, of course, has its place in the following pages. It rounds off and fills in some of the gaps. But in the end, it is the 'social' in social science, the process of finding and writing about my ever-changing position in PNG, which offered up the most profound information. The thesis unfolds in a manner representative of the experience. That is, the story emerges from vignettes, bits and pieces that will call forth the unevenness of discovery located within first fieldwork. The literary tact is one that gains a richness in the practice by exploring entering the field, discovering the depth and limits of the field created and the conclusions as to the links and discontinuities of the experience. I will argue that George E. Marcus's discussion of

mise-en-scène, rapport and complicity are also a process as well as a means of conceptualizing the relationships to and with the field. And lastly, perhaps after all the thesis is about birthing - or at least an exposition of a transformative process to a new life on the other side of first fieldwork

Thoughts on Flying

My mind cannot be trained on the moment; it flits everywhere but in the 'now'. It jumps back nine days to the beginning of the trek in earnest, when the eve of my departure is marked by a Montreal spring snowstorm. Even then, I was trying to envision the tropical climate that now overwhelms me. Those tropical imaginings distracted me from the series of protocol and procedures ad nauseam of air travel and jet-setting. The intensity of colour, climate, sights, smells and utter personal displacement sends me time-travelling back to past contemplations of my privileged position as a globe trotter. The palm-treed village I so anxiously await and planned for is before my very eyes. Yet oddly, I escape back to retracing my thoughts of the trip thus far.

I momentarily allow myself an indulgence of imagining I am the intrepid anthropologist off seeking rarefied knowledge cloaked in the uncommon elixir of high adventure, daring and entitlement while clutching onto my scholastic experience thus far as tightly as any imagined holy book. This whimsical mental extravagance is short-lived. Images of the self-sufficient and exalted traveller seep away, sapped from my musing, as the reality of the endless 'hurry-up-and-wait' of airports and airplanes begins. I am in the care of the air transportation system. The freedom and awe experienced moments ago dissipates and now splays open irony and the romantic fiction of the glaring, unfolding new reality. In fact, my created identity and any other identity which I may have thought I possessed is only beginning a dissolution process that will continue for the next three months.

I begin to ponder the notion of 'freedom' instead on that spring morning in 2003. I ponder the 'freedoms' of travelers, in the belly of the SARS epidemic, the war against Iraq and post 911 mania, where people are free to move: **if** they have lots of money, **if** they obediently stand in line after endless line, **if** they have all of the necessary government-issued paperwork, and **if** they behave in a submissive and appropriate manner pleasing the airlines, sundry security agencies, corporations and states. Those are the general 'freedoms'. For others, it is a fate of birth, despite their relative wealth that will determine their fate. They have the freedom to travel relatively unmolested **when** they are the right colour, **when** they are the right gender, **when** they speak the correct language, without an accent to betray them. I contemplate this as I move through endless electronic gadgets, checks and balances. Adventure and work aside, I am in the care and control of others.

My mind fast-forwards through the two days spent in the air, only momentarily touching down to change to five other planes, receive passport stamps in four new countries and fly through 18 different time zones. The changes are only subtly punctuated by the varying airport scents and the endless hours of artificial and stale smells of aircraft. The consistency of navigating my desires and needs through the rules and regulations established and re-established with every launch and touchdown, with every security check and customs border, foreshadows with reliable accuracy the entirety of the fieldwork experience. This is nothing like the lessons from my sacred anthropological texts I carry in my head. On the other hand, perhaps it is.

I did not think it would feel this way.

Port Moresby

The first two days are spent sequestered in the nation's capital of Port Moresby (population 188, 089 census 1990). A PNG website had warned us to avoid all public or private transportation and trust only the vehicle sent expressly for us from the hotel where we are registered. The website (the kind normally used to promote tourism and the goodwill of a nation) notes frequent car-jackings routinely take place on the seven kilometer strip of highway between airfield and lodgings. In unadorned frankness, it cites the capital as extremely dangerous and inhospitable to visitors. Running the gauntlet from the airport to the gated and chicken-wired hotel, we remain holed up 'for our own safety and protection' from the 'lawless' and 'violent' city. Running the gauntlet from the airport, I have the surreal sensation of moving through a post-apocalyptic, post-capitalist world gone terribly awry.

There is a dichotomy etched into the landscape. The living conditions of what appears as perverted, disjointed and disfigured replicas of rural village life and squatter settlements within walking distance of high-rise apartments consume all the land not ensconced in barricaded and enclosed encampments of opulence (Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993). There are people inhabiting this terrain: the greatest mass walking the roads, attending or hawking goods at open markets, or dwelling in the houses pieced together with a mixture of bush material, cast-off lumber and discarded metal. While their numbers account for the overwhelming majority, the wide-open spaces where they circulate appear somehow empty and misused. I see around me (from the safety of the speeding car sent by the hotel to gather us up) the conceived, miscarried then made-

barren, misplaced dreams of my citified world I recently left behind, strangely perverted. Buildings and compounds occasionally punctuate the left and right of unclogged road systems.

Behind the steering wheels and walls reside the privileged minority. The elite live so delicate an existence it would appear they would instantly vaporize without the perpetual encapsulation of car, fence or compound. Their numbers are hard to fathom, given their seeming need for protection, privacy and seclusion.

The edifices are attended to by what might be called the excluded middle, their numbers appearing to be in excess of the elite and the properties they protect. Teams of security personnel, occasionally armed, stand guard at many of the gates, most commercial establishments or pace the length of the fences and walls. Their numbers are astounding in relation to the number of properties and inhabitants located in the privileged few.

There is no pretending or denying our relative position as we approach and gain speedy admission to the barbed-wired fortress masquerading as our hotel. We remain holed up 'for our own safety and protection' from the 'lawless' and 'violent' city. There are armed police and private security continually circulating inside the compound of the hotel. It is only sheer ignorance that leads us merely to feel queasy from our confinement but safe during our time there. It is not until our trip home that we are informed that the night before we had first arrived in Port Moresby, there had been a 'major disturbance' with guns drawn and bottles broken for weapons in a barroom brawl in our hotel. The danger seeps despite security. The conflicted groups, we are told: *the military and the*

police force. There is no further explanation offered or available. Reality is never neat and tidy.

Port Moresby, the national capital, is in such a state of dislocation that it has been ranked the number one worst place to live in the world out of a possible 130 cities surveyed in 2002, beating out even such centres known for high crime rates and violence as Johannesburg, Manila and Bogotá (Windybank and Manning 2003:7). The average company pays out 8% - 10% of its gross earnings on private security and losses from theft (ibid). I note the pageantry of uniforms in the landscape and it rivals the adornment of billboards back home. They are ever-changing fixtures of the city.

In the 1960s, Port Moresby was a white colonial town with Australians numbering approximately ten thousand. In 2002, a mere twenty-eight hundred expatriates remained. Rural-to-city migration of mostly semi-educated youth abandoning village life have been drawn by the promises of modernization and employment, work, opportunity and adventure. This group now outnumbers the elite by one hundred fifty-to-one (Nibbrig 2002:39-40). More often than not, they find a disconnection from home, unemployment and misadventure with newly formed groups of peers bereft of stabilizing societal norms.

Even among some of the young elite (those fortunate to be pursuing an education at the University of Papua New Guinea), domestic violence and uneasy marital reconfigurations no longer based on *kastom* and *taim bipo*, Tok Pisin for 'the traditional generalized past' are rampant, as they adjust and adapt to *taim nau* 'the modernizing present' (Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993:178)

Port Moresby is a tarnished reality-check overshadowing any glimmer of optimism this post-colonial nation may have held as a concept. Poverty, crime and entitlement are implicit in every action in this recently-minted nation. While the final destination of my fieldwork is far from this experience, there are historic, economic and social interdependencies integral to any understanding of rural life that conditions any fieldwork experience. There is a multiplicity of reasons to interrogate the modernity of the newly-formed state of PNG through the lens of Port Moresby and its relationship to Kokopo. These links are located in the contemporary and historical creation of third world countries, 'underdeveloped' nations and specifically PNG. It is a brief and cautionary tale of the dangers and shortcoming of imperialist 'catch and release' programs.

Massaging and Reconfiguring PNG into Western Notions of Legibility

This section outlines and contextualizes some of the outside and often barely visible pressures exerted on the Bariai by presenting a cursory history of national development, while examining the presumptive goals it was meant to deliver, and assessing the contemporary condition of the nation-state, as a whole, while linking the national with the local.

Recent debate surrounding heterogeneous sites of production of knowledge highlights the inadequacies of contextualizing the field site as a closed cultural system of practice. Ignoring the larger context assumes there is access or direct recourse to the realities we study located solely within our interactions and communication with the

subject. This notion can no longer be supported once the illusion of the subjects as the contained embodiment of 'a culture' is addressed (Fabian 2001:77). While the strength and focus of anthropology remains firmly located within the relationships developed with particular situated subjects, in this case in one particular location, both the anthropologist and the subjects have "a sense of being *here* where major transformations are under way that are tied to things happening simultaneously elsewhere but not having a certainty or authoritative representation of what those connections are" (Marcus 1999:97).

While perhaps the mental maps of subject and anthropologist may differ in their theoretical configuration of the source and force of external pressures, together we share a bond, a complicity of ignorance as to the encompassing effect of outside forces. How external forces have shaped PNG as a nation state is to be addressed immediately. Some of the strategies used to work out uncertainties in village life will follow. How I have chosen to frame the unknown and unknowable, is what you are currently reading.

In this regard, a partial and privileged thumbnail sketch of some of the external forces exerting pressures on the field site is in order at this time, though. Marcus asserts that not including a mapping of cultural formation within the research design trivialized the particular ethnographic study, resulting in an incomplete project which can no longer be supported within the intellectual environment (1999:97). The insertion of the larger context of societal pressures becomes necessary to help triangulate the relationship of the encounter as PNG (as a nation-state) may afford me some legibility and partial historic reference points of familiarity. Its unique configuration is also and only at the fringes of my fieldwork.

What is currently the nation state of PNG has undergone rapid reconfiguration and acceleration of multi-faceted changes in the past few centuries. European contact ushered in colonization beginning in the 19th century, and in 1975 PNG was internationally recognized as a sovereign state[3].

The history of the territory now encompassing PNG is rife with complex dilemmas of reportage. Prior to colonization, there were interrelated islands of varying sizes with populations often dynamically inter-connected by trade, marriage and/or warfare. There is little consensus as to the number of culture/linguistic groups in PNG contemporarily[4], let alone an estimated or educated guess of pre-contact. As a non-literate part of the world, groups inhabiting this area held their collective pre-contact past in myths, stories and ritual. These were ignored or discounted by the European chroniclers. The perspective of the explorers muted the voices of the many diverse peoples (Sillitoe 2000:14). Framing the area alternately (and more often than not) simultaneously into a 'useful' landscape that ranged from a natural resource inhabited by pesky and potentially dangerous sub-humans, a source of cheap labour, and/or innocent 'primitives' in need of Christian salvation, history was written by the invaders (Sillitoe 2000:14). Fredrik Barth points out that boundaries (and I would suggest history as well) are *our* concepts used for *our* analytical purposes, potentially having little to do with the perspective of the peoples anthropologists engage in the field (in Sillitoe 2000:34).

[3] While perhaps by the letter of the law this may be the case, one could easily argue there is little room for self-determination in PNG at the present (Windybank and Manning 2003).
[4] Gewertz & Errington 1999 contend that there are 600 language/culture groups, Sillitoe 2000 suggests 700.

History became a program, written and defined by industrial modes of production, with Western economies as the ultimate models, judges and juries (Esteva 1999:9). According to Vincent Tucker, the emergent 'world-view' is nothing more than an inscribed cultural code, structured around economic principles and practices of Western domination (1999:2). However, in order to provide an overview of the current dynamics at work in the country as a whole, a short examination of the area should take place within particular constraints which historically confined indigenous peoples to the roles of passive 'primitives' unknowingly awaiting evolution and animation as they were penned into colonial history[5].

> Primitive inhabitants, immense swamps, and a deadly
> climate combined to provide a protective wall around New Guinea
> which long thwarted intervention and even exploration.
> [van der Veur 1966: 1]

This observation serves not only as the scripted gateway to the book *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries: From Torres Strait to the Pacific* published in 1966, but also offers a partial explanation, sentiment and perspective as to why the early European explorers and their respective colonizing states were relatively slow to incorporate PNG into their systems of domination, resource extraction and inexpensive labour pools.

Tales dating back as far as the 17th and 18th centuries described acts of cannibalism, head-hunting, sodomy and sorcery. Fear and the remote location limited systematic contact, trading and labour exploitation to periphery and coastal areas (for the most part) of PNG until well into the 20th century (Sillitoe 2000:14-18).

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[5] That being said, when we do not conflate the people of this constructed country, the question begs to be asked, which histories are representative of and relevant to the current struggles of cultural identities in relation to the nation?

Formal colonization processes were not instated until the last years of the 19th century, initially by Germany. Later it was overtaken by a reluctant Great Britain for military and defensive purposes, in an attempt to strategically protect what remained of the shrinking British Empire from the perceived threats of Germany, Japan, France and Russia (Sillitoe 2000:24). The now geographically-delineated territory of Papua was ultimately handed over to neighbouring Australia in 1907. Australia dispatched and seized German New Guinea at the outbreak of World War I (Sillitoe 2000:27). Ironically, Australia was newly sprung from its own colonial past and still cutting its nationalistic teeth as a colonial federation (McPherson 2001:4).[6] [7] World War II intimately introduced many PNG villages to the ravages of mechanized war.

In Kokopo, there is a sunken navel vessel dangerously close to the shore in the cove. Other remnants can be found through out the village and in many of the other villages I visited[8]. Despite the ease of which we can read about what is euphemistically called 'The Pacific Theater' of WW II, in many instances this theatre became an 'interactive' reality, replete with both 'friendly' and 'hostile' invasions and retreats. The sudden confrontation of a war from afar played out on village beaches and in communities, once on the colonial fringe. The onslaught of hundreds of thousands of

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[6] Australia's colonial past in contrasted sharply and contained strikingly divergent settlement patterns including mass immigration, eviction, displacement and genocide of aboriginal peoples (Armitage 1998:16-17); a past Australia chose not to repeat in Papua New Guinea on a large scale.

[7] The mandate in fact, was set up to 'protect the native population and supervise its gradual advancement' and to regulate the 'blackbird' industry, a practice where plantations would capture and indenture natives as labours occasionally wiping out the male population of coastal villages.

[8] The war landed in Kokopo undoubtedly, but I have no further information in this regard. It can be assumed that perhaps there may be a few remaining elders who witnessed the war played out in the village, though I never had an opportunity to discuss this matter with any of them. In Kokopo, as well as most of the villages I visited, hollow torpedo casings were used as the bell to call villages to local assemblies and meetings and various other pieces of metal could be seen in homes reconfigured from their former function into the fabric of everyday live.

troops and millions of tons of equipment left enduring scars throughout the islands (White and Lindstrom 1989:4).

Despite the carnage and upheaval, the war also afforded many natives their first opportunity to interact with what they saw as more 'generous and friendly' Westerners in the guise of U.S. soldiers, some of whom were dark skinned, as well (Sillitoe 2000:27; Smith 2002:60-61).

It is for this reason that the people of Kokopo were not completely taken aback by my darker complexion. And it is for this reason my skin colour was not a marker of race. I was from 'away', far away, and therefore categorized as *waitpela*, 'white fellow'[9].

Swallowing it up.... Colonial Rule

The post World War II era brought Papua and New Guinea together to form one territory under a United Nations trusteeship administered by Australia under the internationally mandated and watchful eye of the United Nations. This international recognition and legitimization imposed a self-conscious effort towards 'positive' economic and educational development and native welfare (Errington & Gewertz 1995:12), as well as preparatory measures to disassemble colonial rule and prepare Papua New Guinea for eventual self-government (Smith 2002:61). Along with the conditioning process, adding to the West's social discourse of 'the primitive' came the economic ranking of 'underdeveloped' nations, a category PNG seemed tailor-made for, amongst other colonial and post-colonial nations. This was succinctly captured in U.S. President

[9] There is a phonetic substitution of [p] for [f] in Tok Pisin for the lexemes borrowed from English.

Truman's second inaugural address in 1949, that in countries such as these, their "...economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a *threat to them and to more prosperous areas...*" (Gelinas 1998:7, emphasis added).

... And Spitting it Out: Independence (?)

Although plans for self-rule proceeded, notions of and for independence were being massaged into an adjacent paradigm requiring less hands-on participation by the West but allowing access to raw materials or cheap human resources. This was being accomplished while simultaneously cultivating an internal dependence on expensive imports; a strategy that disciplines, regulates and controls with greater efficiency than any form of direct rule, barring perhaps slavery (Nandy 1999:269).

In his work on globalization, Appadurai humanizes and problematizes this global movement as "a permanent traffic in ideas of peoplehood and selfhood" (2002:47) necessary for successful technological transfers of information and ideologies to create imagined social links between strangers necessary to the project of nationalism. Where Appadurai humanizes, problematizes and generalizes global ecumene, Gelinas politicizes and categorizes incommensurate structures built into post-colonial nations. The constructions of 'underdeveloped' countries have several characteristics, according to Gelinas, including financial and monetary dependence, an overseas-oriented economic system, national economic dislocation, and the subordination of elites to foreign interests (1998:22).

The notion of 'development' took on new meanings and understandings when U.S. President Truman announced in 1949 that those parts of the world that did not

participate in industrialism, capitalism and nationhood (as did the Western world) were 'underdeveloped', in need of protection and required a helping hand to achieve advancement (Esteva 1999:7). Development in the form of aid is supposed to be the answer for 'third world' countries in general and PNG, in this instance, specifically. This 'answer' never seems to provide the expected or desired results. Certainly, this appears to be the case with three abandoned, thus failed development projects[10] I saw or discussed with the villagers in Kokopo. While many scholars critical of development discourse acknowledge failure of development attempts, the explanations often dismiss the process itself as the problem.

Subsistence farming is reformulated as a lack of a marketplace; indigenous technology viewed as a sign of a deficiency in production and rural populations, an available and 'pre-productive' labour force ripe for the picking. The development model frames its theoretical perspective within the myopic paradigm of the commodification of land, labour and exchange (Scott 1998).

Within the narrow focus of an economic and cultural construct, the question begs to be asked, what are the goals of development? The rhetorical and practical applications diverge. Rhetoric espouses a prognosis of productive citizens who, given the opportunity, training and tools, will choose to emulate the behaviour and ideology of Western culture. They are merely not 'developed' enough on the social evolutionary chain to realize such aspirations. Bob Sutcliffe views this perspective metaphorically as a journey upon which some nations perceive themselves farther along than others (1999:135). James C. Scott

[10] There were remnants of a concrete dock, a water system meant to deliver water to the village and I heard of an aborted system to educate local women in midwifery. All projects have since been abandoned.

demonstrates how cultural legibility of a nation-state, or in the case of development, the funding state or institution, is the measuring-stick by which 'cultural advancement' is calculated (1998).

The uncritical acceptance of the myth of development as a natural law - an objective reality - clouds the potential realization that this view simultaneously devalues all other world-views and dismissed them as 'primitive and backwards' as well as 'irrational or naïve' (Tucker 1999:2). The rhetoric also allows for the condensing of varying characteristics, histories and cultures to be homogenized as a generic 'other' while also offering up a negative comparative standard from which Western societies can admire their elevated position and stature (Hall 1995:186).

The majority of development aid for Papua New Guinea comes from Australia; in fact, Australia has provided 19 billion dollars to PNG since independence was granted in 1975.

Peter Sillitoe argues that while the majority of the PNG population are materially poor, exceedingly few live in poverty and many lead full, contented lives within their own cultural perspectives (2000:45). Subsistence farming accounts for 80% of the nutritional needs of PNG and forms the backbone of the survival of the country (Windybank and Manning 2003:3). Regardless of the success of this particular strategy of sustenance, its dependence on traditional wisdom, skill and an egalitarian, stateless society is associated with a primitive past, outmoded by modernist systems of efficiency and legibility from the top down in a hierarchal system. These indigenous means of survival are not represented within the models of modernity but as a value judgement,

and therefore are made invisible in economic calculations[11] (Bocock 1995:182). This is why an assessment of a population can be described as living below the poverty line, presenting a value judgement of 'lack' regardless of actual circumstance. The problems facing PNG in regard to technological development and lack of material goods are incommensurate with issues of similarly rated poverty-stricken areas such as India and South America, yet statistical analyses often interpret economic data as equivalent (Sillitoe 2000:10).

Accompanying me to the field, along with the luggage I hand over and reclaim at every culturally modified border, is this mental baggage I carry with me to the field. I bring this baggage theoretically. My baggage arrives to witness and participate in a reality, a three-dimensional animation of all of the complexities and richness hitherto laid flat and tidy within models of discourse, pre-digested and re-presented. And with more similarities than I would care to admit, I bring historical baggage. With more similarities than I would care to admit, I come sharing some of the naivety of the unwary 1st world tourist deconstructed in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988). I come to pick and choose the pieces of PNG that suit my needs. I absorb that which I can understand and leave the rest for those who will follow me, just as those who preceded me have done. Lastly, I bring ironic baggage. With a history perhaps shared with Kincaid, whereby, by fate or fortune (depending on one's outlook), I too come from a world that has been swallowed up by colonial forces that first encompassed, then displaced and finally, reconfigured my ancestors in relation to a larger world.

[11] See Marshall Sahlins discussion of 'primitive affluence' (1972).

It is my turn now. The threshold of anthropology lies immanent as I begin to unfold this particular story, to create my own partial understanding of PNG, fieldwork and ethnographic writing.

Kimbe

We forge another mad taxi ride from hotel compound to the Port Moresby airport. A quick plane ride across the strait and we land in Kimbe, the provincial capital of West New Britain. Here again we are privy to the services of a private driver compliments of Mahonia Na Dari, the academic research compound where we stay as we shop for the 'cargo' for the field. With its immaculately maintained grounds and widely interspersed cabins, we have a sense of being the only guests there.

We remain in Kimbe for three surreal days of shopping for supplies and other imagined necessities for the 'bush'. Our driver, whom we come to know as Mike, patiently accompanies Naomi, Dorothy and David Counts and me into town each day, fetching us at an appointed time and acting as 'bodyguard' for our stash as we accumulate goods but need to venture yet again into one more store. We shop non-stop, moving from store to store at a pace marking us as people with a mission. We are indeed a bizarre sight; an uneasy, agitated visual incongruence, out of step with the tropical pace and flow of those around us. My sense of identity(ies), already tenuous at best, relentlessly continues to evaporate as I walk the streets, shopping, hauling and fetching cargo back to the truck. We are strangers who stick out like sore thumbs. Collectively and individually, we are an anomalous grouping. Dorothy and David are spry elders, both still agile of mind and body and both possessing a gift of the gab and the relaxed forwardness

which betrays their American roots. Naomi possesses poise and organizational skills befitting a woman I fondly tease as having the ability to 'herd cats'. As the 'youngster' and freshman in the group, and similar to a younger sibling who has convinced the elders to let her tag along, I try to make myself as useful as possible, providing the 'legs' and 'back' whenever possible. I never wander far, as my linguistic and social skills limit my range.

I move through town, a place more intimate and comfortably safe in comparison to Port Moresby. There is a reflection of me as alien in the eyes of those who move familiarly here. I am strange to the townspeople. I am unfamiliar to myself. It should be stated here that in Canada and elsewhere in the West, I have never been acknowledged or recognized as Caucasian. How unsettling to find my dark skin, a public marker so filled with embedded meaning elsewhere, is not the marker that denotes my difference here. Any naïve hopes I may have had embarking on this voyage, hopes that my hyphenated Afro Canadian dark skin[12] could possibly be useful as a common point of connection, are dashed and usurped by other cosmemics: my dress and mannerisms. My ethnic lineage is muted for the first time. It is my cultural background addressing those who witness my presence.

In PNG, 'race' is not necessarily defined by skin colour. In a foundational modern myth of the Maring people of the PNG highlands, a villager has a dream where he goes back to his natal village to find it transformed into a thoroughly modern city, replete with food imported by plane. The citizens tell him they have become "white," though to the eye, they are as dark as ever (LiPuma 2001:2). This "whiteness" reflects a notion of

[12] Skin colour is so complex is it not? I am in fact a light-skinned Afro-Canadian.

"others" who can summon goods, live without kin, revel in privacy and stand outside the circle of indigenous powers and influences" (2001:116). There is no doubt then; I am *waitpela*.

I share perhaps a common dilemma encountered by another 'hyphenated' woman, Dorinne Kondo. She is a Japanese American who conducts her fieldwork in Tokyo, Japan. She addresses this fragmentation of personhood as a problem wherein she must simultaneously assert, submit, negotiate and create multiple identities while doing her work (1990). This dissolution and fragmentation is not so straightforward in the moment.

Only when I return from the field with the perspective of time and contemplation is it possible to analyze the wash of discombobulation with the eye of a disinterested researcher. Field notes, while crucial for the exercise, remain the clues and cues of the maze of the moment. As Margery Wolf remarks they are just "notes on one more exciting event in an exotic environment in which I found myself living" (1992:3). It is not until one returns from the field that the wonder and awe of the moment can subside long enough for one to pull back and disengage from the experience just enough to turn the collection of stories, impressions and jotted-down bits into working material to be translated into working data, rearranged in order to be shared in academic format within a particular intellectual community. The progression (in my case) happens slowly. The process itself is necessary, yet not commonly emphasized as a privileged part of the process, despite the fact it informs the end result at every turn.

We are perhaps missionaries? These would be the most familiar *waitpela* to grace Kimbe. The clothes we have chosen to enter and leave the field in are dowdy by our

standards. Skirts with hems just below the knee or longer, no pants or shorts are worn in public for Naomi and me. Dorothy flaunts gender convention and sports a pair of hiking shorts, as does David. We are rich and we move with a different rhythm.

Hindsight will again grace us later when we are gently informed by Mike the driver that our behaviour in town has been, if not in bad taste, most certainly in poor form. Power shopping followed by the opulent display of our bags containing our loot in the town square is a *faux pas* from any vantage point here. According to *pasin bilong tumbuna*, or *kastam* (ancestral ways) one might only display abundance prior to some form of distribution. According to *taim nau* (the modernizing present) or *taim bilong mani* (the age of money), affluence is barricaded behind fences and security guards, carefully separated from those less able to participate as fully as those who have it.[13] Ah, but we had work to do, schedules to keep, budgets and time constraints from which we could not stray. Cultural sensitivity and ethnocentric mind-mapping collide.

At the end of each day, as we wait for Mike the driver to appear at the appointed time, we alight in the town square, a city block of ragged trees with rutty roots posing as park benches. We begin the 'work of the field' in this location. Using a passive (but effective, tried and true) anthropologically rigorous method to locate potential town dwellers, who may have come originally from Bariai, we 'hang out' hoping to find and identify 'our' *wantoks*[14] in order to get a potential preview to recent developments in the village. We hang out in the town square, waiting to be approached and Naomi conversing

[13] McPherson presents an interesting perspective of being 'othered' by the white expatriate community in PNG despite being white herself. Her comportment did not conform to *their* expectations (1999:24-25).
[14] Wantoks are an important social identifier based on the premise of an expanded ethnic affiliation (Knauft 1999:189)

with those who come near. This seemingly haphazard approach is in fact highly effective, as there are few foreigners, ex-pats or Caucasians remaining in Kimbe today. Most white permanent residents are known to the indigenous population and are rarely seen mingling or loitering (as we are) in the square.

Eventually we find *wantoks*, - people related loosely to our final destination. Our transportation is firmed up, a boat and crew hired for the final leg of the voyage. I have not anticipated the two-hour boulder-studded trek in the back of a pickup truck as we are jolted through miles of palm-oil plantations. From a non-descript riverbank we embark on a river run of equal length. There are two boats, each with outboard motors that stutter, start then fail time after time for the first part of the journey. It is unsettling as I remember the initial excitement my friends and family had for my upcoming adventure which, as the departure date grew closer turned to trepidation, then verbalizations as to the state of my sanity. What *was* I thinking coming here? Now, in the middle of 'who knows where'- knowing where I was on a map seemed irrelevant at this point - as we glide through the water flanked by jungle on both sides and I, looking for crocodiles...[15] Naomi turns to me with a mischievous grin. "You know," she says, "These guys could slit our throats, throw us to the crocs, take our cargo and no one would even come looking for us for three months?" I am sure there is palpable horror crossing my face, as my metaphoric rose-coloured glasses are ripped from my eyes. She continues right away, serving up an applied lesson in local connections and interactions. "I have 'family' here. The *wantok* system is all about connections and relationships. We have entrusted

[15] See Hortense Powdermaker for thoughts on fear in the field (1966:51, 58-59).

ourselves to them and they have taken us on with all of the responsibility that entails. I have been incorporated into the *wantok* system. We will be alright".

Subjectivities

The question of my personal identifiers changes as I move from urban to rural settings. In Port Moresby, those who surmise my origins often thought them to be perhaps 'Pacific'. I am seen as from 'away' but not as white. Those who comment saw me as Western but not European. In the city of Kimbe, origins seem to lose all currency and the privileged cosmemic identifiers leads locals to assume we are missionaries, after which other details are irrelevant. In "the bush" this alters substantially. Our presumed affiliations in a greater world context are vague and suspect.

At the village level, I am introduced and remain as an assistant to and student of Naomi. Though conscious while going into the field that my skin might be an initial novelty, it did not occur to me that my age, gender and marital status would create enigmas in relationship to my being a student; a student with the means to travel afar and one who could/would leave her children with relatives to do so. Initially unaware of the long-term ramifications of this, two considerations presented themselves. Explaining that institutions such as banks and the government would lend me the money to do my work is suspect and for the most part seemed incomprehensible, while leaving my son in his father's care and my daughter with my parents at least made some sense.

I am situated in a location tethered by my soft, citified feet and constrained by lack of accessible transport. For three months, most undoubtedly the first time in adult memory, I have lost the ability to circulate (for social, cultural and physical reasons) at

will. Dependency rules my every step, every movement (including bowel, for the first two weeks) I make away from my house. Yet, simultaneously, I had 'cargo': manufactured time-saving devices, store-bought city foodstuffs, books-paper-pens-gadgets and more clothing than perhaps any one family put together[16]. The overt tensions of dependency and materiality are never far from my conscience; but conversely, nor are the more subtle connotations of culture and power.

Renato Rosaldo's analysis in *Truth and Culture: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (1989) highlights a relevant entry point to begin to outline subjectivities located in the field. He addresses the usefulness of multiple subjectivities as a means of getting at perspectives hitherto unexamined. By using the example of Jean Briggs' ethnography *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family,* he points to how her inclusion of feelings she experiences in the field directly impacts on her relationships, and therefore creates dialogues which give her insight into the emotional lives of the Inuit (1989:175-178). Briggs' socially inappropriate behaviour of requiring both physical and mental space away from her informants elicits tensions which, once out of the field, she constitutes her position as that of struggling-to-cope anthropologist in the field (1970). It is the authorial voice that braves exposing some of the realities of the field – often left tucked away in journals and fieldnotes – and turns it into an analytic discussion as important points of enquiry and intersection.

The participant observer is often improvising: thrust into a dance of balancing the analyst in the field, an emotionally dishevelled sensory being or a zealous (partially)

[16] I packed as lightly as I possibly could, having been counselled by Naomi prior to entering the field. Despite my best efforts, I still had more clothes than most. There was some self-serving justification for this as I would leave most of my clothing behind in the form of gifts upon my departure.

immersed participant. Rosaldo argues including multiple subjectivities bring a depth and richness to ethnography otherwise missed and dismissed in more classical "disinterested scientist" models of the past (1989:169-170). As a launching point, Rosaldo deconstructs and neutralizes the Weberian hierarchical sources of knowledge by showing the benefits of consciously directing political rhetorical forms within literary strategies as a means to produce committed social analysis (1989:182-186). He illustrates "zones of friction" by bringing forth E.P. Thompson's use of multiple identities, Harold Conklin's neutral 'objective' stance, Floyd H. Flake's juxtaposition of political power and social subordinate positions, Geertz's confusion enmeshed in an inverse situation and Zora Neale Hurston's use of irony, to make cultural interpretation and social analysis "do new kinds of work" Ortner addresses (1999a:8).

Place and Space

This different kind of work suggested by Ortner allows me to think about the Bariai from two different perspectives. Arriving at my destination halfway around the world, by having access to and using many of the contemporary technologies and communication innovations, appears as a confirmation of the new global world. However, Kokopo is a place never pinpointed on global maps, occasionally flown over by aircraft and only intermittently the direct site for the exchange of resources for small amounts of cash. Merchants from beyond the reciprocal trade network of the Bariai, people extraneously involved in economic or nationalistic endeavours show up only when an insatiable invisible marketplace out-muscles the financial cost of getting to Kokopo. When their goals are sated or expired, they gather their goods, drop a pittance of cash and depart, leaving no room for commensurate relations. I hesitate but must

acknowledge an honorary membership in this group. My mobility and their relative 'situatedness' underscores how globalization is not about the free flow of goods and people, but premised on unequal webs in the world, "complex mobilities and uneven interconnections" as noted by Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (2002:4).

I would like to engage with George E. Marcus' discussion of the use of complicity as a "device for tracing of a certain critique... of the valorized understanding of fieldwork relationships from within the reigning figure of rapport to an alternative conception of fieldwork relationships in which the figure of rapport has lost much of its power as a regulative ideal" (1999:88). In addition, I will argue, the ethnographer's placement in the field, my placement in the field, can be seen both as the process of the experience and as a unifying conceptualization for the creation of ethnography (Jourdan 1997:3-4). That is to say, while in the field my organizing capacities conceptualized and engaged with the notions of mise-en-scène, rapport and complicity and their changing relationships to one another as the fieldwork relationships developed.

The voyage from home into the village *felt* like the staging of a production of which, as in theatre, one has no idea how it will be received. I proceed on some form of faith that I am about to, or at least aspire to, cross the magical threshold of anthropological inclusion by virtue of having the opportunity to finally go into the field. Settling into the field, the pleasantries of polite meetings with some, and the wary curiosities of others, the establishment of rapport, in all its hues and shadings - reference, relationship, connexion, correspondence, conformity – and the darker side - mesmeric action exercised by one person on another (Marcus 1999:86), relationships are promising

as I attempt to establish rudimentary social graces whereupon an approving smile or nod of recognition of my efforts is taken as a *rapprochement, tout court.*

Once there, I see the development of relationships as being both crucial and hopefully meaningful for all parties, while not able to lose sight of simultaneously my relative position and the forwarding of my initial cause and goal. The relative ease of my journey there and the improbable likelihood of a villager making the inverse trek is privileged by a history of colonial and post-colonial relations (and this occasionally paralyzes me, I admit). Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson point out it is not exploration, colonization nor the advent of anthropological enquiry that are the animating factors of history or trade relations (2002:67). It is the past constraints of the scientific model, the fiction of conceptual framing and the unproblematized "us" that have long been misguided, underlying assumptions skewing the 'results' (as argued with examples of myths of a homogeneous England (2002:69) and an ahistoric nomadic !Kung (2002:73). Therefore my situation and identity in Kokopo carries with it 'historical baggage' that must be contextualized within a greater framework of time and any preconceived notions I may have of self.

Once planted in the field site, my relationship to 'outside' is reversed. People, commodities and stories move around me; sometimes in sight but more often than not, out of my view. Only then, from my restricted vantage point, can I witness this project as having less to do with geographic locations than with conceptual places of interaction. My informants and other locals move about, by land and sea, in canoes and by foot; travelling to neighbouring villages, islands out at sea; and, occasionally to the places

outside my understanding. In this movement I saw the 'group' I came to study as 'uncontainable', as though grains of sand slipping through my fingers.

In the process of leaving the field I come to the realization that while there is a hope or at least a possibility the connections have some significance for all parties concerned (my informants and me) the links are a series of partial connections and unknowable disconnections between all of us, including the readership of this work.

The last point I would like to raise is that it may be difficult or perhaps impossible to find authority to 'write up' in the field. Just living through and reacting to the new experience becomes a full-time occupation in those moments. Panic set in, in this regard, having read then forgotten, Barbara Gallatin Anderson's assertion that:

> ...first fieldwork... is not characterized by the orderly progression that is eventually bred into published account of it. The graduate student would be helped very much I think, by being candidly advised of this and reassured that even the most flagrant lapses from idealized standards of field procedure need not damn the research outcome. [1990: 4]

There will be no surprises such as the diaries of Malinowski years later to compare and contrast with the authorial tack taken in his publications. First fieldwork was a challenge. Feelings of disempowerment, confusion and dependence intermingled with exhilaration, joy, privilege and agency. This writing attempts to find a path that can link the 'happenings in the moment' with 'what happened' in retrospect. It is the space between the 'doing' and the 'writing' where I find links and connections that bring an added richness to the work; all of the work in all of its permutations. Flawed though the

process may be[17], it is in fact a social and human laboratory within which we conduct our research. The fiction of the intrepid explorer/adventurer, pure of heart, whose presence is not to change or convert, but to observe, note and understand, fuels the imagination and the fiction of the experience itself. According to Clifford Geertz (1973:14), "Looked at in this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse"; a lofty and comforting sentiment on the way in. But, like a bad moving day, it is messy and disruptive on the way out. Our solace lies in the promise of order from disorder once it all settles down.

Having addressed my relationship to 'place' and where I come from, situating the informants in theory is equally relevant. The key to this understanding is redefining the problem of the space of the 'culture' in terms of an analytical framework.

From Gupta and Ferguson, we understand that:

> ... associations of place and culture may exist but must be taken as problems for anthropological research rather than given ground that one takes as a point of departure; cultural territorializations must be understood as complex and contingent results of ongoing historical and political processes. [1997:4]

Culture and place are fluid and relational. The problem occurs when the writing begins. Analysis demands categorization; a model within which to frame the lived experience of the fieldworker, the now producer of knowledge. At best, one can say "culture is something that belongs to people, that defines their personal identity and

[17] Vasso Argyrou argues that ethnographers strive to accomplish the impossible; to locate a paradoxical sameness within cultural diversities (2002).

community membership" (Darnell 2001:340). At the very least, laments James Clifford, "culture, remains a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without" (1988:10).

I problematize the concept of culture by choosing to move forward with Sherry Ortner's re-theorizing of Clifford Geertz's notions of culture by making it do new kinds of work. At the same time, one must recognize there are conceptual limitations inherent in the transformation of fieldwork experience into ethnography when attempting to frame and analyze lived experiences for an audience unfamiliar with the area of enquiry.

Therefore, it is necessary to contemplate the thoughts of Renato Rosaldo on the possibilities and theoretical usefulness of incorporating multiple subjectivities (1989). These methodologies offer alternative means to identify and address other ways of knowing in more creative and useful ways than within the limitations of the Weberian disinterested scientific approach. Rosaldo demonstrates through ethnographic examples how varying analytical strategies can be useful as social analysis: concrete examples of the new kinds of work Ortner suggests (Ortner 1999a).

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argue against the unproblematized fictions created by embedded assumptions of histories, people and their intersections. They discuss culture and concepts of place as being relational, worthy of a study of the dynamics of relationships. In the end it is a balance we seek; tacking back and forth from fieldwork to text and from lived lives to models of representation.

In performing the necessary functions of fieldwork and subsequently reworking the material to present in written form, I experience this dilemma head on. It is difficult to

write from a position of authority about an experience which moulded me to conform to functional quotidian subordination.

What Culture Is – What Culture Does: Still

> Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be... a search for meaning.
> [Geertz 1973:51]

The concept of culture - where and how they might intersect - has become an ongoing point of contention in ethnographical enquiry. It can be synthesized as locating where (and if) these bounded groups are and how the discipline of anthropology may accurately record their goings on. The debate launches an enquiry that in practice may be seen as a range or as a tacking back and forth between a search for valid representations of groups, communities, and persons, and a means of coherently presenting the findings. This range can be conceptualized on the one hand, by privileging theory as the zenith of enquiry and making use of ethnography to ground the work *and* as a means of approximating some form of truth. The "truth" is illusive so the conceptualization of the "approximation", according to Eric Wolf, requires a "draw(ing) together (of) different systems of thought and action by extending and multiplying sign-dependent connotations across different domains" (1999:288).

Alternately, emphasizing ethnography first requires a searching for an appropriate organizational methodology to study and write about people and groups with potentially differing worldviews. The 'truth' here is less important than the dynamics. For both, a fundamental administrative order must ground anthropology as a legitimate enterprise and from the perspective of the producer of knowledge; these key considerations

fundamentally must be addressed. Thus, it becomes necessary to break down the enquiry into how to conceive of the work in the first instance and then, how to create an exchange of knowledge of the experience itself.

Conceptualizing the work

Regna Darnell describes fieldwork as an epistemological stance requiring levels of relativism and suspension of disbelief, despite the fact that 'realism' of the social sciences must be held in tandem in the writing process and in a:

> ... logically subsequent stage, the anthropologist must stand apart from the experience of another culture and its ways of being in the world to compare, to analyze, to formulate in alternative terms a translation that will make sense out of the original experiential context. Cross-cultural understanding entails a double hermeneutic and embraces it as methodological breakthrough rather than crippling tautology (as it appears to philosophers). [2001:261-262]

While this may be a part of the problem, imbedded here are other considerations. In *The Fate of Culture: Geertz and Beyond*, Sherry Ortner reiterates and defends Geertz's social theory of culture as being a system of meanings, embodied in symbols (1999a:6). Regna Darnell elaborates this point by noting the observation of behaviour, while a legitimate and necessary endeavour (especially to a cultural outsider) is an important process; the meaning of it is dependent on the words (as symbols) that explicate it (2001:12). To parse this further, the ontological constructions help us to grasp what culture is while the epistemological framework of symbols is the indirect expression of meanings located in the head and within language of the actors (Ortner 1999a:6).

The very concept of culture has been criticised here on two specific accounts. The first, as a totalizing conceptual 'othering' of ethnic groups that risks limiting analysis

to a dialogic of difference and narrows global perspectives to a centre/periphery discourse (Marcus 1995; Abu Lughod 2002; Rouse 2002). The second, yet related dilemma draws attention to issues of the objectifications and fictions of totalizing informants as representatives of "other cultures," erasing the reality of heterogeneous memberships (Ortner 1999a:8; Rosaldo 1989:108).

Ortner recognizes these commentaries as useful additions to the scope and understanding of culture, but disagrees in that they are reason enough for its dismissal (1999a:8). By expanding 'how' anthropological enquiry is done, Ortner proposes there is room and a need to retain 'culture' as a vital, though admittedly conceptually bounded tool.

She suggests that the position of the ethnographer and their cultural perspective entering the field has been for the most part left untheorized. By placing them under an equally rigorous analytic frame (defamiliarizing the familiar), we may arrive at a sharper analysis brought into focus by the disjuncture at the sites of interaction (1999:8). Notions of agency can be used as a strategy for examining questions of power and constructions of meaning. It assists in marking out authority (or lack thereof) in relation to understandings, desires and intentions of all the actors (Ortner 1999b:146-147).

Researching life ways is not a static process of just "getting into heads" through speech and other tangible symbols, but an intersection of interchange. The weaving process is not done in isolation; people, kin, communities, villages, trading partners and unknowable others all interweave in relation to one another, describing a dynamic process and not a location. Even in a contemporary, fractured and porous world, "the fundamental assumption that people are always trying to make sense of their lives,

always weaving fabrics of meaning, however fragile and fragmentary, still holds (Ortner 1999a:9)". The strand omitted from the list, a necessity of fact in the transferring of information, is an analytic procedure created by the presentation. It is constructed by the 'eye' of the ethnographer and the 'I' of the writer, whether acknowledged in the text or not[18].

It is my intention to weave these strands of meaning, however frayed the edges, into a collage which privileges depth and richness of dynamics. Exposing the loose ends can then be seen as not unfinished, but as a means of demonstrating that limits of analysis are in themselves part of the total understanding of the untidy nature of culture.

Analytic Methodology

The doing and the writing occur in spatially different dimensions yet it is in the reading where the two must come together. Just as appreciating a painting is not the sum total of understanding the paints used or the labour involved, the fiction of the intrepid lone anthropologist, already debunked from the start, needs to be replaced by a more careful exploration of the field and one's relationship to it.

The first mise-en-scène takes place not in the text, but in the field. The ethnographer organizes and configures a space from within which to witness and interact (or perhaps more authentically negotiates a space within the cultural, socio-spatial dimensions allotted by the hosts) prior to the ethnographer's written analyses. There cannot be a sense of writing about "Being There" until situated psychically, to locate oneself in the centre of 'something' regardless of the multiple and heterogeneous sites of

[18] Dorinne Kondo's use of the imagery of the 'eye' and 'I' presents a concise argument and justification for the process of writing and occasionally overwriting fieldwork into ethnography (1990).

production which later inform or lay outside of one's understanding. It is *this* necessity of a created space I believe Ortner is pointing to in the previous discussion of the continuing relevance of and for culture.

In finding one's place - creating a centre from which to work, entails not only the dictates of a physical location (which has a physical relationship to those who will inform the work) – we begin the process of building ties with our hosts and others. Geertz, through his seminal work in "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1973) uses his literary talents to bedazzle the reader. By situating his authority in the text based on a serendipitous event where he is able to demonstrate to his audience his move from outsider to privileged guest and temporary insider, it is the strength of his writing that allows for a simple event with its pat explanation to go unproblematized and be unproblematic for the reader. It is not until, as remarked by Marcus, Geertz delves with trepidation into, then pulls back from a more reflexive contemplation of rapport, that what he wrote and what he experienced in the field can be parsed and examined as differing text and experience (1999). Geertz settles the matter to his uneasy satisfaction by naming it instead "anthropological irony" whereby the politics of fieldwork are subsumed by the "always slightly absurd but very human predicaments of a well-meaning outsider thrust among people with very different life chances" (Marcus 1999:91)

The fiction is not only located in the text but can be somewhat of a conspiratorial experience of complicity where, perhaps for the potential and promise of the encounter there is:

> ... an enormous pressure on both the investigator and his subjects to regard these goals as near when they are in fact far, assured when they are merely wished for, and achieved when they are at

> best approximated. This pressure springs from the inherent moral asymmetry of the fieldwork situation. [Geertz 2000:151]

There are several points that relate intimately to the experience of first fieldwork that thus far remain underdetermined and conflated. I would suggest the neophyte investigator may not see the clear-cut revelation of irony or asymmetry initially, but may, as was my case, experience an evolutionary process of sorts. In the unsettled space of arrival and getting located, one is no more than a survivor of events awaiting the settling in. During this process interactions are between unknown people, not informants, subjects or the like. Hosts and guests, however unfamiliar to one another, are the determining factors. It is not until one has some form or other of a command – if nothing else – of some space that one can begin to look at it from any other perspective[19]. It is only once truly located, with space and time, in the field that one has the wherewithal to see the divisions, nuances and inherent conflicts with rapport.

It is my experience that the considerations raised by Marcus in regard to complicity - collaboration, imperialist nostalgia or the existential double-ness of both anthropologist and subject - also unfold as a process, not as either/or propositions.

Thus far I have attempted to mark out the perspectives and parameters of the work at hand. I have located some of the discussions central to defining culture, situated the actors and examined some of the alternative subjectivities possible in the field. I have also threaded the utility of these choices in respect to the fieldwork experience throughout this text in an attempt to keep the subject matter engaged with and on top of the theory, not the inverse.

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[19] I will return to and elaborate this point further on in the discussion by introducing notions of space as a predetermining factor for being able to see what our informants cannot see and write what our informants cannot write by introducing an argument put forth by Jamaica Kincaid (2000).

Old-Fashioned Anthropology: Does it have a Place?

In addition to this consideration of the single-site locality, the geographic isolation of Kokopo village – quite literally off most maps – and the technological incongruence further punctuates this endeavour as seemingly old-fashioned and out of step with current trends in anthropology. For what is knowledge but what holds currency and interest in the moment?

Anthropology as a discipline is not immune to the trends and tides of its contemporality. Its construction of knowledge has more often than not examined "away" but responded to and been in dialogue with pressing concerns and situations located at "home." Just as mass media such as newscasts and newspapers both reflect and inform their target markets, anthropology has scoured the globe to produce bodies of work which are in dialogue with and for itself. The benefits to the people we work with are either limited to the individual tack of the ethnographer or, on a macro scale, exist solely on a philosophical plane. Individual endeavours may - as a goal - more often address the strains and events of timely concerns located in the societies from whence the strains and events come. Vasso Argyrou contends that Marcel Mauss' *The Gift* responds to the breakdown of European reciprocity during the First World War. Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict's works address the home-grown dilemmas facing American society during the inter-war periods; while Malinowski had little to say about the women of Trobriands during the First World War, yet Annette Weiner in the 1980s – the height of the women's movement - focuses on the importance of women (2002:18). Examined in this light, the effectiveness of the rhetorical strategies informs more the socio-political concerns of

historical circumstances of the society from which the ethnographer emerges than that of the fieldwork site (2002:17).

Contemporarily, multi-sited, or commodity chain analyses, brought to the fore in such works as *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus 1986) and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus & Fischer 1986) make this project seem out of step with much recent ethnography. According to Roger Keesing and Margaret Jolly:

> The anthropology of Melanesia is in crisis, not because anthropology is everywhere conservative in questing for the vanishing primitive and residual tribalism, but because New Guinea and nearby islands are imagined as places where peoples practicing their ancestral cultures can still be found. [1992:226]

Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington found cause to defend their geographic field and long-term research so compelling as to devote an article to the continued relevance of Melanesian enquiry, noting the "scuttle-butt that Melanesia is, for purposes of employment, no longer a 'trendy' culture area" (1997:127). They argue PNG and the cultural area of Chambri particularly, has a long history of study, dating back to the infamous Margaret Mead and her study of personalities (1963) that offer up a historically-informed systemic perspective of the functioning of societal processes as people negotiate, accept, reject, and most often reformulate external stimuli contemporarily (Gewertz and Errington 1997:128).

Their continuing contribution and examination of the groups within PNG explicitly attempts to investigate the depth and breadth of cultures that are 'over there' while responding in content and context to the cultural and disciplinary exigencies of a contemporary nature 'here'.

"On the Shoulders of" in New Britain

Jane C. Goodale (1995) lived and worked among Kaulong communities from 1962 to 1974 and most notably was an early exponent and practitioner of photography and audio-recording as a means to enhance her fieldwork.

Field neighbour and linguist Ann Chowning worked with an adjacent culture group to the Kaulong, the Sengseng (Goodale with Chowning 1996) as well as several other culture groups including extensive work among the Kove, the group to whom our boatmen belonged as we entered the field (Chowning 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990).

In my case, I have the genealogical potential to build upon, compliment and continue 'on the shoulders of' the works of Naomi McPherson, Dorothy and David Counts. I accompany these three anthropologists into the field with their history of their combined work spanning close to a half-century of research in the area.

Naomi McPherson has organized an edited volume examining the perspectives and individual motivating forces of participants, patrol officers and others aligned with the colonizing forces (2001). The anthropological insight (that of studying the particular, i.e., starting from specific individuals, incidents, etc. in order to come to a better understanding of the complexities of the general) demonstrates the integral and foundational place this form of methodology had in terms of positioning later theorists to be able to parse globalization into something more sophisticated and meaningful than an overarching generalized force.

Due to extended and multiple ventures into the field, McPherson has the depth and experience to write on myth (1994a), morality and sorcery (1991), gender (2002)

and reproduction in West New Britain (Scaletta 1986) (McPherson 1994b), subjects outside of my grasp within the 3 month constraint of first fieldwork[20].

Dorothy and David Counts use their long-term fieldwork experience to delve into a breadth of topics inaccessible to one-time research. They demonstrate the complexities of change with regard to the cash economy and cargo cults (Dorothy Counts 1972, 1994; Counts D. A. and Counts D. R. 1977), family, conception and childcare (Counts D. A. and Counts D. R. 1983; Counts, D. A. 1985b, 1988), female suicide and wife abuse (Dorothy A. Counts1987, 1992, 1990, 1999) and aging and death (Dorothy Counts 1983, 1985a, 1991; Counts D. A. and Counts D. R. 1985, 2004) in Kaliai, an area several hours east of our fieldwork site.

To abandon this area by ceding to the whims of what can be seen as a trend loses in my estimation, the potential for the richness available in studies such as these over time. Instead of framing it within the paradigm of 'flogging a dead horse' or 'been there, done that' in favour of the 'new and improved' places of doing anthropology, I suggest that the old-fashioned notion of follow-up long-term research and (at least the ideology of) 'doing it until you get it right' has more currency.

Work

Once in the field, the first objective of census data collection proved to be a useful means to both enhance my learning of the local language, while dovetailing with the ongoing research of Dr. McPherson. My specific responsibilities were to assist Dr. McPherson by mapping and plotting homes, outbuildings and various exterior material

[20] Naomi McPherson: nee Scaletta.

accumulations of households. While I performed my assigned tasks, she (optimally) interviewed all adults residing in the homes with regard to their kinship lines, their progeny, their decisions to reside in the village as opposed to the city and, her ultimate goal, to 'suss' out the complex networks of reciprocity within first-born ceremonial obligations.

Though Dr. McPherson's research is separate from my endeavours, the information gleaned from my work as a research assistant was paramount to my understanding personal relationships, taboos and spatial relations between villagers, the wider cultural group and trading partners, as well as gaining an 'ear' for the language. It also provided a cultural platform and a cursory understanding of the local geography, societal organization and kinship patterns; all were useful and discipline-appropriate components of the social and physical mapping of the field site.

Methodology

The dilemma of how to present the data commenced prior to departure and continues into the present writing. The process of writing down the data in the field and writing up the results of the fieldwork was continually haunted by Edward Said's critique of the legacy of anthropology as structurally fraught with unequal relationships of power between writer and subject (Said 1978:2). Despite my personal struggles with sentiments of inadequacy[21] and powerlessness[22] during my stay, I would move in and out of the field

[21] I agonized about whether I had the 'stuff' to finally become an anthropologist, had I read enough, digested enough theory or for that matter, was I ready to 'rough it' for three months in the 'bush'. I had never cared for nor done much camping and the like before, preferring cement jungles to bugs, soil and the elements. I was also a (very) mature student and a single parent at age 45. I wondered if all of this work and preparation was merely the manifestation of a mid-life crisis gone out of control, having left my two children, one on each end of Canada, so I could pursue this dream.

[22] I will address the changing status of my identity later in this thesis.

with relative ease in comparison to the life chances potentially afforded to the people who would be my hosts. I would return home to write about their culture as a means to further my career, in exchange for little more than the equivalent of shiny bobbles in the form of purchased goods[23] meted out at our discretion, perpetuating the same structure of inequity so troublesome to me in the first place.

All research took place within the accepted anthropological methodology framed as participant observation. There was often a disjuncture of how I felt about the 'doing' of fieldwork, and what my imagination had led me to believe it would resemble after years of reading the accounts of others. Despite the patience and hospitality of our gracious host community, at best there were moments of feeling close to being *in* the group, but never could I honestly say I had the impudence to even imagine I was *part of* the group. These sentiments of disjuncture, between the realities lived in the field and my anticipation of the experience (based on my academic training), presented themselves as perhaps personal unpreparedness or a previous lack in scholastic rigour during my sojourn. The ever-present philosophical angst turned into productive contemplation and praxis upon my return by climbing back 'on the shoulders' of anthropological theory and engaging with the work of Pierre Bourdieu. He exposes the entrenched and embedded assumptions of presumed objectivity; its doxic positionality which allows for those writing to narrow their discourse to that which they see as vital, masked in a cloak of scholarly legitimacy by defining the parameters within which they would like to espouse to the world, without having to justify, expose or even contemplate their assumed omnipotent or omni-cognitivity of the object of their study (1990). As he points out,

[23] Even this was largely not of my own doing. My personal budget was little more than my airfare; all of the cargo we brought into the field was grace of grants acquired for and by Dr. Naomi McPherson.

proponents of an objective social science, and more specifically of "scientific" participant observation, come home to write not of the experience from whence they came, but to treat and merely to have as a goal the experience as an autonomous exercise. The raw data is for scholastic interpretation, valuable in and of itself, disjointed entirely from the lived lives of those being observed (Bourdieu 1990: 31).

Therefore, it was not with the high-minded audacity H.L. Goodall Jr. cautions academics to avoid (2003:59) that I found myself living by and wont to write about - not only the multi-vocalic place and people I had occasion to meet, but also unfolding the relationships between my morphing identity, my experiences and the work at hand. Not by any noble theoretical mastery but for base reasons of self-preservation, I adopted the principles H.L. Goodall Jr. puts forth as a moral methodology for speaking and studying in the world (2003:58-59). He provisions what he terms as the three "thou shall nots" of interpretive ethnography. We should:

1. Not assume an objective, distancing and politically removed posture;
2. Continually be cognisant of our own positionality in relation to those we study and live with; and,
3. Not write in the third person or limit our style or format to the constraints and guidelines of the canons of scholarly norms (Ibid).

The census was fraught with conflicting, multiple and cross-purposes. While the data was to be made available for and to the people of Kokopo when complete, it also served as an efficient method to introduce us to each and every villager. This efficiency had a price similar to the one we paid in Kimbe when 'power-shopping' all over town. We were doing what we thought we needed to do to accomplish the task in a way that made the most sense. The action of traipsing door-to-door, asking questions that are

always answered, with notebook in hand emphasizes the power relations at play of our different world systems, whereby we can do this and they will oblige:

> Our house veranda looks north. It faces both the village and beyond the rows of houses, the beach. We are back about 50 meters from the tract road dividing the parallel lines of homes, a phenomenon introduced by colonial occupation as a means of better keeping track of and counting the 'natives'. The patrol officers didn't have to go far once they exited their briefly-moored boats. Jump out, line 'em up and count 'em. People, houses and pigs.... It feels like we are doing the same kind of thing with our census. I guess maybe we are...It feels so wrong, but I don't know why. That is what we are saying anyway. It makes sense to them and some have shown an interest in seeing their family trees[24] and Naomi is glad to have something of value, or at least of interest to give back to villagers. But as Naomi points out, the data collection for her purposes is a means of getting an understanding of kinship relations, firstborn ceremonial work and customs.
> [Field notes May 30, 2003]

During this particular exercise (as with many other situations), wielding pen and paper was not always unproblematic. These rudimentary tools of the anthropological trade became and remained devices of division, markings of power, mobility, external knowledge and wealth. Writing in public (and even occasionally in private[25]) became a methodological tightrope that had to be carefully negotiated at all times. Conducting structured research was informative to some extent, but it was not, however, the means by which I was able to learn about and from individual people. In light of this and several other considerations, other structured formal interviews were inappropriate and quickly aborted.

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[24] Naomi has brought along the genealogical trees she put together from her census she completed in 1981

[25] There were times when I would attempt to write by kerosene lantern after all had gone home and Naomi slept. However, if someone happened to see the light, they would more often than not come to check on us and discover me working alone, a behaviour considered abnormal and suspect in an area where desiring to be alone can only be framed as being up to no good (sorcery or other bad things), or as a poor reflection on the communal responsibility of looking after us, unless we were sleeping. Even the feat of negotiating to have our own house had been problematic at the start.

Language acquisition strategies had commenced prior to departure in the form of studying Tok Pisin grammars obtained from anthropological linguist Bil Thurston[26], and listening to audio recording of a similar language group from the Solomon Islands provided by linguist and professor of anthropology, Christine Jourdan. In order to accomplish these goals, one of the most pressing tasks was to quickly acquire a working knowledge of Tok Pisin, one of the three national languages of PNG. It was apparent right from the start that the project would produce increasingly useful and coherent information over the period of fieldwork as my level of linguistic competence increased, and indeed, this was the case.

Once in Kokopo, Dr. McPherson afforded me two weeks of on-the-spot, moment-by-moment, exhaustive (and exhausting, I am sure!) translations. Subsequent to that I was on my own; though during quiet times, away from the villagers she would fill in details I may have missed, answer specific questions I had to the best of her ability, or clarify points I half-understood. The language barrier was complicated by the fact that *Tok Pisin* is the second language of the village. While all adults and youth are fluent in at least *Bariai* and *Tok Pisin, Bariai* is spoken most often amongst themselves.

This bilingual environment was exacerbated by two *Bariai* perspectives; the first, the local magistrate[27] made the pronouncement that since I was there for only three months, I did not have time to waste and should be taught *Bariai* and *Tok* Pisin simultaneously. With time, this edict was relaxed in most settings, but should I attempt to

[26] Drs. Thurston and Goulden have also been working for the past twenty years on several local vernaculars in West New Britain.
[27] a civil polity roughly described as a mixture of village peace officer, judge and civic liaison to the district

pull out writing materials to record spellings and specific vocabulary in *Tok Pisin*, the *Bariai* translation was carefully provided as well.

The second perspective had to do with a cultural sensibility I was unprepared for, and initially caught me off guard. As a student of Dr. McPherson's (this is how we agreed to introduce my position and relationship during this fieldwork), culturally appropriate behaviour should have been for me to remain mute when approached by an adult, subordinating my voice until spoken to when in the company of Dr. McPherson. As a naturally talkative person, even lack of language skills did not deter me from inserting my proverbial 'foot in mouth' on more occasions than I choose to admit or remember. I incorporate this information not simply as a tidbit of comic relief, but as a real methodological constraint and consideration, moulding and informing my ability to use verbal communication as a tool of fieldwork. It proved to be psychically dishevelling, especially the first month in the field. It limited what I could experience to kinetic expressions of participation and hyper-sensual manifestations of observation.

According to James Clifford:

> Participant observation obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation. It requires arduous language learning, some degree of direct involvement and conversation, and often a derangement of personal and cultural expectations. [1988:24]

While this description speaks to what happens to the ethnographer upon embarking on such a venture as fieldwork, let us refocus and return to the first objective. Subsumed in the particular objectives laid out specific to my enquiry is that most fieldwork, especially first fieldwork, is about making personal connections, associations and ideally, friendships while participating in everyday activities (Emerson, Fretz and

Shaw 1995:1). Establishing personal connections, hitherto a seemingly straight-forward notion, requires a reconfiguration of how relationships are first conceived even prior to negotiating how to work towards building these connections.

There were many false starts and readjustments of the methodological approach. The two pocket-sized tape recorders and tape brought specifically to log informal interviews proved to be ineffectual and impossible to use in more casual and impromptu conversations. Frankly, the technology got in the way. People saw the device as an official transcription mechanism, therefore wanting to first rehearse what they would say, in order to ensure they 'got it right'. More often they were concerned that information about them, their way of life and their beliefs, had the ability to venture out into worlds beyond their physical grasp. Therefore it had to be presented perfectly, stilting and stunting communication. In the end, I finished my research with a variety of songs, sounds of ritual mourning and funerary processions. On several occasions I was granted the opportunity to record *stori nating,* nonsense tales spoken for fun, having nothing to do with serious myth telling (I was carefully informed). Most dear to my heart on a personal level was a recording offered to me of a spell for love magic dictated by an elder, Stella of the garden (as I refer to her) who wanted me to keep and use this gift once I had found the man I wanted to marry back home.

As briefly addressed earlier, writing during informal conversations produced anxiety for many villagers, especially those twenty years old and over. Most adults were non-literate. The capacity to write had many negative associations. Colonialism, outsiders and war; all incommensurate relationships of power and control that had passed through the village at one time or another, each having left their particular mark. A variety of

rumours exacerbated our situation and circulated through the village. One was that the true purpose of our visit was to spy for the church. Sent by 'Rome' (conceptualized as being a part of America), it was speculated that we were checking up on the precision with which they practiced Catholicism. Another was the possibility that we were ancestors of one of the creator beings that had left the Bariai in disgust near the beginning of time and had traveled to the West. It was speculated that we could be coming back to either cause havoc or bring prosperity, but either of these scenarios was precarious, as spirits seen taking physical form of any kind can be considered dangerous.

Younger, partially literate youth presented me with an inverse problem; they were eager to see the writing, curious to see if they could decipher it and puzzling through it provided an opportunity to work on improving their English skills. Brigit, a bright and curious teen who had been forced to leave school for health reasons would practice reading aloud while I worked. While this provided an opportunity for me to develop a rapport with her, it also meant that during her visits I could not record any of the events of the day. There always loomed the possibility for the school-attending visitors to our home that they could see what precious stationary goods and implements we possessed and they may become the lucky recipients of them as gifts. All and all, moving in, around and through the village of Kokopo on a daily basis worked best without pen and paper or most appliances.

Cameras, on the other hand, were a 'horse of a different colour'. Producing a camera caused other problems; however, those problems were ostensibly our own. Pull out a camera, and all in sight or calling distance were immediately in the viewfinder.

Asking people to wait their turn or not be in a particular picture was often ignored, or at best considered bad form.

In the end, what worked best in this particular situation was a mixture of straight-ahead, old-fashioned participant-observation. I use this term now as I am back in scholarly pursuit. But in the field, it was 'hanging out', watching, participating when obliged or volunteered, and attempting to find enough time alone to write up as much as possible before sunset or visitors arrived.

Often in the field, it was difficult to conceptualize methodology. Being taught to dance the women's dance was not participation in the moment. It was attempting to learn that the serious ceremonial dances were less about performance than about 'feeling', the understanding of the dance through the movement and the sounds of the drum. Stumbling up the jungle paths to the gardens, surrounded by sure-footed women continually fretful of my clumsiness was not about 'observation' at that point in time. But it did adjust and reframe my understanding about environmental competence, both mine at home, and theirs here.

It also afforded me the rare opportunity to create and deliver (and have successfully received) a commentary on this point, what became my one and only standing joke. Everyone had heard about television. A few of the women had seen one. All recognized it as a window into other worlds unavailable to them. Here, I must also digress and explain that many simple bush materials are used daily in functionary ways that have equivalent pieces of complex machinery (though not necessarily more efficient) replicated in the West. A banana leaf used to cover a head during a rainstorm, for example, is called 'a PNG umbrella'. This is both a joke and a social commentary. To

reduce the stress to the women of my pedal incompetence and to demonstrate my comprehension of their comments, I would call out "PNG T.V." every time I stumbled, to roars of laughter. Is it possible to analytically dissect methodology from a point in time of human connection?

Ethnography

"A Mise-en-Scène"

Structure and Home

- Where I Have Neither: Assumptions and attempting to make sense of where I am

Sensual overload. There is a mass of faces with names I can not remember yet, no defined spatial sense to anchor me. There is the walk from the beach to the place we will sleep tonight. It is high tide, with a space of about 25 meters between the water's edge and the first row of houses lining the white sand beach. Crossing a sand road, we walk another 25 meters to a house on the left of a graveyard. There is a ragtag procession of curious onlookers, scared children and old friends of Naomi's moving toward the house of our host family. Our boat had arrived on the shores of Kokopo late that afternoon with only an hour or so of sunlight left. The Counts had veered off to their village some hours ago. We would not see them again until the return trip home.

Not much time to get my bearings in the village. While others bustle and talk around me, I am guided to a *pandanus* mat, my first gift that will be mine for the next three months. Someone motions for me to sit. I sit. I stare. I smile. I am on the porch of the home of Don, his wife Rasen and their six children. Don is the son of Peter and Mary.

On Naomi's initial visit two decades ago, Peter' father 'adopted' her into Peter and Mary's family as an honorary first-born. This is the link which affords Naomi a means to integrate and function to some extent within a culture that is built on kin ties and relationships. It is not lost to her that it is also a strategy for this family to legitimize their claim to her and the benefits of having a trading relationship with someone with

access to Western goods and food. Peter has 'retired' as head of his family since Naomi's last visit. He now spends his days child-minding his many grandchildren and doing small tasks.

Don has taken on this function as the eldest male, though not the firstborn. It is in their home we temporarily reside until our accommodations are ready some ten days later, re-establishing our relationship to them and the village at large. Don's sister Maia is the firstborn; friend and closest confidante to Naomi. She has the quiet and respected authority of her status. Her 15 year-old firstborn, a daughter away at school in Kimbe, is Naomi's namesake. Maia also lives in Don and Rasen's house with her youngest 8 year-old son. Her husband is a schoolteacher in the next village, and had wanted to take on a second wife. Maia did not approve of this arrangement and has recently moved back to her family in Kokopo. My status remains ambiguous other than I am a student of Naomi's, therefore subordinate to her.

Peter and Mary live across the sandy road on the beachside, next to the houses of their other two male children, one married with children, and the other, widowed. There is another married daughter, who lives with her two children and occasionally her husband down the road from there. There had been another son who has died since Naomi's last visit. Patri-local extended families contemporarily live in permeable nuclear family groupings clustered within visual and shouting distance from one another.

As I take all of this in, put flesh and blood to the stories I have heard and old pictures I have seen to some of the faces prior to arriving here: I sit. I stare. I smile.

Structure to be – Structure that Was (Not)

Across the graveyard to the left are the 'bones' of a structure. This will be our home, I am told. It is the leftovers of an Aus-Aid 'development' project: failed. We await the completion of our home, a skeletal structure at this point; to me at least. There is a shell of a building with posts and beams and a *kopa*[28] roof; that is all. We await its completion, to be walled and floored to our specifications. It is on the mountain side of the two rows of dwellings hugging the shores of the bay. We would be approximately equidistant from each end of the village, though set back seventy-five metres or so from the almost straight lines of the other homes, and right next to the graveyard. I am told it was built 'a while ago' by men who came to install a water pipe to the centre of the village so the women would not have to walk the long distance to the rivers. "Where is this water pipe?" I ask. "When was this built?"

"The pipe is over there," someone points with their head. "A while ago," they answer. The ambiguous nature of the project is never made clear. Any inquiries about it in the future are met with dismissive comments and avoidance. In the end, all I could find out about this project is that there were white men who came for a long enough time to have built a house to live in, built a long pipe (300 meters, I am guessing) to bring water into the village and then left. Within a short period of time the pipe was destroyed. When was it destroyed? By whom? And why? Again, in ambivalence and hedging, several stories are offered up: 1) It happened during a dispute between a group of youths from the next village and Kokopo. 2) A local youth possessed by a *masalai* (a pesky spirit being) broke it. 3) It just broke by itself.

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[28] Literally translated from Tok Pisin as 'copper roof', it is actually corrugated metal.

I am left with many more questions than answers. I wonder if the location of the water pipe is problematic. It ends right at the top of the graveyard. Graveyards are a very recent phenomenon mandated by colonial and post-colonial rule. I would often witness children not willing to even walk in front of the graveyard alone. I wonder why our soon-to-be house is a skeleton, as well. I can only speculate that any bit of material easily disassembled was picked clean by enterprising people. I can only speculate that the whole affair caused great stress in the community.

The other cannibalized and decomposing structure in the village is the wharf. In this case conversely, it is the incessant motion of the waves that carries away the concrete and stone, leaving an ever-shrinking crumbling heap as the years go by. It was a government project started prior to Naomi's fieldwork in 1981. It too was a punctuated project with no follow-up or long term plan. It too has no story I am privy to.

I contemplate the intermittent influx of white people and it occurs to me, 'we' disrupt more than help, despite (perhaps yet dubious) individual good intentions. Missionaries, development and anthropologists...and rumours about industry, a logging company moving in shortly: what am I doing here, anyway?

Food for the Soul, Food for the Body and Now Me Lying Down to Sleep...

> Other than being able to locate myself geographically, a concept completely meaningless at this moment, I do not know where I am, who I am, or even what I am. I have no clue as to where or how I will relieve my bodily functions. My status as an apprentice is not enough to explain me to me. I am all new here. I am a child waiting to see how my adoptive home will receive me, how I will fit in. I have much to learn. [Fieldnotes May 11, 2003]

I am privy to a sneak preview, a rehearsal for the 'singing in' of the bible that will happen this Sunday at the Catholic Church[29] up the mountain by children of "LKK 2[30]." It is a syncretic affair, which mingles local dance traditions and bible-waving with a guitar band. Don and others are adamant to show and tell us just how well they practice Catholicism, something that perplexes Naomi and is a change from her previous visits.

The sisters Maia, Wanda and sister-in-law Rasen are preparing and handing out food. We are served first and instructed to eat. Each serving is prepared and distributed by the women to each member of the family, one by one, as they are called. We eat where we sit. Finally, we are led to one of the two rooms inside the house where we set up the mosquito netting and our bedding. The rest of the family has moved into the other room.

My emotions stretched taut, my body spent and my intellect jell-o, I attempt to settle down for the night. Where is this place? It is too large of a question. Where am I now? The answers I grasp at have no currency. I need a strategy. I need to locate myself, to regroup and stop internal disintegration.

All of the training, all the careful preparations are insufficient. I regress into my past at age three when I remember being a passenger in the family car and going to a destination I was not privy to while listening to the news on the car radio. The words were in English, my first and only language then, but I was still learning. I remember calmly thinking, paraphrasing my thoughts, "I don't know what they are saying. I

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[29] Ironically, the patron saint of this church is St. John the Baptist. As far from home as I may be, I will still celebrate the holiday on June 24th halfway around the world from my home in Quebec.

[30] LKK stands for 'Little Christian Community. There are 4 in the village, each alternating weekly the responsibility of singing in the bible and reading parts of the Sunday sermon. These designations are used when talking to us for approximately the first half of our research and will be discussed in the section on religion and church.

understand some of the words but not the meaning. One day, I will understand this gibberish." That curious memory soothes some of my distress and segues to another experience years later.

I am reminded of being introduced to the Waldorf system of learning. Presented as a holistic method of internalizing knowledge, it suggests learning is most easily accomplished when starting from where you are, especially spatially. Is this anthropology? I do not care. If I am not put back together by morning it will not matter.

I feel the camping mattress dull the lumps of bark flooring under the weight of my exhausted body and feel the corners of my lips gently curl in awe and amazement. I had some schooling, training, talks and preparation for this after all, didn't I? Each mattress had shrunk in thickness with every changing bed I had slept on during this journey into the field: my own, the ones on the planes, Port Moresby, Kimbe and now, here. Sleep comes fast and hard.

"Take Me to the River"

I don't know why I love you like I do, all the changes you put me through.
Take my money, my cigarettes, I haven't seen the worst of it yet.
I wanna know, can you tell me, I'd really love to stay.
Take me to the river, drop me in the water.
Take me to the river, dip me in the water.
Washing me down, washing me down.
[Green & Hodge: 1974]

Awaking in the village to the sounds of roosters crowing, dogs barking and women already working at preparing the morning meal, I am refreshed (though slightly stiff) after a deep sleep. This morning is the launching pad for my first fieldwork! Base urges call, however. I must ask Maia to take me to the 'bathroom'. It is a gendered female

over-grown bush area about a 15 second walk from the house. There, she stops and points into the bush where I should go. She takes on this habitual responsibility for us for the ten days until the outhouse next to our yet-to-be-completed house is ready. Firstborn responsibilities are all encompassing.

And what of bathing? I am ripe. It seems another lifetime away since I showered yesterday morning at The Mahonia Na Dari Marine Research Centre. It would be the last indoor (albeit mostly cold water) plumbing I would see for the next three months.

Maia will take us to the river to wash as soon as the morning dishes and laundry are packed into buckets that will accompany us on Maia's head. Our dirty laundry is put in a net bag that I carry over my shoulder. My very essence expresses my foreignness: my skin, my clothes, even my choppy gait. We are led down the road accompanied by several young girls also carrying buckets of clothes, pots and pans on their young heads in between the two rows of houses the length of the village. We are on parade and I am getting my first glimpse at the layout of the land. We start off down the road. No, not a paved road, but a stretch of sand the width of a residential street. I still compare in relation to from whence I come. I will call it the stroll as people rarely, if ever hurry and it accommodates nothing but bi- and quadrupedal pedestrians. At each house where someone is home, I hear the same words called out and the same words answered as a response. I will learn by listening. I will learn to repeat the words in this same fashion every time I pass a neighbour for the duration of my research.

Yutupela go we?	"Where are you two going?" they will ask.
Apinun, mitupela waswas long Kaiau	"Good afternoon. The two of us are going to bathe in the Kaiau River." We reply.
Olrait, yutupela go, mipela stap	"Alright,", they will say, "you two go then, I will stay here."

It is a wonderful day.

Site/Sight-Seeing

Home here is a space built with mostly bush material construction. Even the concept of home was alien. This is what I understand: home as a physical structure enclosing an interior lived-in space. But here the 'home' includes the outdoor space surrounding, and often under, the house. People live outside. The interiors of residential structures are storage spaces transformed into sleeping spaces at night.

Despite, or perhaps because of their unrefined finish, the houses appear deceptively simple in appearance, yet are magnificent feats of efficient engineering upon closer examination. It is a pity that this brilliance of form translates so poorly on the two-dimensional photographic page I can reproduce after the fact.

The homes are poised in the air, supported by perfectly straight logs stripped of bark and branches, plunging into the sandy ground below and reaching up into the air, melding with the walls while demarking boundaries of interior private domestic spaces.

The number of rooms varies from one to three, with two rooms being the norm. Behind these walls are the private sleeping and storage centres of its residents, absolutely out of bounds to outsiders of any kind at all times. We are an anomaly to some degree but

Naomi's 'adoptive' status permits us this arrangement. We never venture into the other room of the house however, as the door is carefully covered with a piece of fabric during the day.

The houses are fronted with verandas, public in view but restricted in access to close familial relationships and rarely, by invitation to others[31]. This space may contain the *haus kuk* - Tok Pisin for 'house cook' or kitchen, containing the fire pit cooking area and the *mumu,* (the stone oven) usually front and centre on the veranda. Or, the cooking area may be slightly off to the side but connected to the house on the ground and built into the sand.

The verandas face each other separated by the 'stroll' throughout the village. Two rows of houses, occasionally three, span the length of the village and run parallel to the bay. Conversations and communications, especially between women and amongst children easily arch the span of the stroll creating a perpetual cacophony of noise commonly marking *laelae,* a Bariai word for between 2 pm and sunset. Time is marked by positions of the sun: *gaisala* is from sunrise through the rest of the morning. *Ado* or *aro* occur as the sun beats down directly on the earth and *bong*, when the presence of the sun is only a memory.

The height of the stilts does not appear to have any discernable uniformity, though it may be accurate to suggest that the seaside homes on average are higher than the mountainside ones. Later during our census work, it became evident the higher homes were the newest; a contemporary style choice, a fashion statement and a means for

[31] Several exceptions seemed to be: following a death when the dead body is laid out here and people come onto the veranda to cry for the dead (see Death section) and more distant kin during exchange ceremonies.

creating additional shaded living space below for humans, pigs and dogs alike. The lifespan of a house is approximately five years, at which time the household may build in the same location or move to another site. The family usually remains in the same general vicinity, as clan groups tend to live together. There are four clan groups in Kokopo. Rebuilding may, however, be a time to change localities within the village, perhaps as a political stance, or to highlight and strengthen different kin/social ties.

Other features gracing newer homes included vertical bamboo fencing that encompass either the domicile or what I recognize as a yard of sorts, replete with flower gardens, shrubs and fruit trees. Few have four walls; most are limited to one or two sides. While there is a sense of structure and purpose to these barriers, it is rare for any one of them to be considered (from my perspective) complete. Confusion on my part follows the solicited explanations of these phenomena. Fences are created as eye-pleasing decorative gardens despite the fact that the flowers often overflow their created boundaries. An even more astounding explanation offered is that fences are where the family's pigs are kept when they are in the village. Many villagers throughout our census reiterated this, as pigs trotted freely under our very noses and roamed the village at will![32]

In actuality, there are smaller bamboo 'completed' enclosures under many of the houses with adult-height head clearance. These tend to be under the homes of parents or grandparents of babies. These are the daytime 'daycares' for pre-mobile infants. During the heat of the midday sun, babies could be often seen attended to by grandparents of

[32] It would not take long to discover that answers to our questions were often what people thought we would have wanted to hear, not what they believed or knew to be 'true'. Most adults have had varying degrees of interaction, indoctrination or have heard endless stories about how to behave and address 'white people'.

either gender[33] in the enclosed area under the house and in the shade, while mothers work their tropical forest gardens located in the mountains and men busily plan ceremonies, feasts or work projects elsewhere. The bamboo enclosures, 'human pens' as I affectionately refer to them, are functional spaces in the everyday.

The walls of the houses are the halved spine of the Sago palm, each two inches wide. They are custom cut to the height of the rooms. Every five pieces are shored together from strands of vines, sections put together until the requisite room size is complete. The Sago spine is pliable enough to be easily cut to size at the corners, yet strong and impermeable to keep out all but the most vicious of rainstorms. The walls may also be made from roughly milled planks salvaged from derelict buildings or obtained years ago when for a short time, a portable sawmill intermittently barged to the village.

Nails may be found interspersed, complementing or replacing tongue and groove technology. They too may be gleaned from other projects, or acquired from returning out-migrants, trade relations or their rare excursions to town. The walls, flooring, and fastening materials, along with the palm leaf or *kopa* roofs (if one is so fortunate), serve as the space defining the private from the public interactions.

All the construction materials are custom fit and arranged for the building at hand. All of the products have many alternative uses and functions in other areas of life. Bits and pieces of the tropical forest, the earth, the sea, and remnants left behind by a colonial past of military and commercial occupation and acquired goods are all re-created,

[33] The responsibility of childcare, especially infant care is shared by all within a kin group regardless of gender and age. It is more relevant to situation and circumstance.

retooled and reused until their expiration. Their uses are only limited by imagination and ingenuity

I have taken careful mental notes to be written down at a later time. This must be the bones of doing fieldwork, isn't it?

"Washing me down, washing me down"

- Background vocals – [*Take Me to the River*, Green and Hodge: 1974]

As young children who accompanied their mothers to the river, here I too am led to the water to witness, watch and learn to bathe and wash clothes on the flat rocks. Our clothes are taken from our bag and washed by others with the bar of laundry soap we have brought. It is a luxury item we share with all who are present at the river. We will do so for the duration of our stay as part of what we can to reciprocate.

The river is a women's social gathering and work place. Men occasionally come out of the jungle, avert their eyes, mutter a greeting and continue on their way. For all the chaos and laughter, there is order. Fully clothed, I am guided into the river to wade upstream next to the left bank. Downstream a few paces on the right bank, women are scrubbing vegetable produce from the garden. The washing of clothes takes place on smoothed-over boulders worn from daily use. This is downstream again from the vegetables. All of the working women face upstream as they work.

Downstream from human activity, the ever-present sows and piglets traverse, drink and generally hang out in the cool shade of the forest cover and the *kolwara*[34] on their way to and from jungle and village as they follow the women who care for them.

[34] Tok pisin for cold water or river - the fresh water here is quite cold in comparison to the equatorial bathtub temperature of the sea. Tok Pisin for salt water is *solwara*

They learn to occupy the area always downstream from humans. The piglets learn from their sow mothers and are corrected by them should they transgress proper piglet etiquette.

The Baptism

When we arrive at the river there is a mother bathing a young baby. The baby cries a little as she is immersed in the water. The women laugh and comment on this though I don't know what they are saying. I dunk my body into the cool water and gasp. The women laugh again and repeat many of the same words. Only babies complain about the temperature of the water. As Maia takes the soap from my hand and begins washing my back, I realize babies and I may share a few traits. Every bodily and domestic function requires assistance and guidance, it would seem. There is nothing I can do alone. I am truly infant-like here.

With less knowledge and ingenuity than I would have liked, there is only imagination to start from to begin to piece together this place and my developing relationships to the people surrounding me. It escapes me initially that I will have to learn these things and more. I will have to learn how to 'be' here, too. It takes even longer to realize local residents are faced with similar dilemmas in relation to dealing with me. I am aware of no other 'white people' besides Naomi who have come to live here for any length of time who were interested in hanging out and not rearranging things. But I cannot avoid the similarities; perhaps we are all still 'killing them with kindness'... Structure and theory abounds, with no place yet to settle.

And on the return walk from bathing, I hear these words:

Yutupela waswas long Kaiau?	"The two of you have bathed in the Kaiau River?" They will ask.
Yes, mitupela waswas long Kaiau na kam	"Yes, we (the two of us) have bathed in the Kaiau River and now we are coming back." We will answer.
Olrait, yutupela go, mipela stap	"Alright", they will say, "you go then, We/I will stay here," concluding the exchange.

I wanna know that you'll tell me, I'd love to stay.
Take me to the river and drop me in the water.
Dip me in the river, drop me in the water.
Washing me down, washing me down.
[Closing verse to *Take Me to the River*, Green and Hodge: 1974]

(not) Seeing Work: Our Home

The days quickly pass during our temporary stay in the home of Don and Rasen, but my frustration grows at the slow progress across the graveyard: our future home. By the fifth day, there has not been more than an occasional man or youth who stopped by the barren structure to examine and walk the property. I am anxious to set up a working environment conducive to hauling out pen and paper at my leisure to record all of the new sights, sounds and experiences I have encountered. The hot, dark room allocated to us brims with our supplies and sleeping gear, and makes it impossible to slip inside to work during the day. And while I can on occasion use a flashlight or our kerosene lamp to try to jot down points to elaborate on later, it strains the eyes, our limited batteries and the fuel supply; precious and rationed commodities here in the bush.

Our living space during the day remains limited to the pandanus mats on the porch, presented to us at our arrival. From this perch, we 'receive' curious villagers and Naomi's old acquaintances. Lacking language and social skills to participate in the languid conversations that transpire as one day moves into the next, my role is limited to

hours of patiently sitting and smiling. My attempts to pull out pen and paper draw undue attention to the endeavour. On the rare occasion when writing is used in the village, it is to record official information: either for the church or government business. Orality, compelling repetition of one's perspective along with behaviour consistent with one's rhetoric is the means to building relationships. As the unusual newly-arrived guests whose business here is still ambiguous, writing while conversing removes any credibility from Naomi's words. The questions and conversation usually follow a similar pattern. Conversation seems to always begin with the obvious; perhaps something like us Canadians breaking the ice with talk of the weather.[35] This excerpt from my field notes exemplifies the point:

"You arrived here (fill in the blank) days ago?"	"Yes", Naomi says.
"You are going to stay here for three months?"	"Yes," she says.
"The men are building you that house over there."	"Yes" she says, glancing over at the inactivity.

But after the pleasantries, the talk inevitably moves quickly to how we fit in and what we might be up to. Anthropological explanations have no currency here. White people only do a few things from their perspective. We are either mining for religious conversion, government information or resource exploitation. The chances of us, two middle-aged women, working for industry are nil, working for the government remote; so we must be missionaries or connected with the/a church. I could bet money on the next question:

[35] Christine Jourdan points out these types of conversations fulfil three types of functions: creating social engagement, relationship building and a means to 'opening social doors'. (pers.com. April 17,2005)

"You know the local missionary[36] from America?"	(The answer to that one is always tricky...[37])
"You have seen the rehearsals and how beautifully we sing in the bible at church?"	"Yes, it is beautiful."
"You are going to live in the house over there for three months?"	"Yes..."

Our enquiries into the progress of the building of our house always brought the same answer, though the question and the answer seemed to come from different perspectives. We saw nothing happening so asked 'when' it would be built. The answer was always framed as "yes, the men *are* building the house". Finally, about day six, Alan, Don's younger, widowed brother began working on the construction in earnest. On occasion there would be another young man who would help him with beams and supports, but for the most part, it was Alan I saw doing most of the work. When the house was complete on the tenth day and, as we are anxious to move in, we walk to our new house. Our cargo is brought over later by a small army of young girls shortly behind us. I am ecstatic to be on my way to starting my work and relieved that the house is done.

I have very little in the way of personal items to share; this fieldwork experience had almost been abandoned before it even began[38], but I feel compelled to offer up an extra pair of sandals to Alan for all of his labours. As I offer him this gift in thanks, I

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[36] There is a Summer Institute of Linguistics worker (SIL) who lives several hours walk away in the next village. He, his wife and two children live there semi-permanently and are in the process of translating the bible into Bariai.

[37] The SIL worker had found the West New Britain website put together by the Counts and began communicating with them. When our trip was imminent, Naomi had contacted him to request that he pass on a message to her contacts in Kokopo insomuch as she was returning to the village. She had hoped they would construct a house for us prior to our arrival. As has been shown, the house was not made ready and this decision to communicate through the SIL worker indelibly and doggedly linked us to missionary work in some people's minds for our period of fieldwork.

[38] Naomi had applied for a SSHRC grant and though it was approved, in the end there was no money left in the coffers and I had had to scramble at the last minute to acquire funds to pay my own way. This situation left little in the way of funds for me to purchase goods with which to reciprocate, though Naomi was generous with the proceeds from several other small grants she managed to secure.

think I detect a moment of awkwardness, but he takes them just the same. It is to be one of the first of many unintentional but inappropriate behaviours I will display. It takes many weeks and an acquisition of a bit of language before I am told, first by Susan, a neighbour and mother of Charles and later by others, that there was quite a to-do about the sandals. Alan had NOT done the work, when I tried to explain and was corrected. The work was done by the elders.

Our first guest in our new home does not arrive pleased, either. Mary, wife of Peter and mother of Don and Alan arrives in a snit. We should have waited until she had returned from the garden. There are important rituals that had needed to be done to and on the house prior to it being inhabited. She chastises those who have let us come over here before they were done.

Notions of work

The house was not idle despite a lack of activity going on. The physical construction was not work. The value and location of the 'work' to make this building functional took place within the orations of the elders to convince others to stop what they were doing and to see value in helping us. Nor had these orations been taken up with any great enthusiasm by our adoptive family. It was to Don and family's advantage to have us stay with them. On numerous occasions they would talk to us about the benefits of having them look after us more efficiently if we stayed living in their home.

Day after day, this would slip into the domestic conversations, including leading questions that required an affirmative answer as to the care they were showing us. It was not until Naomi addressed the villagers in the public forum of the Monday Morning

Moot[39] that the visible labour had commenced. The 'work' had in fact, been going on rigorously from the first day. I had been 'looking' all the while in the wrong direction with the wrong perspective. The giving of the sandals therefore was seen not as an acknowledgement of Alan's contribution to the construction of the house, but as a very public and inappropriate sexual innuendo from a single woman to an eligible man.

Though there is some understanding that my gaff is one of the many that 'stupid white people' can make, the subject comes up in conversation from time to time for the balance of our stay. Alan also negotiated and construed this turn of events into an opportunity to take advantage of the situation. Whereas other single young men would sit on the ground when coming to visit as it is inappropriate to be invited onto the porch, Alan would regularly visit and strut onto our porch and make himself comfortable. There are several older women who would walk by when this happened and speak to him in a curt tone. It was only much later when I acquired enough language skills to realize they were reproaching him by sarcastically calling out that he was acting like the *masa* (master) of the house. This one indiscretion on my part may have been the catalyst for the lack of trust that developed with many of the elder women in the village and their tight-lipped stance in regards to speaking with me. Alan was dispatched suddenly (at least it seemed so to us) on a trade mission by his elder brother Don two months into our fieldwork, not to return before our departure[40].

[39] While a hangover from colonial times , the moot has been reconfigured and appropriated by villagers as a means to organize internal village business as well as including a government-mandated function to discuss corporate concerns.

[40] This trade mission expedition solved several problems for Don as will be illustrated shortly.

Rapport

"Step into our Culture, if that is why you came"

Within the first week, we are invited to a firstborn ceremony. These ceremonies present one of the means for a married couple to begin the process of developing their adult status by building their own network systems through a series of ceremonies. Prestige is built in Bariai not by what you possess but by the relationships you are able to forge, by what one can attract into your network, or by what you can give away. The ceremony takes place in a taro garden located a good half hour walk into the jungle up a mountain path.

If my steps had seemed ungainly walking to and from the river (the only trip away from Don and Rasen's house during our first few days in Kokopo), then today they are perceived as incompetent by those surrounding us. My steps are carefully monitored and fretted upon with every small trip and stumble. There is a hand poised at an arm or shoulder to support me. I do not initially see the strain my inept actions are causing to those assuming my care. I attempt to gesture that I am a bit clumsy, but nimble and will be fine. I do not initially notice the steps of those around me, including the children. They are sure-footed and economize energy. Despite the crowd, a hundred or so people, there is little noise as we make our way, single-file up the mountain path.

The jungle itself is relatively benign. Apart from occasional flat spots with razor-sharp grasses, rocks and above-ground roots, there is little danger. There are no large wild animals other than wild pigs, but they steer clear of humans for the most part. There are black and yellow centipedes which I am informed are poisonous if stepped on with bare feet, but I wear plastic sandals and watch the ground carefully.

The taro garden is about five acres in size, according to my best guess. For this ceremony, all invited parties reap its produce. First all of the taro are brought to a central location where they are sorted for size and quality, and then divvied up into stacks that will be handed out to various clans. This work, I am told – i.e. the organization of the event - is performed by the *baulo* (Bariai word) of the parents of the first-born. This relationship is embarked upon after marriage, but prior to the birth of the first child. The census work will hopefully shed some light on from what kin pool the *baulo* is chosen. Though for my purposes of framing it, it appears to be akin to a step-parent relationship. Direct questioning on this issue produces little understanding on my part.

On this day, I have the first experience of many where I became part of the entertainment. I hasten to say though, that I also see it as a means of inclusion in the group. What *do* you do with visitors who are not part of the system of exchange and who show interest in it?

> I am dressed up with a black armband with beautiful flowers tucked between it and my skin. A flower lei, tied with vines is put around my neck. When I try to joke that I am being dressed as a first-born but I have no taro to give away, I am not sure I am understood. But Bev goes to the taro field and comes back with five or six big taros and a flat basket, ties the taro on with vines and announces I will be carrying this down to the village on my head. A *puna* – a head pillow made from bush material – is placed on my head to distribute the weight of the basket before it is placed for the march back home. I have to hold the basket with at least one hand though Wanda is encouraging me to try to let go. After several failed attempts I tell her I will try once we are off the jungle path and in the village where it is flat because I did not want to slow everyone behind me. As soon as I get to the village, I try and succeed! I walk all the way through the village to our house without using my hands! Naomi sees me coming and has the camera poised to capture the feat with me in all my regalia. [Field notes May 2003]

Losing My Topic and Gaining Insight

False starts and dead-ends are not uncommon in fieldwork. This too I would learn quickly. I find I am smiling and talking to (through the kind assistance of Naomi) a very friendly and very pregnant woman, Idet. This, I thought, was a very fortuitous moment. My thesis proposal had been formulated in hopes of exploring childbirth and birthing stories in the virtual absence of the medicalization[41] of illness and birthing in Kokopo. Naomi had spent time studying and writing about birthing, both in the village and in a health post many hours away (Scaletta 1986; McPherson 1994b) and I had high hopes to follow up on her work. Alas, despite promises to let us know when she would go into labour (how very presumptuous of me to think I might be invited into such an occasion), in fact it is the very next morning when we hear not only had the baby been born that very night, but Idet had been labouring as we spoke to her in the gardens.

It is a raucous night once again as dogs fight over a bitch in heat. I wake up to lots of activity and have to pee. It is still dark but I think dawn is near. Alas, it is 12:30am! Wanda is sweeping the front yard in the dark. There is hardly any moonlight but she is sweeping. I fumble to the back to pee and thankfully no one stops me or accompanies me. I return to bed and sleep until sunrise. There is tension in the air. Everyone looks tired and stressed, especially Wanda this morning. We get the news that Idet had her baby last night. As the day progresses, we discover she was in labour yesterday in the garden and she had no intention of telling us. So far as I understand, she had two women helping her; Bev and another, quite unusual for such an experienced mother. Bev and Peter adopt the

[41] Baer, Singer and Susser define medicalization as "the process (of absorbing) ever-widening social arenas and behaviours into the jurisdiction of biomedical treatment through a constant extension of pathological terminology to cover new conditions and behaviours" and the birthing event reformulated from a natural physiological process into a pathological one (1997:13).

baby immediately. I learn Idet is no longer married nor is her previous husband the father of her child. While her pregnancy has none of the moral connotations of 'illegitimacy' I am familiar with, the local term for her situation is called *bel nating* 'empty belly' – to denote the lack of proper placement of the child in the social order of the community. As with all systems, there are means and ways to circumnavigate reality with ideology. Adoption appears to be the solution in this instance. [42]

Maia, our guardian and 'sister'-host, explained women birth in private unless there are complications. If this is the case, her mother or one of the women trained years ago in rudimentary midwifery skills may be summoned. Further investigation as to whether there are (or were) indigenous methods of birthing, or elders with this knowledge proved equally fruitless. Answers to my enquiries are met with silence or vague explanations that "...some of the older women used to do that sort of thing, but with the education programs offered many years ago by the health post, these practices are now obsolete." Despite Naomi's ability to glean a substantial body of work years past (1994b), it becomes immediately evident I have picked a topic impenetrable for me given the time constraints I have and the language skills I do not.

Panic and frustration set in. No longer armed with a topic, no home yet ready to occupy and set up 'shop' in, and most importantly, the brutal realization that without either rudimentary language skills or a firm understanding of the culture, just coping is a monumental task in itself. I spend my days sitting in and listening to groups of people. There are names, snippets of mangled interpretations of conversation scratched out in my early notepads; disjointed and confused jottings scribbled down hours later. Writing is

[42] Adoption is highly prevalent in Kokopo according to our census. A fascinating topic but it is outside the boundaries of this present work.

rarely conducive at the moment of conversation. Whether on a porch or at the river where we bathe and washed clothes, I strain to catch a familiar word here and there, but even then it losses all context at times. Conversations race on more often than not, leaving me in the dust. Sound becomes a monotonous buzz and my focus becomes purely visual.

> When we went to pay our respects to Idet and the newborn baby we were stopped at every household. They asked where we were going, we told them and we moved on. We weren't sure exactly where she lived; just that it was in the eastern sector of the village. Some women asked their children to take us there but they were all afraid of us. House to house we stopped and told what we were doing and were told the way to go. Rescued from our aimless wandering, a woman guided us to the house, explaining the situation. Idet was sleeping on the porch with one of her other little ones (maybe 2 years old). She has 7 or 8 total: 5 with her husband and the others with different men. No one was saying more to us. Idet woke up when we approached. We told her not to get up, we would not stay. We had been told earlier by Bev that the baby had no nappies. We had brought one along with a bar of laundry soap and several teabags. With the adoption info, Naomi wasn't sure if she should leave the nappies there or not. She was told by the woman who brought us there to leave it and it would get to the baby. We left there to go looking for Bev, Peter and the new baby's house. Walking back toward our house, we came to Peter and Bev's place. Why we were directed through to Idet's without any explanation and right past the baby is hard to say. When we got to their house, the baby was laid out on the veranda on an old piece of foam and some pieces of cloth. Peter sat behind the baby so that it could catch the best bits of the breeze the skies had to offer. His engagement with the baby was astonishing to me. Never had I seen a father of a new born so enraptured. Bev sat to the side admiring both her husband and child. I guess! All the joy with none of the pain and work! They were very forthcoming. Was it the perplexed look on my face? In a way, I thought it was a good system; Idet already has too many children to look after all by herself, so she can adopt her baby out to someone close at hand and always know her child. Then I wondered who would nurse this new born? Turns out the birth mother does! Hm… not sure I feel good about that. Poor Idet! That would kill me! Are they going to run the baby down the village every time it cries? And why are Peter and Bev adopting? Well, Bev doesn't have any girls to help her with her work. The baby is an investment in their future? Reading about this in an anthropology text, I could rationalize it.

> But I'm not sure how I feel now. These are people's lives, real events. Everybody seems fine with this, except me! I don't know if I can do this…
> [Fieldnotes: May 15th, 2003]

Regardless of the efforts and intentions of field preparation, the displacement of familiar cultural norms are a part of the mise-en-scène and part and parcel of the building of rapport. Its most common omission from the discourse, often glossed over in the writing as a strategy perhaps to create the authority required within the text, may not be relevant to the analysis intended. However, as a member of the intended audience reading for clues and a template prior to my trip, this omission served initially as pointing to a 'lack' on my part. Only later does it transform into a theoretical consideration – a tack taken, a decision, a strategy chosen by ethnographers, and not the fieldworker – to establish a rapport between the text and its readership 'here'.

First fieldwork is a liminal space.

Making Connections

Kinship can be multifaceted. It is negotiated and cultural. I am descended from an anthropological tradition which helps link me fictively in the field to the village. Being 'born' into these systems does not automatically assume membership, however. There must be a socially-constructed catalyst to forward the network. Similar to the firstborn ceremonies that change the status of both parents and child in relation to other members of the group, 'being there' is not enough to constitute being a dynamic participant within the group. In my case, the constructed and culturally-bound grouping I aspire to is that of anthropologist. Understanding, learning and reproducing appropriate behaviours and procedures determines this. For my purposes I must literally write myself 'in' to the

network as part of the initiation process. The mise-en-scène to date has placed me in the village, established the seeds for relationships; and through my association with Naomi, granted legitimacy for my sheer presence. The rapport building process pursuant to this can be reinforced and confirmed by showing a depth of authenticity in most cultures, however configured. Naomi's link with Kokopo serves both as my validation of an ancestry both in form (in anthropology) and in presence (in Kokopo).

Naomi's mise-en-scène, linked with rapport, is denoted by her inclusion into the village by a respected elder not only by appointing her to a position, but also by offering up the 'key' to understanding Bariai through myth. I use my network of association with her to forward my process of inclusion into the village as best I can.

In 1981, Naomi McPherson was instructed by Mr. Pore Siko (the great-grandfather of many of the middle-aged men in the village, the man responsible for 'adopting' her into his clan and bestowing the status of firstborn upon her) that in order to understand the Bariai, she must understand the Story of Moro. Within this tale, according to Pore Siko, exists the codes of conduct and the worldview of this land (McPherson 1994a:153). In this section, I present a small portion of the Moro myth as a means of analyzing a serendipitous engagement experienced with one of my youngest friends (named Charles) and informants in the field, whereby I 'fell in' to a learning experience that promoted my understanding of local etiquette. Etiquette is often subtle and transgressed by newcomers who, like me, may have few opportunities but trial, error and embarrassment to accumulate such embedded knowledge. Though daily visits by my wee friend were seen as a break from work for me in the moment, Charles's calls, seen

through the lens of Moro serve to illustrate proper behaviour for giving and receiving, as well as help to clarify gender relations in regard to work.

The Moro Myth

> Moro, his mother Poposi and Aisapel wandered on, eventually making camp on the beach. Mother cooked a meal of one boiled taro, gave half to Moro, and shared the second half between herself and little Aisapel. The next morning Aisapel awoke complaining of hunger. Although Mother told him not to concern himself with a worthless child, Moro felt sorry for Aisapel and offered the child the remainder of his own piece of taro. Each night Mother cooked and distributed a single taro; each morning Aisapel awoke complaining of hunger. Moro blamed himself for the boy's discomfort and gave the child his own taro as compensation. On the fourth night, Mother prepared their last taro, and on the morning of the fifth day, Aisapel awoke hungry and complaining to his mother. "For pity's sake," Mother cried, "are we living in a village with our hunger? We have come here, to this uncultivated bush and this infertile beach." Moro again contributed his uneaten taro to Aisapel.
>
> At noon it began to rain, so they moved up from the beach to seek shelter under the trees. Cold and wet, Aisapel cried for the comfort of their home, complaining of their desolate and uncomfortable existence exposed on the beach. Despite Mother's attempt to keep the boy quiet, Moro sadly accepted responsibility for their predicament and told them to bide their time. That night, as the others slept huddled under the tree, Moro called forth their house and their gardens from Mt. Gidlo. [McPherson 1994a:160-161]

Further on in the tale, advanced once more by the complaining of Aisapel, Moro calls forth twenty young women who will right the wrong of Aisapel having to perform women's work. Poposi dispatches them immediately to the gardens while she remains at home to cook (McPherson 1994a:161-162).

My Friend Charles and Doing Right

Charles is a curious and adventuresome toddler. He would walk the couple hundred meters between our respective homes to visit with us on a regular basis, unaccompanied and seemingly at will. The approach of his thin but strong limbs carrying the slightly oversized belly of a well-fed and fit toddler always brought a smile to my face as our eyes locked on our mutually grinning but mute mouths, and sparkles seemed to pass back and forth between our eyes. Having dexterously grappled with the five branches cobbled 18 inches apart creating the staircase up to our porch, he would explore our kitchen/porch/office; careful to touch nothing in the process and particularly curious about any food we might have. With his inspection complete, he would walk to me and I would sit him on my lap.

Without a shared language between us, as with most relationships in the village, I would often resort to one of our few common understandings: food. I happily offered my little friend a finger banana or cooked taro, whatever was on hand at the moment. He in turn never asked for food, but waited until it was offered and then readily accepted. This initially appeared an odd behaviour for such a young person. However, over the months to come, Charles's unusually well developed social graces at such a young age allowed me to think about and observe etiquette and transgressions surrounding food.

In the myth presented, Aisapel's behaviour of asking for food is clearly marked out as a social transgression. His mother admonishes the demands he makes to his older brother at every turn. She prepares the food at hand and distributes it according to how she sees fit. In the tale, Aisapel's requests are quite overt and in bad form. Asking for

things for one's personal comfort or needs is seen as inappropriate. Yet at every turn, his requests are met by Moro.

During our stay there are daily requests for various and sundry items; however, the desires are usually framed as a requirement ideally of one's firstborn or if not, then for some member of the family senior to the person making the request. As with so many social interactions, acquisition through indirect means is a valued skill. Regardless as to whether the request is in fact for personal gain or not, no behaviour should be displayed in this manner. On the other hand, there is a competing and complementary exigency which suggests that a request made must be fulfilled. Despite the ill-mannered demeanour of Aisapel, a request or a need cannot and should not be dismissed by those behaving within correct social norms, as represented and presented by Moro-firstborn and exemplar of society. Asking and giving is serious business amongst the Bariai.

The other critical lesson to emerge from these visits is the clarification of gender responsibilities. Ideally, women plant, maintain and harvest the gardens, and then prepare and hand out the food at their discretion (Strathern 1988). Women also control the fire in which it is cooked. It is not uncommon to see a man walk to the hearth and request a log from the fire if he is not carrying one, which he will carry with him constantly to light the bush cigarettes men smoke[43].

Men have as their responsibilities to "provide" for their families. The older the man, or more specifically, the more prestige a man has acquired, the more his work becomes administrative in nature. Just as we may commonly understand that a

[43] There are several exceptions to the 'asking for someone else' rule. Asking for fire, betal nut or daka are exempt. In these cases however, there are strict kin tie rules which seem to apply in terms of who can do the asking to whom.

businessperson said to 'run' a company is most likely not the same as the worker who performs the labour to produce the widgets or services, so is the work configured - especially in regard to men's work among the Bariai. The lesson of the construction of our house can be seen in this light.

There is always food in our house, despite the fact we have no access to gardens. We never ask for food, yet mealtime never approaches without a steady stream of village women who would (seemingly) randomly arrive with prepared dishes of taro or *kaukau* 'sweet potato' or yam. The actual coordination of such an effort escapes me to this day. I do know there had been many orations at the village meetings (mostly men's work) about the importance of taking good care of the newly arrived guests, as we were there to find ways to help the village. Our arrival on the shores of Kokopo requires the villagers to find an understanding of how they would incorporate us into their daily lives, and how they would make sense of our presence within their reciprocal network.

Charles's mother, Susan, inevitably comes looking for him. The first few visits, she would have a worried look on her face and question him. I recognize enough words to realize she is asking him if he has asked for or taken food without asking. I assure no, he has done no such thing, as the food had been offered. She nods approvingly. Both Charles and I have done 'a right thing'.

Monday Morning Moots

Among the loftier question informants and others may have as to what *exactly* these anthropologists *do* is, for practical purposes, left to gossip outside the meetings. The first few meetings focus, in part, on ways of incorporating our very presence into the community. One after another, men pace the ground as they speak of Naomi's return as a

sign that she is committed to the community and helping improve their access to modern forms of transportation and education for the children. In return, it is their responsibility to make sure we are well looked after in terms of food (a woman's responsibility), shelter (the task of men) and our general safety (a duty bestowed on the village as a whole) throughout our stay.

One after another, men rise and present their wish lists of items, big and small. There is a request for school supplies: textbooks, pencils and paper for the children. Another would follow suggesting that if Naomi would be able to produce a motorized boat, a ship was preferable, then they would have access to larger markets and could provide the means to have access to sorely lacking hard currency through the sale of 'copra'[44], cocoa, and other local excesses their gardens might produce. As the list grows, so does my trepidation about my very presence. I am reminded of Geertz who rues:

> One is placed, in this sort of work, among necessitous men hoping for radical improvements in their conditions of life that do not seem exactly imminent: moreover, one is a type of benefactor of just the sort of improvements they are looking for, also obliged to ask them for charity- and what is almost worse, having them give it. This ought to be a humbling, thus elevating, experience; but most often it is simply a disorienting one. All the familiar rationalizations having to do with science, progress, philanthropy, enlightenment, and selfless purity of dedication ring false, and one is left, ethically disarmed, to grapple with a human relationship which must be justified over and over again in the most immediate of terms. [2000:150-151]

Naomi calms the panic written all over my face, with a knowing glance before she is invited to take the ground. It is a delicate act, this balancing of intent on the part of fieldworker and host – and I am thankful this role is hers, and not mine. She begins her oration by placing herself historically as an appreciative guest, honoured to have been

[44] This is dried coconut meat.

adopted by the ancestor Pore Siko (now long since dead). She addresses her relationships and her commitment to the Bariai, while pointing out her work as important because she is able to return to her homeland and share the life-ways of the Bariai to a larger world. Part of the proof of this work is evidenced by my presence; a student who upon hearing of this wonderful place with its hospitable, kind and generous people, has come along to see for herself.

As for her being the *rot bilong cargo,* capable of delivering vast quantities of goods, that is beyond her means as a teacher. However, she is committed to the area and will continue to establish connections and advocate for the Bariai in whatever way she can...[45] This is the means and method of local rhetoric. Naomi understands it well; she has navigated this path many times before. My lack of experience does not allow me to see this clearly as of yet. I sit with my uneasiness still pondering Geertz when he writes:

> What I am pointing to...is an enormous pressure on both the investigator and his subject to regard these goals as near when they are in fact far, assured when they are merely wished for, and achieved when they are at best approximated. This pressure springs from the inherent moral asymmetry of the fieldwork situation. [2000:154-155]

Our goals as anthropologists or as purveyors of goods are not clarified to anyone's satisfaction. They are murky and abstract at best. The village holds up its end of the bargain, regardless: from start to finish. They are concrete and clear.

The Monday Morning Moots are also a venue to hear of the comings, goings and politicking of the village in relation to commerce with outside merchants. The

[45] In fact Naomi, David and Dorothy Counts have numerous ongoing projects in the area, however thus far none of them have a direct short-term impact in the village. Naomi is, however, personally helping to sponsor Maia's daughter (Naomi's namesake) and another fellow to complete post-secondary programs. Mentioning this in the Moot may have been counter-productive as it could be construed as helping and favouring some clans over anothers.

configuration and pattern of village life make dealing with the rare but punctuated scheduled stops – a timetable determined by business people with a bit of cash to trade for a bit of Bariai - impossible. There are the *beche de mer* 'sea cucumber' merchants who arrive occasionally to see if there has been any harvesting. They seem satisfied with a little or an abundance. They come regardless with no definitive schedule.

This is not the case with a copra boat that shows up one day. The captain has come to speak with the men to ensure they will have hundreds of bags of copra at the ready when the big ship will pass by in several weeks. He talks, he paces, and he tries to create a bond of *wantok* to secure his position: "I am from here" he begins – "here" meaning he was born in a village somewhere in the general area, before moving to the city – "I have worked in the big cities but this is my home and I now would like to bring prosperity, share my prosperity with my people. Make copra and I will pay you cash on delivery. We will all prosper and have access to money and maintain the good way of living we have in our villages. We can have the best of both worlds."

Perhaps his links were not convincing enough, perhaps his timing is bad, or perhaps his orations are not strong. The date he set to return is days after the St. John the Baptist Feast Kokopo sponsors. There is no copra at the ready when the big ship arrives weeks later. All the men have been busy preparing for the celebration and the exchanges that would take place, not processing coconuts for copra. The captain is livid. He swears and curses, he yells and paces. "You will stay stupid bushman if you are too lazy to work for money. I had offered you the *rot* ('the road', if directly translated but the embedded meaning is 'the way to make money') and you are not interested. Stay here in your ignorance and let the world pass you by!"

The Kokopo men are nonplussed by his reaction. They had told him they had an important feast to attend to first. The captain leaves, and the Kokopo men turn back to Naomi, "So, what do you think you can do for us here? We have no way of making money for school fees and we have no transportation. Can you buy us a ship?"

Breasts

When we arrived in Kokopo the first day on the beach, most of the women, certainly nursing mothers and elders and pre-school age children were topless. I struggle writing this term 'topless'. It assumes an embedded understanding which infers the wearing of a shirt is somehow the norm and the absence of a shirt is a lack, as though there is "a naturalness" to this piece of social behaviour. It reminds me of a joke I heard on the radio years ago promoting a beach party of sorts whereby a voiceover of an indignant old lady unthinkingly says, "If God meant us to be naked, He would have made us that way!" No doubt this nonsensical logic is not far from the thought processes of missionaries who insisted on introducing the *laplap*[46] and *meri-blaus*[47], clothes contemporarily and ironically considered traditional wear.

Within a few days, it becomes important (well, at least apparent) to me, though not to Naomi, that there are fewer and fewer breasts being exposed in the village. Women seem to be more often wearing shirts or *meri blaus'* in our presence. When going to bathe and passing unsuspecting shirtless women, it is interesting to note that upon our return,

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[46] A *laplap* is what we might call a sarong, a long rectangular piece of fabric normally wrapped around the waist and tucked in at the side hanging to about calf length. When dancing, two *laplaps* may be worn; one as usual and the other as a gathered belt to hold the grass skirt panels in place. Female teenagers, on the other hand, forego the *laplap*-as-skirt, and have taken to wearing long walking-type shorts under their grass skirts. As mentioned earlier, I had not brought shorts to the field and so wore a *laplap* and it seemed more fitting for a woman of my age.

[47] Picture, if you will, the tops worn by those in a choir, almost knee-length, often replete with puffed short sleeves and a scalloped hemline. This is worn in concert with an ankle-length *laplap.*

their upper torsos are now clad. I wrestle with this observation for some time. Is it that the women are dressing because there is 'company'? During feasts or other celebrations when visitors come from other villages near and far, there is a tendency to see everyone dressed up, breasts covered unless participating in a dance and clad for that event.

But the subtlety of this is not obvious until I am long home and studying photos. Other than *laplaps and meri blaus,* the attire of most people comes from bags of clothing originating from second-hand bins in places where perhaps you and I live. I witness here the end result of the clothes recycling we practice at home and watch the transformation of the meaning of the garment. Cleanliness and covering with an urban (i.e. Western) flare is the fashion. Missing buttons, fallen hemlines and rips are irrelevant, though certainly not desirable. Covering is fashion, not modesty. But I do not *know* this in the field. There is so little I feel I can investigate or manipulate. I decide this may be my chance. It is small and insignificant, I think at the time, but I have a need to affect some form of research, however miniscule, to satisfy my curiosity and to test my hypothesis.

We are invited to witness and participate in a *singsing bilong kastom*[48]. The music and dancing are snatched from ceremony, however this will turn out not to be a performance piece staged for the visiting anthropologists. It is a party, an excuse to have fun that will last the whole night long, with dressing up, photographing and teaching me to dance as the opening act of the evening. How often I have read of anthropologists in the field describing the performances they suggest are staged for them, or the ceremonies they are invited to attend where they are introduced to and invited to learn the steps and the words of the group. I cannot say I recall reading a perspective pointing to the

[48] *Singsing bilong kastom* and *samsam bilong kastom* are used interchangeably. Though *singsing* is to sing and *samsam* is to dance, in activities deemed traditional, one never occurred without the other.

possibility that the event is in fact mounted for the pleasure and entertainment of the group. Is this because it is the anthropologist who wields the pen? I have no illusions here; I am part of the entertainment. Nor can I write out or reconfigure that phenomenon to suit the exigencies of the authorial voice of the writer of the text. The irony of writing about disempowerment as a methodological strategy for fieldwork with authority is difficult to reconcile.

We go to Agnes's house located at the far end of the village tucked up against the bottom of the jungle. As is protocol for special guests, I am invited onto the porch while she disappears into the house to retrieve the dyed grass skirt panels that are worn for *samsam bilong kastom*, traditional dancing. It has been decided (as usual by others) that I will learn to dance today and I will be appropriately attired as a *meri bilong ples,* as a local woman[49]. However, just how 'authentic' I will be is something to be negotiated. Only a few of the elder women still make their own skirts. Their skirts are made by tucking the blunt end of three-foot freshly-plucked cordyline fronds, front and back into a *laplap* wrapped around the waist, in the 'old-fashioned' way; with nothing on underneath. From the waist down, the outside of the thigh is exposed, an immodest decorum by the standards of those younger, but accepted and honoured because of tradition and a respect of the elders and their 'old' ways.

The grass skirt panels I am adorned with over top of my *laplap* are made from processed and uniformly cut grasses, dyed in vibrant yellow and red. They are a garment usually purchased from other villages or, as I was to later witness, at an impromptu

[49] *Meri bilong ples* has richer connotations as meaning someone rooted in village life. However, it can also be used in a derogatory fashion in urban environments to depict a lack of worldliness similar to our expression 'country bumpkin'.

marketplace which appeared during the St. John the Baptist Feast Day in Kokopo[50]. What I will wear to adorn my upper torso becomes the point of enquiry I will pursue.

Young girls who are or who have attended school, wear a bra under the cascade of floral garlands hung from their necks. Women with children do not. It is automatically assumed I will don the small t-shirt I am wearing, as I have no bra. It is a known 'fact' that *waitpela meri* do not go without a shirt at any time. I suggest that the shirt is not necessary if they are insistent upon giving me the experience of *meri bilong ples*. As usual, my opinion is taken into consideration but not acted upon until it has been discussed, confirmed and insisted upon by Naomi. I am heaped with necklaces of flower chains, shell money strands and a borrowed pair of circular boar tusks. Banana leafs criss-cross my shoulders and chest providing maximum breast coverage. Jewellery is brought from this one and that one for my arms neck and head. Each piece is then stuffed with yet more multi-coloured flowers. My skin is rubbed with coconut oils to create a shine denoting beauty and vitality. My face is painted in black and red.

There are few mirrors in Kokopo, certainly not something used with any regularity and those I saw were small shards of glass kept in the home. I do not see what a sight I am until I view the photographs some months later. This is just as well, for despite my desire to dress as a *meri bilong ples* and my theoretical musings about the concept of clothing, my personal filters are challenged once the dressing procedure is complete. It occurs to me that many of the older women have dark green and black tattoos covering their cheeks and foreheads which they would have seldom seen. There is a moment of epiphany where I realize why, when being shown pictures of themselves

[50] Female guests to the celebrations spread out grass skirts for sale on the ground on the edge of the festivities. These transactions occurred with shell money not hard currency.

from Naomi's last trip, the villagers did not always recognize themselves but may have to wait until someone else points and names them. This other sense of self begins to make sense to me as I leave the comfort of the enclave of women to venture into the dance circle. Perhaps this is all for the good. As the 'opening act' for the evening's festivities, I can only imagine seeing myself would not give me any useful data as to how my hosts see this transformation.

Linking arms with women on each side of me, the male drummers begin and the *samsam*[51] lessons start in earnest. We circle the drummers for the duration of the song, counter-clockwise always, repeating the deceptively simple dance steps as I am supported on both sides. As usual there is no teaching per se, there is showing, watching and feeling the rhythms of the music and the bodies.

> My image of me was completely dependant on the kind words of people that evening and the next day. I have not seen my face or body since arriving here! When the light was straining to send off just enough beamlets for a photo op, the drumming began. I was placed between two other *bilased*[52] women, Agnes and another younger woman. To my left was a circle of men, some drumming and some ready to sing. I was the amusement. The music began and the *samsam* lesson took place in front of 25 – 50 (?) on-lookers. This particular dance step is very simple in its mechanics. The feet gently shuffle thru the sand; the knees bent to help the gentle rocking of the pelvis. This action serves to displace the glass skirt. The bobbing of the backend of the skirt was the goal, an acceptable 'sexy' move. I am simultaneously encouraged and laughed at as I struggle to find the rhythm of my patient and learned partners on either side of me. This was PNG TV, I hope, at it finest, lol[53]. I can only speculate that this movement may have some relationship with the hilarious, beautiful and numerous wagtails (birds) who entertain us every evening in the village.

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[51] *Samsam* is the term for dancing. In this case, it is traditional dancing and not to be mistaken with other forms of movement to music. I learned this the hard way several days prior to this event when I spoke of my eager anticipation to learn to *samsam* and did a little jig whilst speaking. Susan upbraided my gestures, telling me this was *not* some *samsam bilong disko* (!) in the city, but ceremonial and sacred dances *bilong ol tumbuna.*

[52] Decorated

[53] lol – online chat short hand for 'laugh out loud' but its usage seems to be spreading even into the fields of PNG.

> So *counter-clockwise* we three move in a line around the drumming and singing men. At least I know my breasts are flapping underneath the pile of *bilas*. Sigh...
> [Field notes June 2003]

I am allowed to only dance one song at a time and then I am directed to sit down and rest for at least one more song, if not more. My entourage 'knows' *waitpela* are not used to much exertion and as usual, are taking great pains to care for my sensibilities, despite my mild protests. As I sit and watch between songs, newly arrived women come to gawk, smile and comment on my momentary transformation into *meri bilong ples*. There are raised eyebrows accompanying a smile which I learn to interpret as bemused approval and an occasional gentle poking at my breasts, "*meri bilong ples, meri bilong ples*", is the grinning mantra for the evening.

But of course, I am not. I want to dance; I want to stay at the party with the other *meri bilong ples*. But Naomi is an early-to-bed and early-to-rise person. When she tires after several hours, I am stripped of the grass skirts, flowers and jewellery and we are escorted back to our home. If I do not go with her, perhaps someone will be obliged to go back to the house and stay until I return. Unless one is a sorcerer or up to no good, no one would ever contemplate being alone (McPherson 1991).

As I crawl into the mosquito net protection where my bedroll awaits, full of the energy and excitement of someone who is a night owl, I grumble to myself about the unanticipated circumstance of dependency and obligation my position here exerts. In the distance, I am reminded of my position by the thumping of the drums that carries on until morning without us. By flashlight before closing my eyes I write:

> I have no personal identity insomuch as I am used to. I have many identities and roles, but they are determined by those around me

> and circumstance. I don't know how to explain this yet, but I am an individual to other individuals in that I think I have relationships with certain people that are developing into...well, maybe not. But regardless, what I may and may not do and say is determined by outside forces. Luckily for me in terms of verbal *faux pas*, my limited language skills still cannot get me into too much trouble!
> [Field notes June 2003]

Other than carefully orchestrated events, my autonomous range is limited to our house and yard, walking to and from the clan across the graveyard to which Naomi belongs, and more recently to the houses immediately in front of us where Charles and his kin live. We are now permitted to go to bathe at will and whim, though this was not without some negotiation and assertion on our part. Walking to visit others in the village, when conducting the census for example, could also be done as a pair. Moving farther afield still requires an invitation and an escort. Navigating in the jungle alone is not only socially unacceptable but impossible for Naomi and me without threat of getting lost or potentially hurt. Besides, for what reason would I want to go there alone? I am resigned to studying the comings and goings of the village, that which is within the reach of my tether. There is in fact plenty going on to occupy my time.

A Marriage to Spouse and Church

Women work exceptionally hard in Bariai. Up before dawn, stoking fires and preparing the morning meal, then off to the jungle gardens before midday to avoid the oppressive heat of the midday sun of the seacoast to plant, weed and gather taro and yams for the upcoming meals. Back down the mountain, stopping at the river to wash the produce of the day, the laundry left earlier, and themselves. Back in the village, food preparation begins again for the evening meal. Despite attempting to maintain a non-judgemental perspective, it was not long before my own cultural filters interfere with

truly understanding the process of food distribution, gendered workloads and relationships of power. Women appear to perform most of the work. From dawn till dusk, they create, maintain and process the food supply, haul water and then clean up after themselves and their families just to begin again. What I see, what I recognize, in that it is familiar and how I contextualize it, is initially limited by my background and experience (Strathern 1988). The men spend much less time in the gardens, it seems. They are more often than not, in the village meeting, planning and organizing an event such as a feast or a ceremony or legal matter or working on a punctuated project or event of some sort. What I could 'see' initially is reduced to what is familiar to me; men responsible for delineated domestic tasks that could be scheduled by convenience as opposed to the continually task-driven work of women. Stories, gossip and events of ongoing domestic violence also (wrongly) confirm and reconfirm some of the Western feminist assumptions and views of patriarchal dominance I hold deep in my core. McPherson notes:

> ...the anthropologist recognizes herself as an alien and the process through which the complex self is objectified and deconstructed, thereby exposing the ethno- and egocentricities that are effects of a life-long enculturation process. [1999:24]

As one often reads in accounts of fieldwork, we too are seen as the local, if not temporary, minor aid station. It did not take long upon our arrival for our porch to become the intermittent clean up centre for various cuts and abrasions. On one of these occasions, a woman arrives at our porch to have some particularly nasty cuts on her

elbow and legs cleaned up. Through gossip we hear she is a *sekan kanu*[54]. Her wounds are the result of a domestic dispute in which she 'got in the way' of her spouse's machete - several times. His first wife had recently given birth and he is spending an inordinate amount of time at her house. Rumours and gossip intermittently circulate about so-and-so being involved in domestic altercations and occasionally fresh bruises appear on a woman's face. But for the most part, as is true here in Canada, we are not privy to the details of intimate violence. I wince and shudder but not until my return home can I intellectually engage with the vast literature produced my 'grand-teacher'[55] on this subject (Counts 1987, 1990, 1992) or other anthropological 'foremothers' who work on gender in Melanesia (Jolly 1992; Strathern 1988; Weiner 1972).

My opinions about the plight of women begin to gel, that is, until shaken loose once again when a very public argument broke out.

Domestic Discontent

There are times when the obvious cannot be seen until something extraordinary punctuates and contrasts the normal patterns of the 'everyday'. There is an unusual ruckus disturbing the normal cacophony of the sea, animals and children emanating across the graveyard from one of the houses of our adoptive family. Crowds begin to gather in front of the house of Don and Rasen. People passing by call out to inform me they are having a fight and that they are going over to see and hear what the disturbance

[54] A *sekan kanu* is a second wife. Christian beliefs intermingled with local traditions have made polygamy appear to be on the wane, but it is not unheard of. This woman later recounts to us that in fact she was 'tricked' into this situation, having understood that her husband had 'divorced' his first wife for her. Yet our census information informs us that he was moving between houses for many years, depending on which wife was pregnant and or nursing. Sexual relations with a nursing or pregnant woman are considered inappropriate. Whether her story is true or whether it is merely what she chose to tell us, I do not know.
[55] When attending an Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) conference the February 2003 prior to leaving for the field, Dorothy Counts wittily introduces me to Christine Jourdan as her 'grand-student', establishing our academic kinship ties.

is about. From the perch on my porch I can see pots and pans flying and crashing off their porch and hear sharp and unusually loud angry voices shouting back and forth. My own sensibilities will not allow me to join the throngs, though it becomes obvious my notions of public and private spheres did not mesh with the realities here. It is the business of everyone to gather to see and hear first-hand what the commotion is about and to discuss their opinions quite publicly.

Twenty minutes into the mayhem, Don throws Rasen from the four-foot porch down into the sand. With what appears to be nothing more than bruised feelings, Rasen shouts back at her husband, grabs the youngest still-nursing toddler and takes off in the direction of her brother's house at the east end of the village. It is there she remains for the duration of my stay; her older children freely roaming back and forth between the two houses at will but eating from their mother's hearth at their uncle's house.

Of Kitchens...

Twice daily, men and boys could be found milling around at meal times, nonchalantly congregating in the space between the two rows of houses in the seashore village. They chat and informally talk about the day's business in their kin groups, not necessarily at their own houses, but never out of intimate visual eye contact with them. Brothers, fathers, young male children and babies socialize and play until they are signalled by the woman of their respective households their evening meal is ready.

In the evening following the fight, the cookhouse fire at Don and Rasen's home is cold. There is no food being prepared or cooked and his children are conspicuously missing. He is not meandering in front of his home where he would normally be found, but sheepishly shuffling in front of his mother's fire across the road. He wanders and

chit-chats with his younger brother until eventually his mother offers up an evening meal. Twice daily this is where he could be found; a testament and walking billboard of a domestic rift as yet unsettled.

...and Karismatiks

'Cause then there was this boy whose
Parents made him come directly home right after school
And when they went to their church
They shook and lurched all over the church floor
He couldn't quite explain it
They'd always just gone there, mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm...
[Roberts: 1993]

Village events spread quickly in Kokopo. Eyewitnesses to the event exchange information with others. Rasen has been bitterly complaining for some time that Don is too busy with his work with the *Karismatik* religious group to rebuild her dilapidated cookhouse.

Continuing to wonder if we are spies from the church, we are invited and attend several of the *Karismatik* healings. They take place outside the home of whoever is ailing, beginning after dark and continuing throughout the night until dawn – often lasting for two or three consecutive days each. There is some form of 'healing' needed at least once a week somewhere in the village. It is no wonder Don has been too tired to fulfill his other obligations.

The scene of the service is replete with men dressed in their finest white shirts and trousers, women in *meri-blaus*', yelling, ranting and waving the bible. No healing session is complete without several key people 'catching the spirit', writhing and rolling in the sand. Interspersed between the orators' calling forth God to witness their devotion and to

heal the ill, the congregation sings hymns to a strumming guitar. I muse that this scene; locality and the cultural differences aside, this could take place in some of the Southern Baptist-type churches where some of my relatives worship in the United States! The words are spoken in English[56] and Tok Pisin, never the local language of Bariai. The procedure is formulaic.

When I enquire as to how this religion has come to be in Bariai, Don and others are clear to point out that it is not another religion, but merely another hand of the *mama lotu Katolik* ' the Catholic mother church'. Missionaries had come to the village and took recruits to a town far away (the name was not noted) and instructed them about this *arm* of the church, saying it would add to their arsenal of faith. The methodology meshed well with the indigenous beliefs in spirits that could be called upon or exorcised by sorcerers, but in this case with community participation, the technique would be only for 'good'. It would aid in sending out the message loud and clear that this community has embraced Jesus Christ.

At no point did I hear direct mention of a belief system resembling cargo cults described by Peter Lawrence (1964) or Peter Worsley (1968) nor did the rhetoric or actions mimic that which the Counts encountered in Kaliai many years before (D. A. Counts 1971, 1972; D. R. and D. A. Counts 1976; D. A. and D. R. Counts 1977). However, the implicit link being created between finding a new source of curative power from the *waitpela* God and the potential for this movement to transform into a search for the key to *waitpela*'s material resources and wealth will be worth attention in the future.

[56] There is no one in the village who can actually speak English. These words have been memorized and most commonly consist of key phrases, biblical passages and slogans.

The recruits had been invited to watch videos over and over again to learn how to perform these services. The hosts spoke to everyone and approached several individuals, telling them they had been *chosen* to 'feel the spirit' in their bodies during the worship. This too had been observed and memorized through the video. Others were told they had gifts of clairvoyance and should share the stories that would come to them from this day forth.

Don sees this new organization as a means for making a name for himself. The powerful orations last for hours at a time until the speaker is temporarily spent. It is then taken up, almost like a tag-team, by one of two other men. Or perhaps, a competition for the floor, on any given night, all hoping this new method of healing will increase their renown. It is a small place, a place that has appropriated a system from afar and is in the process of massaging it into something useful internally, while hoping against hope it will also serve as a tool to further gain access to the riches they see in the distance yet just beyond their grasp. Watching this spectacle brings forth such sadness in me. There are some commonalities to the colonial experience which ring universal despite their location in the world, despite the method, texture or demeanour of the invasion.

> In a small place, people cultivate small events. The small event is isolated, blown up, turned over and over, and then absorbed into the everyday, so that at any moment it can and will roll off the inhabitants of the small place's tongues. For the people in a small place, every event is a domestic event; the people in a small place cannot see that they might be part of a chain of something, anything. The people in a small place see the event in the distance heading directly towards them and they say, "I see the thing and it is heading towards me." The people in a small place then experience the event as if it were sitting on top of their heads, their shoulders, and it weighs them down, this enormous burden that is the event, so that they cannot breathe properly and they cannot think properly and they say, "This thing that was only coming towards me is now on top of me," and they live like that, until

> eventually they absorb the event and it becomes a part of them, a part of who and what they really are, and they are complete in that way until another event comes along and the process begins again. [Kincaid 2000:52]

I realize early on this new community activity could replace my lost topic. It would be new and something I could follow should I find the opportunity to return again at a later date. But try as I might, I cannot distance myself from personal feelings of anger and disgust, along with - I will admit - a touch of self-righteous outrage at what I would come to see as a concerted and politically-motivated surge of Western right-wing conservatives continually finding new (old?) ways of dividing the world into 'us' and 'them'[57]. Even here in this dispassionate forum without prejudice, I cannot squelch the buttons this pushes and the bells it rings. In short order I make a decision to no longer go to any further healing sessions, though keeping my thoughts about it to myself. There is no doubt in my mind it is a fertile opportunity lost, but one I am not equipped to pursue. I have the space and the silence Jamaica Kincaid addresses but not the skills as of yet.

With compassion for my limitations Naomi, my wise and knowledgeable anthropological elder, notes my anguish but continues her work in this area.

Somehow I can participate in the vivacity of the 'Past' with ease, excitement and comfort. When faced with the workings of everyday life - religion *does* play a major role in the everyday – I falter. This is disturbing as I consider all that is written about

[57] In addition to this type of proselytizing, the air waves around the island were being over taken by fundamentalist radio stations. We had initially brought in a mechanical wind-up radio to use and then leave behind. However, we found that where ever there should have been a local radio station from the capital of Kimbe or Port Moresby, a more powerful religious station had moved in blocking or interfering with the local signal. All of the English stations we found had an overtly aggressive and militaristic tone to their religious message and freely mixed blatant capitalism and profit with the divine. We took the radio back with us, in the end.

anthropology, with its ethnographic present and partial perspective which can and certainly has privileged the 'weird and the wonderful'; fields of study that demark difference, not similarities. Though I cannot cope with the *Karismatik* movement, I resolve to open my enquiry to other sources of culture which seem familiar to me and yet transformed. I will soon have a perfect occasion to work with the concept of culture 'in different ways'.

...and Kitchens and Bridewealth Again

There are holes in the floor and scrap pieces of every kind of imaginable material to be found spanning the gaps in Rasen's cookhouse. This tenuous situation had incurred more than a few mishaps and injuries for Rasen and several of the children. This is further aggravated by the slow pace at which Don and his kin had been proceeding to conclude his family's bride-price obligations to the kin of his brother's wife.[58] The preparations for her final bride-price payments and the accompanying feast were to transpire in the months to come. The practice of bride-price as being due and payable at the time of the marriage is perhaps more a construct built into anthropology textbooks than a reflection of reality. More often than not, it is a transaction spanning years (Carrier 1993; Strathern 1984). In this case though, the payment is long overdue. The 'bride' and her kin had held up their productive and reproductive responsibilities: She has produced many live healthy children and food for all, during their marriage.

The following morning as I pass by their house on the way to continue the census, Don is busily tearing apart the old cookhouse, constructing a platform for the bride-price

[58] See Andrew Strathern (1983:4-10) and Marilyn Strathern (1984:14-73) for discussions on marriage transactions.

ceremony and generally planning for the traditional work he had been neglecting. He works on these projects consistently until the day of my departure. Within two weeks of the fight, as the new head of the family since Peter's retirement he has also sent his two younger brothers on a trade mission to sell sandalwood oil so there would be cash to purchase the rice and *tinpis* 'tin fish' necessary for the ceremony.

Finding the Balance of Power – My Place or Yours?

On the surface, Rasen's departure from her nuclear home showed all the markings of all-too-familiar signs of forms of the oppression of women universalized by some Western feminisms. However, it did not take long for me to see that my limited understanding had been flawed by what I could not recognize.[59] What had escaped me as I framed life in the village was that women not only worked hard growing the food, but they in fact controlled not only most of the means of production but also the distribution of food. Women determined who they fed, and how much. Food is a shared commodity but there are many rules around its distribution (Strathern 1972, 1988; Weiner 1976).

The shuffling about of the non-producing individuals[60] and the void caused by Don's home fires not burning in fact served as the visual cue I needed to 'see', understand and interpret how relations of power are played out.

Rasen may have displaced herself however she is in no way a 'displaced' person. Her life continues much as it always had. She goes to her gardens daily, cooks and gives food to family members of her choosing; only the location of her time in the village

[59] Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (1989:3) illustrate the conceptual problems anthropology encounters when using words such as 'household', 'domestic' or 'family'.
[60] Of course men were producers too, but not at mealtime. Their responsibilities were of a much punctuated nature. They built the houses, fences in the gardens and communal structures along with the very time-consuming church and traditional ceremony work; both which required external and internal networking and trade.

changes. Her response to both the domestic violence and her unfulfilled requests for a new *kukhaus* demonstrates her agency and power. Don is in fact very fortunate her family lives in the same village. Kokopo is an exceptionally desirable village; it has a clean beach with plenty of close, clear and pristine fresh water[61]. It may have been a difficult task to woo her back (as it appeared this would happen once his work was accomplished) had she not come from the same village though a different clan group.

Though on the surface it would appear Bariai has patriarchal and patrilocal systems at play, according to some of the findings of the census-taking of Naomi McPherson, there are more complex patterns underpinning this local ideology. Her initial conclusions are that there may have been a different organizational system in place prior to the arrival of "Catholicism." According to the results of our census, it is not uncommon for married women unhappy with the behaviour of their husbands to return to their family of origin in protest. Once there, the husbands may have to travel to and from one village to the next to woo their wives back, or as our research shows, move to their wife's village.

[61] Stephen Keu, a man with a Masters degree in environmental science and originally from the Kove culture group of WNB was hired by my elders to conduct environmental assessments of the land use, pollution, and water quality. I do not have access to his report but in conversation he told me I would most likely never again have an opportunity to drink water as clean as in the rivers surrounding Kokopo.

Complicity

Going to the Gardens

I am finally deemed competent enough to go to with the women to the gardens, my first event away from the village without the pomp and circumstance of a major outing. The treks undertaken to church each Sunday call for the abilities of a tight-rope walker to navigate on logs stretched over swamps. I can easily cross these now without the assistance of others. I no longer trip as often on roots underfoot along the paths.

Maia takes me to her gardens along with her sister Wanda. We climb the jungle paths for awhile then sit and rest at what appear to be communal meeting spots. Climb, sit, rest, chew, talk, climb, sit, rest, chew, talk. Others come and go as well, sitting, chewing betel nut, talking and laughing. I am given the guided tour of both land and sea. As we pass by gardens, Maia tells me who works this one and that. When we come to a clearing, the expanse of the ocean comes into view. It is interesting how the village is intimately deceptive. By virtue of being in a bay, I would often forget we were in fact on the ocean. The corners of the bay grant a false sense of delineation and *containedness.* From the perspective of the mountain this illusion evaporates. Looking north, there is nothing but water and the shadows of distant islands far off in the distance. I am consumed with the realization that this perspective reflects the way in which I must contain the field to understand it, yet from the top of the jungle, the containment evaporates and the entirety and vastness of the world is laid plain once again.

As we pass other gardens I am shown who is working which sections of land. Women have different neighbours where they work during the day. This too points to the

parameters and limitations of my perspective from spending most of my time in the village.

Close to our final destination, we take one more rest at a gathering place in the gardens. Maia spies my neighbour, the old woman Gertrude with Agnes's firstborn. They are coming our way but they have not seen us. I am pulled into a delightful conspiracy as Maia and Wanda lie down on the ground out of sight so it appears I am alone, having me call out to Gertrude and the child. The joke is hilarious though short-lived. Their utter surprise lasts a minute as they approach but when the questioning begins, I am unable to sustain the joke. I name my accomplices when asked, though they remain hidden until Gertrude and the child arrives at the site and spy the hiding spot. There is wonderful laughter shared as they sit down with us to chew betel nut. Away from the performance element of crowds gathering to witness my first introduction to *buai* (betel nut), I am offered and accept it again. This time there is no instruction; it is assumed I know what to do with it. The taste is not nearly as wonderful as the smell and yet again I am surprised by this as my mouth fills with red saliva and I attempt to chew and spit. Wanda decides I need a little *buai* bag, a container for lime and *daka* of my own to complete my *meri bilong ples* look. She produces this paraphernalia for me the next day. Having relaxed and enjoyed each other's company, it is now time to walk to the river to bathe and quench our thirst.

It is the same river I normally bathe in, but just higher up the mountain. The river here cuts deep. We carefully walk down into the dark canyon; even Maia and Wanda have walking sticks. Conversation is cut short as both women focus on the dangerous descent while mumbling incantations announcing our approach to the potential spirits

who may be present. After bathing, they suggest I should put on my shirt. I have been walking without it through the shade of the jungle. The garden areas are open to the sun and they point out I should continue to "cook" my breasts slowly. We laugh again, together.

At Maia's garden, she points out the plants that are food and the weeds. We sit on a log, in the shade and rest again. I am wondering if we are resting so often for my sake or if this is the life. When it is time to work, I am told to stay in the shade and rest while they work. I run after Maia and ask if I can help or at least watch. She is concerned I will get my hands dirty. *Waitpela* do not like to get their hands dirty. I tell her I love to get my hands dirty in the soil. I tell her I used to always have a garden before I went back to school. I tell her my hands clean up the same as anyone else's. She is surprised but gets a digging stick for me and shows me how to look for and retrieve *kaukau* 'yam'.

The vines and leaves of the *kaukau* plant cover the earth, vines running every which way. One pushes aside the leaves and looks for big bumps in the soil. When found, the trick is to get the stick into the dirt and locate the *kaukau* without breaking the skin and not before determining if the *kaukau* is of a reasonable size to harvest or whether it should be left alone to grow more. In most cases, it is also attached at both ends to an underground root system. I assume it is desirous to re-bury exposed roots and this is confirmed with a nod. Learning by doing: When I start gardening with Maia, I merely follow her and she points and I dig it up. After she demonstrates this several times I still cannot grasp what it is that she is seeing that informs her there is a big *kaukau* present. Learning does not come merely from observation in such a short time. I ask her to show me what she was looking for. As is the case too often, I cannot see it until I know what I

am looking for. I am looking for swollen mounds of dirt, red in colour and coarse in texture. I am finally deemed competent enough to be left to my own devices. My success rate drops substantially when I left on my own but I do find some and manage to fill the basin I have been given.[62]

Left to my own devices…I am participating however miniscule, in a life-way designed to directly meet the needs of its members regularly, self-sufficiently and most importantly, without one good reason to over-produce. Clean, clear water. Fresh, healthy food and soil that crumbles off your stick or hands. It takes my breath away. I look up and over the tree tops to the ocean once again; I am reminded of the vastness and interconnections my romantic imagination suppresses in order to privilege these thoughts. There is of course, extra food: for *Kastom* work, exchanges, feasts and the like. Extra food is also transported and sold at markets, a four-hour poling expedition by canoe to Cape Gloucester for hard currency; brutal work for a pittance. I am also reminded we are here for a particular three month cycle, when food is abundant. The rainy season will deliver less food from the earth and hard times will follow as villagers wait for the crops to regenerate. I suppress that every five years or so the gardens will deplete the soil of its nutrients and the hard work of clearing new space in the jungle for new gardens will take place. The fun of digging up vegetables with a stick could most likely be rewritten as the drudgery of women's work if my stay would have been one year and not three months. Catching myself more quickly now, I begin to see the line I must cross between sightseer or tourist and anthropologist. It is a process of learning; the garden teaches me as have many of my experiences that I must learn by doing.

[62] Judith Oakley writes of the embodied knowledge that comes to the anthropologist and the change of the perception of the people when participating (however incompetently) in physical labour in the field (1992:16-17).

With my basket full of produce, I go to help Maia pull weeds. Part of her garden suffers from neglect sustained while she had been in Kimbe to check up on her daughter. Educating one's children has costs beyond what has been visible to me to this point. Gardens are life.

When the weed pulling is done, we sit down again, before packing everything up to be carried on our heads. I am given a two-quart-size bowl containing six tomatoes, some ginger and I am told to carry it on my head. We then walk back to the public rest area we had stopped at on the way up. My hands remain at my side, never touching the bowl.

Gertrude's Name and Tail/Tale

Gertrude and her grand daughter are already there taking it easy and roasting finger bananas on a small fire. Their abundant harvest surrounds them. Maia proudly speaks of how much work Gertrude accomplishes. She tells of Gertrude gathering all the wood needed for her four sons and that she constantly works in all of their gardens.

Gertrude interjects to tell her story. She was not always this industrious. When she was young, she was very lazy and enjoyed sleeping, she says. Her mother tried getting her to go to the garden but she would not go. So her mother hit her three times and since then she works hard.

Weeks prior, I had been given a local name by Alan and it was being used with more and more frequency by members of his family. Though initially honoured - thinking (or at least hoping) it was a sign of some level of acceptance – I am called *Donga*, the Bariai word for 'teeth'. Without language skills I sat and smiled the first month and a half

- a wide-mouthed grin, I fear. On this beautiful day in the jungle garden Gertrude decides I need another Bariai name apart from *Donga*. Her tone and eyes tell me *Donga* was a part of PNG TV. She pronounces I will be *Tapu*, her namesake because I share traits with her. I love to work, clown around and laugh. For the rest of the afternoon and during selected other times in the field, there are shared moments of laughter that feel inclusive. But PNG TV remains part of what I can reciprocate at other times. It is the least I can do to provide some entertainment value. This I can in spades and it has the added benefit of me not being able to take myself too seriously.

Now Naomi has no time for this old woman. She considers her a bit crazy, too. There are people in the field, as there are at home, we just do not care for. But I find Gertrude charming. After the naming she settles in to tell me a story of going to *Glosta* 'Cape Gloucester[63]' to have the first of her babies. She births a snake-child, she insists, but the nuns and Padre will not let her see it. They say it is dead and they take it away immediately. Gertrude tells me they take away her baby because they want to keep it for themselves.

I smile; I have heard this story before sitting in a classroom oh so many years ago. Moro the creator being of the Bariai, the deliverer of wealth is being introduced to me in a birthing story, what I had initially come to search out. Her tale is fantastic and heartfelt when spoken. Moro the creator being, deliverer of wealth and symbol of self-sufficiency does not leave of his own volition as he did the last time (McPherson 1994a) but is taken

[63] Cape Gloucester is a town about two hours West by motorized boat, four to five hours poling a canoe or eight hours walking from Kokopo. This is the location of the 'local' high school and a hospital of sorts though there is no medical doctor on staff.

away by those who are seen as already having *rot bilong kargo.* Is this the rantings of a crazy woman or is this Gertrude's explanation for their present situation?

After eating roasted bananas pulled for the fire upon our arrival, we pack up to leave. As we walk down the mountain, women oh'ed and ah'ed as we met up or crossed paths. Maia leaves me at the church after another brief rest. She is going back to a banana garden to do some planting. I am reminded my participation is partial. I continue down with Wanda to bathe before returning home.

Back to (the) Business... of Religion, Modernity and Madness

Don believes he can find a market for the sandalwood sap that is in abundance somewhere in the jungle, but he says not where. When the missionaries came, they had some incense that smelled the same. He figures 15,000 kina[64] would buy a permanent construction house. Then maybe, he hastily adds, he would help the community. I shudder at the potential double-bind he may find himself in.

The differences of degree located within systems of indigenous economies of socio-political exchange and kinship obligations could easily transform into differences in kind as the country's most fortuitous and enterprising citizens seek a path of individual accumulation which by its very nature alienates them from their village roots (Smith 2002:174-175). In another island on the northeast coast of PNG, the village of Kragur is experiencing a growing fissure within the community, witnessed and noted by Michael Smith between his initial fieldwork in the 1970s and again upon his return in 1998. As the village begins to introduce elements of a cash economy through their dealings with a larger, outside marketplace and men begin an out-migration for employment, the

[64] Kina is the national currency of PNG. One Canadian dollar is equivalent to approximately 2.5 Kina.

community develops a strategy of incorporating and explaining both church[65] and a cash economy into the existing structure in the form of the ideology of *gudpela pasin,* 'the Good Way' to live as a cohesive community (Smith 2002:30-31). Tradition and the rhetoric therein are seen as the means for maintaining a cohesive sense of group. Yet Smith concedes during his visit in 1998, while the rhetoric prevailed to some extent - people were still judged according to their *pasin* – their character and behaviour, but more prevalent also are individual complaints about the disrespect of elders and the neglect of kinship obligations (2002:171). Gone is the privileged position The Good Way promised by the ancestor so long ago as Smith remarks:

> I heard no fervent public speeches about keeping money in its place (behind God, Maria [Mary] and perhaps the ancestors) of the kind I had heard in the 1970s... Inside Kragur, movement toward the kinds of differences in monetary fortunes and interests characteristic of town life would belie claims that Kragur was a place of unusual harmony and solidarity. [2002:172]

In Bariai there too is currently no negative correlation between religion, a cash economy and the reciprocal kinship-based economy still practiced here. Many men express mixed emotions when the topics of mining or logging are brought up but never in relationship to the church. They are devout in their particular practice of Catholicism. It seems to be a devotion augmented and no longer relegated to Sunday service as it was during Naomi's last fieldwork (pers. con.). At the moment, the blame is directed towards lack of transport, the government and their own lack of 'getting the words right' when in prayer or getting heard by the White God who has obviously been in touch with the

[65] A recent myth developed which speaks of the God of the Catholic church having come to Kragur prior to the arrival of the missionaries and speaking to an elder, giving him directives about how to live from that day forth and to be prepared for the missionaries who would follow. In this way, Kragur put together a syncretic worldview which included a mandate to continue sharing while embracing the Catholic Church.

waitpela. If they could only figure out the *rot* 'the way to money', they too will have it all, as we do.

> I wanna scream and shout!! "Don't do it!! Protect yourselves and your land. It is so beautiful here. You control your days and nights, your work schedules and your play time. You mix them all up and it is not like that where I come from." I do realize I am romanticizing, but despite knowing this, the emotions are strong. Point of contact: Naomi has a good point. What can you talk about when experienced life is so different and we have the upper hand in some respects having the knowledge of the workings of ... well maybe not, but at least some 1st hand experience of both worlds. The people of Kokopo have merely imaginings. The inequities are apparent to all but the methods of coping with them vary. Naomi says there is nothing to talk about. It would be irresponsible at best and equally as damaging as missionary work at worse. When looking at the big picture this seems a reluctant best answer. But on the ground there is something really wrong with it. These real people who lead real lives that I will be attempting to explain to a larger audience soon. If one day they are able to look back and see what has been done, they as a group - they who stayed and watched and then understand - they may not be pleased. If they don't survive, it will be just another job of salvage anthropology sent in before the cats, shovels and graders. They talk about their world, their families, their religion, their language, their culture to me. Is it truly for a few crumbs, a pack of rice or a kerosene lamp? I can't imagine that to be the case. Or are we the equivalent of a Bariai lottery ticket, by talking to us their chances are slim to none. But if you don't play, you can't win. [scribbled rantings, no date June 2003]

It is of no comfort nor is there currency in, on some level 'knowing', as Keesing and Jolly remark (Marcus and Fischer 1986) "most local cultures worldwide are products of a history of appropriations, resistances, and accommodations". Those are infuriating words of unaffected, disinterested social scientists as I witness, experience and 'feel' my own outrage. Here, in my visceral anger and sadness I prefer – I choose – to harken Jamaica Kincaid's more melancholy assessment:

> The people in a small place cannot give an exact account, a complete account, of themselves. The people of a small place cannot give an exact account, a complete account of event (small though they may be). This cannot be held against them; an exact account, a complete account, of anything, anywhere, is not possible... The people in a small place can have no interest in the exact, or in completeness, for that would demand a careful weighing, careful consideration, careful judging, careful questioning. It would demand the invention of a silence, inside of which these things could be done. It would demand a reconsideration, an adjustment, in the way they understand the existence of Time. To the people in a small place, the division of Time into the Past, the Present and the Future does not exist. An event that occurred one hundred years ago might be as vivid to them as if it were happening at this very moment. And then, an event that is occurring at this very moment might pass before them with such dimness that it is as if it had happened one hundred years ago.... When the future, bearing its own event, arrives, its ancestry is then traced in a trancelike retrospect, at the end of which, their mouths and eyes wide with their astonishment...[Kincaid 2000: 52-54].

I see the luxury of 'space' Kincaid writes about as also a heavy responsibility. While perhaps there are those who would gloss over this incident - this crisis taking place in the field notes - as an off-day - it occurs to me in the *present writing* that this may not be a literary otiose, but the birthing place of raw emotion later transformed into acceptable discourse of grand theory. Is this not but an alternative construction, what we can do with the messy experiential bits, what *we can do* with the luxury of time and space, what we can then and later see as imperialist nostalgia? In any case, whether I can presume to share great thoughts with great men is irrelevant. The key revelation is the crisis I perceived was a transference of sorts. Whether the coming crisis I perceive is immanent or not, in that moment in the field, it is *I* in crisis. It is my moment of 'in the field' culture shock and has more to do with my visceral awakening to the relationship between the "us" I do not want to momentarily be a party to and the "them" I have been

constructing. With the luxury of time afforded me by being within the "us" since the field, I must assume the responsibility to write down the roots, the seeds to my awareness from its conception/inception to the final delivery here on paper. It is a process, indeed.

Marcus' point that this perspective is not tenable in theory holds true in the field as well. The alternatives are to leave (this is not an option) or to find a way to re-conceptualize the relationship. Carrying the weight and responsibility of Western history can only be productive at times. A crisis of conscience, a mental melt-down and perhaps a bit of culture shock has its place in the field but there must be room for other experiences as well.

And Don? With his home fires still extinguished and his traditional work filling his days, we do not hear his voice ringing out chapter and verse in the middle of the night as often any more. There were others to replace him, though...

The strain between Catholicism and tradition did manifest itself however in other ways. St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of the Kokopo church. It is a 15 minute trek across a swamp and up the mountain to get to the church.[66] On June 24th, Kokopo hosted a feast day[67] that drew hundreds of people from the surrounding villages; some from as far away as a three-hour motorboat ride. While still considered villagers, the 'bushmen in boats' have greater access to the town of Kimbe, hard currency, mission benefits and

[66] I must say, I carried with me a nugget to ponder for the whole of my fieldwork. Colonial forces had relocated mountain garden-dwellers such as the Bariai to the seashore. All of the churches I saw along the coast where situated above the villages on higher ground, away from the *solwara* 'salt water', the ocean. While I have no illusions the history of colonization and missionization can be conflated into one process, they did function in concert to some degree, none the less. With this layer of enquiry added to the equation it turns dislocation and relocation into a dialectic of repositioning. Hierarchy is introduced in physical form.

[67] Feast days are events where food is distributed by clan affiliation. It is not a social eating event. The stress and anxiety of the preparations for this day were tremendous as, despite the rhetoric of the Catholic saint being celebrated, it is a fund-raiser (food for money) but executed in a method more resembling *traditional* exchange work.

Western goods. They have the means and access to fuel their outboards, a luxury no one in Kokopo could afford during our stay[68].

Interspersed between traditional *bisnis*,[69] dance performances of the host and visiting villages are a series of 'action dramas'[70]. The themes include organized religion, community cohesion and AIDS awareness. It is notably consistent, regardless of the context that sorcery, tradition, and responsiveness to, if not respect for the wisdom of the elders is derided in either the personification of an old buffoon, or ominously noted as 'black' knowledge from the past that impedes the benefits of and access to all that modernity has to offer, both spiritually and economically. Whether comedic or dramatic, the audience is enthusiastic and attentive to the *action dramas.*

The conflict of the message delivered in the *action dramas* and the ongoing performative *biznis* taking place seems apparent, but only to me. There is a complicity here of which I am not privy to its membership. In the space of the feast, roles are reversed whereby villagers can sit comfortably and reconcile the contradictions of larger more powerful ideologies with their own internal beliefs. I have been metaphorically flipped inside out and turned on my head. Is this not exactly what I must do as a member of my society at all times? Do I not find mental strategies to reconcile the contradictions

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[68] We made a day trip to Gloucester by motorboat to visit the local hospital and high school one day. In order to secure gasoline, Don had to pole his canoe two hours away and back for our purchase of fuel. In return, as is common practice, whoever could fit on the boat and wanted to come, did so. Weekly, some mothers would pole four hours each way to bring food to their teenaged children who studied there. In turn, the teens would walk home through the jungle Friday afternoon for the weekend, arriving Saturday morning and leaving again Sunday shortly after church to be back for high school Monday morning.

[69] The official program was a fundraiser of sorts. Guests paid 1kina for a basket of food. However, I would argue that those travelling from afar would not have wasted this opportunity to conduct other 'traditional business; at the same time during their stay.

[70] Action dramas are a method of disseminating information in the form of skits and very much a center-periphery phenomenon. We heard they were used by many church groups and NGO's as a means of spreading specific messages in remote areas.

of the rhetoric of my place of origin with the many personal counter-beliefs I have and navigate within the system in which I circulate?

Marcus points out:

> This affinity arises from their (the ethnographer and the informant) mutual curiousity and anxiety about their relationship to the "third" – not so much the abstract contextualizing world system but the specific sites elsewhere that affect their interactions and make them complicit in relation to the influence of that "third"- in creating the bond that make their fieldwork relationship effective. This special sense of complicity does not entail the sort of evading fictions that Geertz described as anthropological irony, in which anthropologist and informant pretend to forget who and where they otherwise are in the world in order to create the special relationship of fieldwork rapport. Nor is it this the covered-up complicity of fieldwork between the anthropologist and imperialism, as is described in Rosaldo's essay. Rather, complicity here rests in the acknowledged fascination between anthropologist and informant regarding the outside "world." [1999:101]

Naomi is constrained by 'visiting foreign dignitary' status and responsibilities. She remains a captive of the make-shift stage for the afternoon. Resident villagers are busy with preparations and performance as any good host would be. I wander alone throughout the festivities. So? You say? Despite a limited arena, this marks the first time since my arrival I have walked for more than a few steps or a few minutes without the accompaniment of another human being. It would not happen again until I say my final farewells to Naomi in the Los Angeles airport on the final leg of my destination home.

My position, I realize continues to change, mould and fit as I gain new competencies. I have been 'socialized' enough to wear the many *bilas*[71] of shell necklaces, armbands and bracelets that have been bestowed upon me as gifts since my arrival. I have some knowledge of their significance, if only a surface understanding of

[71] Finery, ornaments or jewellery.

their cultural connotations, I have a deeper appreciation for the relationships I have developed with the gift-givers. I have earned a new relationship within the village. I am sought out and introduced, albeit it still as *Judy, student bilong Naomi,* to visiting school teachers and elder relatives from afar by people I know. I am relational although it is tenuous at best. I am glad for this.

To Akonga "We" Go

I am invited to attend a funeral in Akonga, the next village to the west, a good hour and a half walk (give or take - no watches!) through swamp, jungle and high grasses. I go to Akonga as Kokopo's anthropologist. I am with 'them'. I am a part of an 'us'. I am also stepping into (or at least trying on!) the footsteps of Naomi. This is the sort of thing she had often done in the past when here for extended periods of time. This day, *em y stap, mipela go* – she stays home and I go.

After bathing in the river just outside of the village, we go directly to a makeshift tent set up in front of the home of the father of the deceased young woman. On the periphery women sit in the shade, some singing mourning songs, others chatting to each other. In the center the coffin can barely be detected under several women draped and weeping over its entirety. I am signalled to sit on a bench under the tent. The women I am with proceed to the coffin and replace those who are there. They cry for the loss. They cry to tell the deceased she is missed. They cry to confirm to her she is dead and must find the ancestors now. They also cry to demonstrate to all present they are not the ones who killed her or had her killed. Dying young is always a bad death. Dying young is always by sorcery (McPherson 1991:132; Scaletta 1985). I have unfortunately witnessed three funerals in my short time in the field. I sit ill at ease, no longer because I am in awe

of what I see, but because I cannot manifest tears this time as I have learned to do in my village.

I take my leave of the tent and wander about the village. There are the remnants of a men's house collapsed in a heap. I take a picture. A man calls out to me asking why I want a picture of a heap of useless ruin. I stammer that the carvings are beautiful. He tells me there is no more power there and shakes his head and walks away. "*Waitpela*!", I hear under his breath.

Part of the death rites includes the distribution of wealth and raw foods to compensate the mourners. I am handed a beautiful clay pot. It is a traditional trade item from the Siassi region, an island to the west. Later, I ask the women I accompanied from Kokopo what I must do with this pot. In terms of reciprocity and ever-circulating gifts, taking it would be a cultural dead-end for the pot. I am told it is a gift to take back to my home. It had been given with this in mind. Today it sits on a shelf in my home as an artefact as though in a museum, "a repository of unique objects whose principal value is private enlightenment, entertainment, fetishization and vicarious possession" (Preziosi 1996:99). It has been stripped of its collective vivacity and function, reminding me fondly of other's generosity and guiltily of the ease of which I and others can take.

With the burial forthcoming, the women take leave of the tent and pallbearers move in to lift the casket. The feminine mourning songs desist as a lone male voice takes up the *Katolik* prayers, recited in English, on the trek the gravesite. At the gravesite the coffin is lowered into the ground. The English prayers of the *kateket* meld with vernacular wailing as shovels of dirt hit the submerged body. Two of the deceased's uncles dive into the grave to beat their chests and the earth, yell and sob at the injustice of

this death. They stomp down the soil as the grave-fillers shovel. I begin to cry. I cry for the dead girl. I cry for her family. Sorcery has also taken her mother and several of her siblings in the recent past. The father fears he is next.

I cry for me, I will be leaving this village, this area, this country very soon. Leaving will be a death if I can never return.

...and Breasts Revisited

The trek home in the late afternoon is an introspective one for me. The imminence of my own departure weighs heavily on my mind. Prior to entering our village, as is custom, we bathe in the river. There are more than twenty of us gathered here and I am taken upstream a few meters to allow space for everyone. I sit topless as I am wont to do most recently, playing and chitchatting in the cool water on a scorching hot day. I hear my name being called. It is Bev, the *kateket's* wife instructing me to stand up. I have learned well. I do as I am told without question. She tells me to face downstream and lift my arms above my head. I do so without hesitation. I am looking at her and do not realize until I hear the thunderous applause, giggles and hoots that yet again downstream from her are the elder women of Kokopo. There are cheers of affirmation, hoots of shock and disbelief and giggles of complicity. *Luk! Susi bilong waitpela meri!* 'Look at the breasts of the white woman!' I hear one of them say. In a place of oral tradition, there is nothing that beats seeing something with your own eyes. Rumours may have circulated but it is not necessarily true until you have seen it yourself. Then Bev ruefully says, "*trengu Judi* 'poor Judy', you will be leaving in a few days, yes?" Fictitious inclusion is easier when the end is near.

Conclusion

Leaving on a Jet Plane

...so kiss me and smile for me
Tell me that you'll wait for me
Hold me like you'll never let me go.
I'm leaving on a jet plane
Don't know when I'll be back again
Oh Babe, I hate to go.
[Denver 1970]

Even if hearing "*trengu, Judi.* You will be going home soon" every day for the second half of my fieldwork was not enough to make me think about leaving, the week and days prior to our departure are about nothing else. Gifting is a public art and a science here. All of our cargo, except a few personal items will be given away in a public ceremony the afternoon before our departure. The penned lists - with additions, scratched out deletions and reallocations – of the miscellany: clothes, cooking items, notions and food carry with it all of the emotions of a living will.

As Naomi reads out the names and I hand over the items, approximately one hundred names with matching items, balanced as best as can be, by clan, family and to a lesser extent, affection, the enormity of this experience moves me to the verge of tears. Bit by bit I have come to an understanding of this small place. I have developed relationships with people that seem to have been able to tenuously span our different understandings of the world. Three months is such a small bit of time.

It is 4:30am the morning of our departure. I awake to the rustling and murmuring of people below our house. As we begin to stir, light the kerosene lamp and emerge from our room, more people gather. The porch fills with bodies, people coming to claim their

gifted bits we had needed and held back until this morning. As we finish with each item, it disappears to its next owner.

There is nothing left, just our backpacks. Those are gently taken from us by Maia who continues to take care of us right to the bitter end. There is a gauntlet of at least 100 women, men and children lining the path from the top of the beach to the boat. As we plod towards the waters edge, encased with bodies, a choir of weeping begins. We cry. We cry for the time we have spent together. We cry for the people who will die after our departure.

I cry for all of the generosity, patience and kindness I have been shown. I cry for the missteps and faux-pas I have committed. I cry for the strangers I met and the friends I will leave. I cry for the heartfelt but mundane domestic dramas and comedies I watched unfold that will never have an ending for me. There is no escaping emotion. There is no escape from learning. It continues to the final push off of the motorboat and beyond.

Subjectivities in and out of the Field

The itsy bitsy spider
Crawled up the water spout
Down came the rain
And washed the spider out
Out came the sun
and dried up all the rain
and the itsy bitsy spider
Crawled up the spout again

This never-ending fieldwork that began in Kokopo continues in the writing. I began on paper conceptually by using Marcus's (1999) discussion of mise-en-scène as a means of establishing rapport. In my experience the mise-en-scène in the field revolved around my ability to 'plant' my disintegrating self in order to begin establish a base. In the writing the rapport hopefully develops with the reader.

In the field complicity, both the innocence of the complicity of irony according to Geertz and the complicity Rosaldo laments as being an accomplice in an evil action or a state of being complex or involved[72] ; all of this transpired in the field. It was a transformative process that at its best will create multiple subjectivities and layered perspectives of enquiry that will continue to make anthropology relevant and allow it to do new kinds of work (Ortner 1999a).

Yes, there is a Place for "Old-Fashioned Anthropology"

In the initial stages of the writing project, I attempted to integrate reading with the writing process. The authoritative voices smother my experience to the point where I suffer a paralysis of the 'pen', wondering for days, if not occasionally weeks, how I could possibly get from what 'happened' to 'what needed to happen' in order to complete the initiation of first fieldwork. To return to the opening analogy, the momentous birthing of the anthropologist began with my delivery from the field. The arrival of the placenta (stretching the analogy to include the foundational importance of past ethnography, the less-celebrated pain of delivering the life-blood of the process) then abandoning it after the fact to privilege the "baby's" presence in the form of a thesis is not without its own challenges and trajectories. This last bit (the metaphorical placenta) is subsumed for a variety of reasons, in most writing by the magnanimous event of the finished product, and becomes is a discard of the process.

An early field note during Naomi's second research project begins to toy with this 'hidden' delivery as she muses:

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[72] As noted by Marcus (1999:86) with the definition of complicity taken from the Oxford English Dictionary.

> I think there is an unspoken, unspeakable, indefinable notion of shared experience, of having 'got through it.' Anthropologists rarely discuss their field experience except anecdotally, the funny ridiculous and maddening things that occur – they never talk about their personal traumas... No wonder many anthros 'crack' during field work, and those that make it through...the experience feel a certain cliquishness (September, 1982).
> [McPherson 1999:24]

The processual analytic tact taken in this endeavour insists upon the inclusion of and understanding of other's contributions through the lived experience, not as a frame to live the field, but as contemplative and engaged dialogue situated after my return. Marilyn Strathern's works on gender (1972, 1984, 1988) do resonate in my experience witnessing Rasen's agency in her domestic capacity and addresses the roots of my initial conflation of Bariai women and Eurocentric feminism. Annette Weiner's exegesis of women's work in the Trobriand Islands supports and enhances my understanding of the power of controlling the hearth and growing food in Bariai and highlights the importance of follow up work in 'previously mined' territory (1976). Domestic disputes witnessed in Bariai can be set against, contrasted and compared to the writings of Dorothy Counts in a neighbouring village (1987, 1990, 1992, 1999).

The intense aversion and subsequent reconciliation of dealing with the point of contact between fundamentalism, belief systems and indigenous has been previously addressed by the likes of Lawrence (1963), Worsley (1968) and Counts (1971, 1972, 1977). The historical dynamism of the relationship between modernity, faith, culture and 'contact' has been tackled head on by Lipuma (2001).

Last but most importantly, the work of Naomi McPherson: on the page, in the classroom during undergraduate school, and with me underfoot in the field, where her passion and love of the discipline became infectious and contagious.

The long-term research of those who precede me - when I finally have the luxury of time and the privilege of space - lifts me back into the writing project at hand. I have a depth of exemplars as deep as anthropology itself to point out the process of study, of fieldwork and of engaging with the debates in the literature.

I have found one can write from authority that "I was there, it was hard, this was a process, and this is a process." Exposing our humanity does not need to be conceptualized as a weakness to be air-brushed and reconfigured. It is in fact a place where the richness of the experience is most intense and its inclusion in ethnography may be an epistemological strength of the discipline, to be further explored and celebrated.

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