

THE LAST FISH, PHANTOM ISLANDS, AND REEF RUINS:
UNSETTLING LOGICS OF PERMANENCE

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ABSTRACT

At the core of this contribution are reflections about catastrophe in the context of the coral reef communities of eastern Sulawesi, and about modes of thinking, imagining, understanding, and being-in-relation. To that end, the writing unsettles and challenges expectations of a stable point of view from which catastrophic events, which are inseparable from how they are conceived, might be overseen. Local sayings and transregional scholarship regarding those sayings offer a vital repository of knowledge and ways of knowing that is integral to this work. A proverb, Sama tales, and multiple narratives of the volcanic eruptions on the island of Una-Una foreground the navigation of change and impermanence by the communities and creatures of land and sea that inhabit the surrounding waters. The author, a philosopher, poet, and diver, begins the composition gazing upward from within the currents, as the reef awakens just before dawn.

Keywords: reef communities; Sulawesi; proverb; volcanic eruption; living-through



Sun burst underwater a pulsating canopy of shadows and light Quivering
aglow billowing clouds and thick grey sky stream upwards through the rollicking
waves Floating silhouette of an aggregation monumental breaks apart in
golden flashings as hundreds of fish wake wander latticed reflections of obsidian
fingers that spiral outwards from the canopied clearing until swept into darkness
of unfathomable depths

Suspended between reef and sky heart is cast ahead of body a
fluttering lure shaped as worm or shrimp or even swimming like a small

fish Reflections on water in this the most voluminous flow of water
 on visible invisible circulations invigorating currents disperse plankton and
 debris swirling arms of swift currents pull

Pink light lifts jagged shapes of islands from the sea early morning shadows afloat
 on magenta flame chugging sputter of slowly speeding boats with fishers
 singing upon return from a night's work drifts across the bay to rest among tall
 coconut palms covered by the rising smoke of daybreak fires

A long line one dugout canoe tied by lengths of rope to another at the head
 of which a small boat with motor files across the rose-colored sea each soon
 to scatter fishing gathering sea creatures trading foodstuffs electronics
 exchanging daily news On water a few hours days or pausing at stilt
 houses directly over the reef for months at a time women and men reel in
 put out lines nets check bobbling bamboo traps spread here and there celebrate
 holidays raise children share tales glean critters along the shore

Neither one tale nor two a wriggling entanglement passes beneath the reflections
 of a round straw hat in the waves as paddle in hands she leans over the edge of
 the wooden hull following a toss of the fishing line archipelagic routes of
 traverse trade at long distance communications vast mobility slavery
 countless small inlets and waterways liquid intervals ancestors of a future
 become present waves that become calm following disturbance
 A boat passes through the seagrasses come back together again



An old Malay saying, '*biduk lalu kiambang bertaut*' ('[after] a prau has passed through the waterweed will close [again]'), refers to a situation that becomes quiet after a disturbance. The saying may pass by unnoticed, leaving but its fleeting wake, or may vanish until encountered again, in another form, so manifold are the ways of saying 'cut water is not severed'. This proverb, which has more than a single meaning, or it would not be a proverb, inhabits plural sets of meanings borne by diverse sayings and substitutions of words. Spoken in oral-oriented communities, it is not fixed. Replete with intergenerational, regional, and occupational variations, with ancient, new, popular, and marketplace forms, it may be familiar since childhood, or may have been learned at school, read in a novel, or have leapt from dictionaries.² The unstable contours of the saying echo a 'living-through' of recurrent and frequently unforeseen disturbances. The saying offers a vital repository of popular and scholarly knowledge and multivalent ways of knowing, that are integral to this composition. Familiar

since childhood, or perhaps never heard, the proverb may leave its traces in oral tales and circulate along with local news of the day.

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The octopus left the airplane landed departures and arrivals twist  
uneasily erupting irregularly into overgrown matted filaments Like a  
long rolling wave villagers arrived by dugout or walked overland by night to  
inaugurate the airstrip

The first landing: government dignitaries tumbled out of the small aircraft  
pronouncing hope for stimulus to economic growth in the province the son of  
the last sultan in the region extolled the mission impossible a handful of light-  
skinned people assured by the eco resort's owner that a singularly efficient private  
conservation model would protect the finest reefs still surviving on the planet  
set foot on the one mile private paved airstrip in the middle of the sea clicking  
photos in every direction a small sum of cash and promise of employment  
was passed on to those who could oppose the event by virtue of longstanding use  
of the land to tend fruit trees their roots now under fresh asphalt All were  
welcomed with a holy ceremony

That local villagers never imagined their small island could be chosen to have such  
a great airstrip constructed by a foreign company as reported by a newspaper  
on the mainland<sup>3</sup> is not so certain One event flows into another and for  
some time everyone in the village recognised that the waters beneath the recently  
laid tarmac were losing power not only were there fewer fish to catch but the  
four-fingered octopus had withdrawn Perhaps a few fishers neglected to  
make appropriate offerings several divers had visited the sacred cavern of the  
octopus which was quickly becoming a tourist attraction handmade bombs  
were sometimes detonated on a nearby reef to extract live fish for trade

One Moba'a's richly adorned cave lacked not in octopi three eight-armed octopi  
can be found there at almost any time hanging from the arched cave  
ceiling lime green tangerine lemon buttery yellow copper persimmon peach plum  
soft corals fleshy translucent clusters tufts of polyps extended from branching  
tips red flame scallop flashes neon green sea turtle circles alights  
fluorescent orange outline of a batfish hovers near bushes of black coral that lean  
into the current Nor could the change be attributed to a lack of strength or  
nimbleness strong flexible muscular tentacles studded with suckers

Have you tried to catch an octopus as it slips and slides over your back

*arms face changing colors shapes no permanent holdfast unpredictable  
movements responsive to each turning of events?*

*Spoken tales accumulate and recombine precise negotiations marking  
subordination to land-based rulers kingdoms pirates slavers wealthy  
traders maritime feats interventions in colonialism global  
commerce<sup>4</sup> links to nobility animals ancestors plants healing of the  
Bajau Bajo those who refer to themselves as Samalan-speaking Sama  
people moving about blown on the unbounded between of shoreline reefs  
mangroves boats seas and all that is considered water which is not to exclude  
land*

*erratic transport forced relocations chosen migrations fluid navigation not  
necessarily to be carried along by the power to move with many forces skilfully  
mediating land and sea*

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When coral reefs are dying at an unprecedented rate due to climate change and other human-impact stresses, an all-too-easy pessimism is frequently extended toward tropical reefs and reef communities, proclaiming their demise or their failure to be as they once were, or as they are thought once to have been. Spurred by a narrowing of vision which grasps for certainties that may be of their own invention, accounts of pervasive destruction wrought by volcanic eruptions on the island of Una-Una near the east coast of Sulawesi show the land as uninhabitable and the reefs in ruin. They often fail to look back, and as though there could be no future, they also fail to look ahead to the accomplishments of the communities and creatures of land and sea that populate the surrounding islands and waters.

Hovering, as I have for many years, with the reef creatures, permeated by the currents as they inundate the imagination and reflection, I am drawn to the skilful and imperfect navigation of circumstance by the reefs and those who live nearby. To the reefs and to the persons and communities of land who have prompted, and generously contributed to this writing, I give my deepest gratitude. A philosopher, poet, and musician, as well as a diver, I hope that readers, each in your own unique ways, will partake in these immersive events.

One afternoon, Anton, who for some years had been sailing and fishing along the eastern rim of Sulawesi, and whose path I happened to cross, asked if I would accompany him to Una-Una, the island of his birth. A young child when

the people living on the volcanic slopes were evacuated and the national government closed the island prior to the eruption of Gunung Colo in July 1983, he would, in the next day or two, be passing nearby and wanted to go ashore to the place at which he had entered this world. News had travelled his way that many people had returned. Yet, with the passage of so many years, he felt that no one on the island would recognise him. Two years earlier, he had sailed the currents of the region, though so deep was the sorrow in which he anticipated being engulfed by eyes vacant of a spark of recognition, that he swung wide of the small island.

The emotional buoyancy extended by one who was familiar with his story was needed, nonetheless, for but a fleeting moment. Upon wading ashore and taking two steps down the village path, an elder strolled over from her cooking fire set to prepare dishes for the upcoming holidays. Scrutinising Anton from every angle, remarking on his eyes and the contours of his face, she named and asked after his parents, brothers, and sisters and, upon receiving confirmation, proceeded to rejoin him with family and friends while news of his arrival travelled quickly by word-of-mouth.

It was ironic that Anton's visit to Una-Una, which affirmed for him many of the connections that had shaped his life, would place my own sense of reality in question. Once I returned home and read further, I found that not only were the lifestyles of the Sama peoples and the existence of the reef creatures of that area considered by many to be dissipating, but Una-Una, following the eruption, had assumed, through published reports, the appearance of little more than a gap in the map, a phantom island.

Despite the absence of human deaths, unremittingly woeful narratives of the eruption of Colo are conveyed by Katili and Sudradjat's account (1984, 27), which presents a memorable picture of monumental eclipse: 'the whole island was blasted and destroyed [...] all houses and coconut trees were destroyed and all livestock, wild life, etc. perished. The nuée ardente swept the coastal area and the sea around the island, killing fish and other marine life'. This widely reprinted illustrated account of the destruction of life forms on Una-Una circulates in several languages in travel journals and popular information sites, as well as in academic publications. Mirroring that account and attracting a similarly large and disparate viewership, the extraordinary photographs taken by volcanologists Maurice and Katia Krafft immediately after the eruption show hillsides of levelled palms and clove trees, scorched bamboo, wandering goats, a teapot, cups, and plate salvaged from the cinders, and the skeletal supports of dwellings left by the tsunami that had inundated the shore. A photo

entitled ‘Plinian explosion of Mount Colo’, which, like each of the images, has been indexed by the photographers, bears the designations, ‘Grey volcanoes; Plumes and pyroclastic flows; Pyroclastic flows, burning clouds; Plumes; Ash rains; Risks linked to grey volcanoes’, and, lastly, ‘Catastrophes’ or ‘Disasters’. Whether and how the island’s human and non-human communities of land and sea negotiated the events is not thematised by these communications, whose vivid interpretive frames are restricted to that which is perceived as the ‘catastrophic’ moment, unaffected by the attitudes and strategic interconnections, or logics, of those who did and those who did not survive.

Resonating in striking ways for Una-Una’s communities of land and sea, and partaking of a shared lineage of living with the magmatic manifestations of a region produced by the shifts and collisions of tectonic plates along the volcanic Pacific ‘Ring of Fire’, are the mundane ‘interior preparation’ of which Yoko Tawada (2012a) writes in *Journal of the Trembling Days: After Fukushima*,⁵ and the aesthetics and politics ‘burned into the spirit [...] taking root in the common ethnic consciousness from ancient times’, described by Haruki Murakami (2011) in his speech, ‘As an Unrealistic Dreamer’. Painting in words scenes in which humanity is situated as a momentary guest within nature (Tawada 2012a, 91), both writers observe that there is no Japanese word that corresponds exactly to the English ‘catastrophe’: the reversal of what is expected, a sudden end.

Since childhood, Tawada notes, she had often heard that during her lifetime there would be a great earthquake in Tokyo, and she had assumed that, ‘even if the entire house, or if all of the city, had been carried away by waves, it would necessarily be the case that a survivor, with a sock or a cup, would begin to reconstruct life’ (Tawada 2012a, 7). An attitude that she depicts as ‘avoiding dramatizing, staying near small objects that one can touch’, the unconsciously acquired practice of calmness became a technique of survival (91).⁶ ‘Living with’, of which Murakami (2011) speaks, reflects centuries of living with the extensive damage and loss of life brought by seasonal typhoons, active volcanoes, and the ‘nest of earthquakes’ on which Japan is perched, an everydayness that, he tells his listeners, has shaped not ‘catastrophe’ but notions of ‘*mujō* 無常’: that everything is ephemeral. Everything born into this world changes, and will ultimately disappear. There is nothing that can be considered eternal or immutable. The shared insistence by Tawada and Murakami that the values of being calm, affable, and helping others after the earthquake and tsunami cannot be dissociated from a loss of critical spirit, locates ‘*mujō*’ amid the social and political tensions of contemporary Japan. Yet, despite lingering uncertainties after Fukushima, which might make the renunciation of society in order to pass one’s life in a secure place of retreat appear the better choice, the precarious is

embraced in Murakami's fiction and by Tawada (2012a), who unhesitatingly affirms her desire 'for a life in a large brightly lit city, with many friends, with theaters and lively streets – with the awareness that these are ephemeral' (102).

As Tawada (2012a) suggests with reference to the rebuilding of Tokyo on the same site after the city was devastated by the great earthquake of 1923, and again after it was more totally destroyed by war in 1945: 'a city is not the sum total of its homes, it exists in our minds. That is what enables a city to be reconstituted' (96). Might we not pursue, then, with a cup or a plate in hand, mindscapes that exceed the insufficiency of catalogues of extinctions? Situated among the unsteady conversations of tongues that cultivate living with instabilities, Anton's return to a village whose residents had reconstituted it undercut ready-to-hand narratives of catastrophe by inciting perturbing mindscapes, stretching the imagination.

Lamentations for the destruction of the coral reefs commemorate significant loss. They may neglect, however, to engage with expectations concerning permanence and continuity and with the manifold conditions generative of decline or of ongoing transformation. Inhabitants of countries that have taken permission to cut down their own and others' forests for timber and to clear fields for crops, to fish the seas, to cover the earth with untold miles of asphalt roads, to install factories and mining enterprises in every area of the globe, not infrequently by means of forced labour, may propose, as a source of capital and an antidote to loss, the regulation of access to tropical coral reefs, placing selected reefs apart from daily local use and disciplining that separation by means of monetary rewards and patrol.

The implications of such an overwriting, however unwitting, of the complex face of 'catastrophe' are made manifest in *The Mute's Soliloquy*, composed by the literary writer and intellectual leader Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Toer was writing during the years in which he was held by the Suharto military regime and subjected to the harsh conditions of forced labour as one of twelve thousand prisoners on the island of Buru. The effects of the arbitrary use of capital, through the sustained impact of Suharto's New Order, which conceived of the more easterly islands of the nation as a fresh source of cheap labour and raw materials, are reflected in the narrator's ruminations: 'Perhaps history will one day remind us that "capital" is not just a stack of money: Capital is the energy that has, over the last four centuries, altered the face of the world and driven away to reservations, jungles, and the outback those people who would not compromise' (Toer 1999, 252–53). Neither silenced nor swallowed by the wind but reaching far into the future, the voice of Nyai Ontosoroh, perhaps the

most famous figure of Pramoedya's Buru Quartet, continues to resonate from the 'Millions upon millions of people [who] suffer silently, like the river stones' (Toer 1984, 56–57).

In a nation that is eighty per cent water, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's (2007) public lecture 'Indonesia's Transformation in the Globalization Era', which announced that Indonesia will become a 'developed country' by 2050, provided that significant changes are made in the provinces,⁷ could not but have significant implications for the peoples and reefs of central and eastern Sulawesi. Presenting both an opportunity to reorient national perspectives and the risk of continuing a history in which the provinces are perceived by courts and officials in the capital city of Jakarta, not only as less economically prosperous, but as backward and a hindrance to nation-building, the influential decree has become palpable through the imposition of a touristic lens subtended by profits from international investments. How the circulation of economics and values that continue to be generated by the diverse histories and involvements of the peoples of the aquatic 'frontier' might alter the orbit of globalised development slips from sight amid unexpected calls for the 'discovery' of Una-Una, renamed 'The Lost Paradise' in the Gulf of Tomini, and for 'Sail Tomini', an international yacht regatta.⁸ By contrast, the Sama peoples of the region had assumed an unbounded mobility, disordering and throwing into confusion logics which claim efficacy through the demarcation and classification of substance. Bereft of the perturbation of mindscapes effected by such mobilities, the reefs become inert, frozen in time. The continually shifting composition of the surrounding reefs, marked by long-term oscillations, intermediate disturbances, and disequilibrium, emerges lifeless, as pristine 'nature' rising above its 'human' surroundings, valuable real estate secured by a snapshot. In such circumstances, efforts to preserve or enhance reef vitality may fail to pursue a self-reflective commitment that might facilitate mutual exchange. Bypassing the navigation of difficult situations by local know-how, and justifying the dispossession of those living nearby, the habitual refrains are repeated: 'They do not know what they are missing' and 'Otherwise, they will have nothing'.

More and more frequently, reefs are without big fish, and some reefs may not have a fish in sight. The difficulty, however, is not that we ask the reefs for fish or sustenance, provided the request does not become a demand in excess of what coral reefs can provide. The difficulty, rather, is that we do not ask enough of the reefs, and we seldom make ourselves available to all that the reefs offer. Eschewing narratives of pessimism and exhortations to salvation with regard to modern-day coral reefs, we will undertake a turning to the uncanny twisting of a reef's myriad forms and uncertain figures that is at once postcolonial

and submarine. Propelled by a proverb that speaks of impermanence – ‘*air dicencang tidak putus*’ (cut water is not severed) – and by Sama tales of the unbounded between and the strength of community ties, we will attend the fractious gnawing of omissions and vast forgetting.

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*ting pling ti ti plingg she stirs vigorously with a table knife water in the tall  
drinking glass play of young girl water glass knife slicing through  
water and this morning her mother tells her once again air potong tak  
putus what child's play! as everyone knows what is one can be sliced through  
but what is two is also one and what is one is two*

*Air dipotong tidak putus as what is spoken on this eastern shore Indonesian a  
second language or third must nonetheless be written potong cut in the most  
general sense air water such childish chatter*

*Jutting abruptly from oceanic trenches so deep that slender shadows of silver  
needlefish sweeping across a pinnacle beneath the sea's rippling surface elude  
sight sharp edge of submarine ridge thin blade of vitality lifts plummets  
erupts upwards towering sinks in the fullness of open water*

*Upwelling flows carve the tapered blade more sharply Currents  
progenitors bring and carry away as ink that leaves a brush to flow into shapes  
of equilibrium debris of extinct volcanoes unknown emanations*

*Far out at sea unbounded drifting fast and faster flying alongside the blade  
water turns colder pushes back then impels Cloud of churning eddies fast  
spiraling down air sucked down confusion of upwards and down*

*Perhaps there is nothing but to ride the currents impossibility of swimming  
against though at an angle might suffice An intimate responsiveness  
even a slow current can be strong stillness of focus if not of motion*

*Fairy basslets lemon pink violet apricot sky blue soar over blade in every  
direction*

*medium current basslets hover in schools close by the narrow ridge finning  
fiercely strong current basslets hide among tousled branches of soft coral  
feeding on plankton*

*Rounding a coral outcropping current in full force grab onto the blade inhale  
exhale descend to currents less intense cling to the bottom but blade is  
abyssal be swept away or pause behind a coral mound*

*leaning into the currents passing just above divers with only drinking straws  
and masks sip bubbles pierce bells of rising exhalations with straws<sup>9</sup> breathe  
confident in the moment*

*Coastlines awash with long reaches of maritime routes that built small  
kingdoms cosmopolitan centres thriving empires Sama traders of sea  
cucumbers fish dried seaweed pearls giant clams coral to burn into lime dye  
plants mangrove wood birds' nests coconuts honey cloves Sama taken  
enslaved by raids and piracy at sea relays of triangulations Makassar  
Ternate*

*Batavia Jolo Canton the Cape Colony London<sup>10</sup> leave their imprint on water<sup>11</sup>*

*Twinned by the placenta spirit that swims free in ocean currents<sup>12</sup> Sama  
shape-shifting peoples of disconnections and mixings occasioning upheavals and  
triumphs move about to pursue livelihoods move on as need be*

*Arriving on shores shaken by earthquakes eruptions of boiling steam molten  
rock plumes of ash three miles high incandescent cloud of fire sweeping  
down the volcano to the sea suffocating clouds and simultaneously a  
tsunami only the old mosque remained*

*Families return newcomers arrive stepping through ephemeral architectures  
bamboo poles open frames houses of palm bark and leaves a few homes  
of cinder block with metal gates and in the coming and going vacated  
dwellings open to inhabit and modify*

*One who has been away almost twenty years since five years of age touches  
shore walks along the path by the sea with ducks chickens clacking of cow  
bells across the commons goats zebu bouncing bicycles nearly colliding carts is  
recognised and greeted by people young and old chatting and engaged in tasks of  
the day asked about family given heartfelt wishes for health and good fortune*

*Friends linger at the turn of a flower-strewn path to verdant fields of coconut  
palms and cloves take homecoming videos on cell phones no tower in the  
village to relay phone calls And with gratitude and joy depart on the boat  
resuming journey<sup>13</sup> Amid the currents belonging*

*Holding fast to the reefs as a passive object a self-enclosed intelligence gropes at empty water as it fashions songs of woe the uninhabitability of Una-Una 'phantom island' covered by volcanic ash and 'wiped off the map' local bombing of the reefs as the harbinger of their terminal destruction irretrievable loss of the four-fingered octopus the impending extinction of the Sama as a people Insisting on the effectual demise of presumed static entities and situations which do not appear to its grasp understanding promotes its own cultural psychic and economic interests*

Amid clouds of ink reef image hides and escapes startles accompanies and sends forth

*Succession of cephalopod-sized blobs mucosal pseudomorphs jetting forth into the current inks that obscure view leaving undetected escapes and erratic changes of direction Splotches unrelenting perhaps there are but these persistent puffs which stinging enter bodies in waves of decoys and disorientations that rarely settle chemical compounds irritate eyes temporarily paralyse sense of taste and smell*

*By daylight dark ink screens under moonlight bacterial effulgences conceal a long line of formless forms at the end of which an octopus tints itself and hangs in the currents mimicking an ink cloud<sup>14</sup>*

*chenchang cencang resonant sound of large knives on cutting boards chop hack mince not a simple cutting but multiple cuts down to little bits air dicincang tidak putus minced water does not separate chopped water will not separate water minced did not separate a striking acoustic impression cincang in modern Indonesian to mince or shred resulting in fragmentation of the object that is being cut vivid evocative but odd in terms of water*

*Thwack of large knives on cutting tables aligned in rows across wide deck of the fish processing boat where at midday fishers stand shoulder to shoulder chopping mincing shredding catch to be flash frozen shipped to Java Hong Kong Thailand China Singapore*

*An economics of chopping: One blade raises up quickly another lowers slicing through and up again and in the cycling gas for a motorboat school fees and uniforms a dwindling fish supply cash to buy food Labours of the fishers chopping cut into small pieces dispersed ayer dichenchang tiada putus may itself be split separated head from tail*

In two months' time in this eastern zone 15 billion rupiah dispensed by the Indonesian government to build fishery ports Cargill Indonesia Philippines Netherlands United States South Korea Germany China increase investments in fish processing palm oil biofuels 462 tons of canned fish is exported to Yemen Syria Saudi Arabia Egypt Libya Jordan Japan rejects billions of cultivated shrimp due to contamination from antibiotics and chemicals

Motile debris residue of implosions scatters into a fractious gnawing ever in relation to memory and vast forgetting omissions burials and denials Carried by currents of simulation the winds of the seas dead and decaying memories of the living

Limbs crisscross outstretch circle at diagonals flap like wings mouths open jerking movements push upward blue and gold fusiliers quiver roll over flip-flop slide into gaping craters pewter lustre of rotting bodies sinks does not float rupture of swim bladders the last fish cease

Currents sweep mounds of coral skeletons across blast zone the deeper reef unchanged gather let drift ashes particles of time

Dynamited reef live fish trade in polka dot grouper Napoleon wrasse pulsating polyps of soft coral spread over rubble Hard corals without a substrate on which to settle diminish succumb unless over time devising ways to resist encroachment Broken fragments neither resemblance nor imitation cabik-cabik bulu ayam cancang aia indak putuih<sup>15</sup> when one tears out the feathers of a chicken or one splits water nothing will break nothing will be severed

Diving the reef ruins a navigation of circumstance fishers who have blown themselves up setting reef bombs widows mining dead coral boulders for income fishing by hand line yields only a few tiny fish What to eat? Devastation of a thousand years' growth in one split second or is a particular reef designated to be bombed time and again so that other reefs remain?

Ugliness beauty knowledges not-knowing justice and its absence impossible to get rid of some and grab the others how to deal with each thing changing?<sup>16</sup> no perfect action but a necessary practice of skillful mediations that unsettle logics of permanence

Currents may be slow or fast water may be minced zoned bound leased Blade sharp edge of submarine ridge unceasingly is being moved through

water      *Chopped water*   air dicencang tiada putus<sup>17</sup>   *the condition of water is that of always being cut through*

*Seven years later a public airport still to be built on a nearby island for local use the first airport restricted to private resort guests peoples of the sea do not await the second landing but assume a motility unbounded and lean into the currents*

*Small cuts these sea foam tales   evisceration of bodily organs rapid irregular motions vibrations   a vulnerability of imagination mimics tempts stings inconsequential nothings voluminous flows so hard to catch the unbounded between*

When heart is cast as a fluttering lure shaped as worm or shrimp or even swimming like a small fish   banyu pinerang<sup>18</sup>   *like cutting water!*

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

This paper was not funded, and there are no conflicts of interest to note.

#### NOTES

- 1 Jeffner Allen is Professor of Philosophy and Africana Studies at Binghamton University, State University of New York. A philosopher and creative writer, her book publications include *SINUOSITIES: Lesbian Poetic Politics* and *reverberations across the shimmering CASCADAS*, which was performed in collaboration at Lincoln Center. She is also the editor of *Lesbian Philosophies and Cultures* and co-editor of *The Thinking Muse: Contemporary Feminist Thought*. An avid diver, her writings often engage postcolonial, environmental, and aesthetic dimensions of coral reef communities, especially those of Sulawesi and Bonaire.

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- 2 For conversations concerning formulations of the saying that guides this reflection I thank Linda Sinke, Zuraidah Mohd Don, Jennifer Gaynor, Ariel Heryanto, Sanher Adelaar, Isa Kamari, Jan Van Der Putten, John Roosa, Peter Suwarno, and also Asim Gunarwan, Anton Moeliono, and Uri Tadmor.
- 3 The event was recorded by the *Kendari Post*, 11 July 2001.
- 4 Several accounts of Sama ancestry are given in the Bugis' oral histories that have been compiled as *La Galigo*. See, for instance, Gibson (2005) and Lowe (2006, 76–80).

- 5 English translations by the author.
- 6 See also Tawada (2012b) and Murakami (2011). A process of soul-searching toward a post-Fukushima Japan appears in the final chapter of Murakami (2014).
- 7 President Yudhoyono (2007) proposed three major steps to effect an integrated change, 'giving the provinces the chance to develop themselves,' combining natural and knowledge resources, and achieving economic growth with equity.
- 8 The notion of the 'discovery' of Una-Una informs even community-based tourism. See Indonesia Diving School (2013) and Syafputri (2012).
- 9 Divers sipping air from short tubes of plastic or bamboo appear in tales told by young divers of east Sulawesi, some of whom first take up diving in this manner, though not without risk. Such accounts bring to mind the tale of an old pearl diver with a straw, recounted by Pickell and Siagian (2000, 16–18).
- 10 The routes of Sama trade and enslavement were extensive. Sama from eastern Sulawesi participated in trade routes to Maluku under the Sultanate of Ternate, the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, and to southern Philippines, Java, China; and they served as intermediaries in the circulation of goods to India, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. Peoples of Sulawesi, in particular, the Sama, were among the enslaved of Batavia, the name given to Jakarta under Dutch rule, and the Cape of Good Hope. Pirates and raiders, including the Iranum and Balangini, enslaved Sama to support colonial trade that supplied tea and other goods from China to England and the Americas, and to work in the fisheries, wilderness, and all aspects of the Sulu Sultanate. The narrator of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *House of Glass* (1988) speaks of white pirates who enslaved fishers at sea in north Sulawesi to work in the mines of South America.
- 11 Pelrase (1996) gives an account of the Sama, the Bugis, and Makassar in the early inter-insular trading networks of Sulawesi. The slave trade in Sulawesi is central to Vink (2003). James Francis Warren (2002) discusses the political and economic impact of the Sama in the rise and fall of the Sulu Sultanate. A thoughtful interpretation of some Sama histories and their implications for the present day is offered by Jennifer L. Gaynor (2005). See also Toer (1996).
- 12 The return to the sea of the placenta of each newborn human is retold in Stacey (2007, 34–36).
- 13 Thanks to Anton for sharing this experience of homecoming in a village on the

island of Una-Una, where Gunung Colo erupted in July 1983. Prior to the eruption, the people were evacuated and the national government closed the island.

- 14 Norman (2000) offers a detailed account of these changes (101, 103).
- 15 An early formulation of the saying, from Minangkabau, a language spoken in West Sumatra. Over time, vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic structures were borrowed from Malay and related dialects and translated into Bahasa Indonesia.
- 16 Ryokan poses this question in an untitled poem, which can be found in Toyohara (1959, 348).
- 17 An old Malay use of the saying offers the insight that the blade is always cutting, with no beginning and no finish point. The saying does not grammatically require – and nor does it assume when used – a subject that chops.
- 18 A Javanese equivalent of the proverb, which means the same: water can't be split.

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