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*TEORIA E MÉTODOS EM ANTROPOLOGIA*

**TEXTOS AULA 4**

pologists have been especially cautious to avoid stories of “disappearing cultures”: Those stories seem too caught up in a discredited connoisseurship of culture. In my own work, I have endorsed the promise of intercultural hybridity. But hybridity is not all promise, and neither is agency. Destruction too requires agency. To tell its stories, we cannot avoid the viewpoint of despair.

Others have, and will tell of the pleasures of resource booms. The need to understand capitalist expansion, however, inspires me in another direction: I will not erase the conditions of terror in which agency is sometimes formed. I will tell stories of destruction.

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## 1 Frontiers of Capitalism

Clusters of red earth push up in broken bits,  
as if asking in an angry fit:  
“Why did you let my humus flee?  
Why weren’t forests replanted on me?  
How much longer must I endure,  
more than two decades and still no one cares?”

South Kalimantan gasps  
Your breath, your life, sucked out, lapsed.  
Who is ready to claim this disaster?  
Which big man is prepared to answer?

My protests flare up, my blood boils  
Is this true, the real face of Kalimantan?  
Was it a lie, my vision of a vast great forest?  
—from Victor Roesdianto,  
“The Forests of South Kalimantan”<sup>1</sup>

*proliferation*: 1. Pathology, etc. The formation or development of cells by budding or division. 2. Enlargement or extension; an increase in number (of); now esp. of nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup>

What do cancer and nuclear weapons have in common? Their expansion, proliferation, is always already out of control. Proliferation, too, is a key principle of capitalist expansion, particularly at capitalist frontiers where accumulation is not so much primitive, that is, archaic, as savage. Frontiers are not just edges; they are particular kinds of edges where the expansive nature of extraction comes into its own. Built from historical models of European conquest, frontiers create wildness so that some—and not others—may reap its rewards. Frontiers are deregulated because they arise in the interstitial spaces made by collaborations among legitimate and illegitimate partners: armies and bandits; gangsters and corporations; builders and despoilers. They confuse the boundaries of law and theft, governance and violence, use and destruction. These confusions

change the rules and thus enable extravagant new economies of profit—as well as loss.

The late twentieth century saw the creation of new “resource frontiers” in every corner of the world. Made possible by Cold War militarization of the Third World and the growing power of corporate transnationalism, resource frontiers grew up where entrepreneurs and armies were able to disengage nature from local ecologies and livelihoods, “freeing up” natural resources that bureaucrats and generals could offer as corporate raw materials. From a distance, these new resource frontiers appeared as the “discovery” of global supplies in forests, tundras, coastal seas, or mountain fastnesses. Up close, they replaced local systems of human access and livelihood and ecological dynamics of replacement and replenishment with the cultural apparatus of proliferation, out-of-control interstitial capitalist expansion, the frontier. This chapter explores the making of a resource frontier in the eastern part of South Kalimantan in the 1990s.

My goal in this chapter is both practical and poetic. To allow readers to feel the rawness of the frontier is also to make it less sensible and ordinary. Sensory absorption can, with luck, sweep away the “common sense” of resource exploitation and leave us with the moving force of anger. The poet Taufiq Ismail is said to have inaugurated the Indonesian environmental movement in a public reading of a poem containing the following lines in 1971 (Ismail 1971, discussed in Aditjondro 1991a, my translation):<sup>3</sup>

*I want to write a poem that resists the probability that Japanese traders will plunder the wood of the forests of Kalimantan, that prohibits the oil drillers and foreign investors from feeding spiritually weak officials, and forbids bribes to customs officers and judges.*

My chapter shares this same goal.

The chapter is divided into two parts. First I tell of how the frontier and its resources are made. This section is based on ethnographic observation from the mid-1990s. Second, I turn to the post-1997 crisis, when frontier-making spiraled out of control.

### I. How to Make Resources in Order to Destroy Them (and Then Save Them?) On the Salvage Frontier

A frontier is an edge of space and time: a zone of not yet—not yet mapped, not yet regulated. It is a zone of unmapping: even in its planning, a frontier is imagined as unplanned. Frontiers aren't just discovered at the edge; they are

projects in making geographical and temporal experience. Frontiers make wildness, entangling visions and vines and violence; their wildness is *both* material and imaginative. This wildness reaches backward as well as forward in time, bringing old forms of savagery to life in the contemporary landscape. Frontiers energize old fantasies, even as they embody their impossibilities.

Most descriptions of resource frontiers take for granted the existence of resources; they label and count the resources and tell us who owns what. The landscape itself appears inert: ready to be dismembered and packaged for export. In contrast, the challenge I've set myself is to make the landscape a lively actor. Landscapes are simultaneously natural and social, and they shift and turn in the interplay of human and nonhuman practices. Frontier landscapes are particularly active: hills flood away, streams are stuck in mud, vines swarm over fresh stumps, ants and humans are on the move. On the frontier, nature goes wild.

The place I describe is a mountainous, forested strip of southeast Kalimantan. My companions in traveling and learning this landscape are Meratus Dayaks, old inhabitants whose livelihood has been based on shifting cultivation and forest foraging.<sup>4</sup> For Meratus, the frontier has come as a shock and a disruption; it is with their help that I experience the trauma of transformation. My account begins in the mid-1990s, when the New Order regime still seemed to stretch forward endlessly. By this time, privatization had become a regime watchword, in practice further concentrating economic power in the hands of the president's family and cronies. Huge tracts had been assigned to logging companies, mining companies, and pulp-and-paper as well as oil palm plantation companies. The military played an important role in transferring these tracts from previous residents to their corporate owners; military men also took their own interest in resources. This seminal period has shaped the wildness of the twenty-first century.

### *An Abandoned Logging Road Has Got to Be . . .*

An abandoned logging road has got to be one of the most desolate places on earth. It doesn't go anywhere, by definition. If you are walking there, it is either because you are lost or you are trespassing, or both. The wet clay builds clods on your boots, if you have any, sapping your strength, and if you don't have any boots, the sun and the hot mud are unmerciful. Whole hillsides slide down beside you into the stagnant pools where the mosquitoes breed. Abandoned roads soon lose their shape, forcing you in and out of eroded canyons and over muddy trickles where bridges once stood but which are now choked by loose soil, vines crawling on disinterred roots and trunks sliding, askew. Yet, ironically, the forest as a site of truth and beauty seems so

much clearer from the logging road than anywhere else, since it is the road that slices open the neat cross-section in which underbrush, canopy, and high emergents are so carefully structured.

In 1994, I walked on a lot of abandoned logging roads in southeastern Kalimantan between the Meratus Mountains and the coastal plains now covered with transmigration villages—Block A, Block B, Block C—and giant, miles-square plantations of oil palm, rubber, and acacia for the pulp and paper trade. In the 1980s, despite the logging, local villagers were asserting customary resource rights, and transmigration here was just a gleam in one engineer's eye, and he wasn't in charge. Now, the region had been overwhelmingly transformed. Even beyond the newly planted industrial tree plantations lay miles of scrub and vines. These were landslides of slippery red and yellow clay, with silt-laden excuses for water. The logging roads had eroded into tracks for motorcycles, water buffalo, and the still-streaming mass of immigrant and local blood and sweat that the government calls "wild": wild loggers, wild miners, and bands of roving entrepreneurs and thieves. Something easy to call degradation rode through the land: Human presence was leaving the terrain all but bare.

Such destruction is not just human nature or the nature of resources. In the violent clarity of the abandoned logging road, irreverent questions come to mind. How does nature at the frontier become a set of resources? How are landscapes made empty and wild so that anyone can come to use and claim them? How do ordinary people get involved in destroying their environments, even their own home places?

These questions can only be addressed by getting inside our daily habits and our dreams. Freeing "resources" opens the landscape in complementary nightmares. The frontier emerges in the intertwined attraction and disgust of their engagement. Order and progress banish imagined wildness; wildness emerges in a parody and recuperation of the worst dreams of order and progress. Monocrop plantations are the flip side of the wild resource frontier. Each calls the other into existence: On one side, endless rows of silent symmetry, biopower applied to trees; on the other side, wild loggers, miners, and villagers in the raucous, sped-up time of looting. Each solves the problems put in motion by the other. Each requires the same entrepreneurial spirit. In that spirit, gold nuggets, swallows' nests, incense woods, ironwood posts, great logs destined to be plywood, and whole plantations of future pulp are conjured. Here is a first answer to my questions. Resources are made by "resourcefulness" in both plantation and wild frontier. The activity of the frontier is to make human subjects as well as natural objects.

The frontier, indeed, had come to Kalimantan. It hadn't always been

there. Dutch plantation schemes mainly bypassed Kalimantan in the colonial period before World War II, allowing colonial authorities to treat their natives as subjects of kingdoms and cultures. Kalimantan's Dayaks, while to them patently uncivilized, were still seen as having law and territorial boundaries, not a wilderness that needed to be filled up. In its first years the postcolonial nation maintained Kalimantan's villages, fields, and forests. Commercial logging only got underway in the 1970s. Administrative expansion and resettlement followed, with the goal of homogenizing the nation. In the 1980s, conflicts broke out between villagers and commercial loggers. Massive fires and waves of immigration disrupted emergent localisms. Through the 1980s, however, it was possible to see rural Kalimantan as a landscape of villages, small cultivations, and traditional agro-forestry, with discrete patches of estate agriculture and large-scale logging and mining here and there.

The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed a national wave of entrepreneurship. Spurred on by economic liberalization with its international sponsors, and a consolidating regional capitalism, entrepreneurs shot up at every level from conglomerates to peasant tour guides. In this great surge of resourcefulness Kalimantan became a frontier.

The frontier, then, is not a natural or indigenous category. It is a traveling theory, a foreign form requiring translation. It arrived with many layers of previous associations. "Indonesian Miners Revive Gold Rush Spirit of 49ers," crowed a headline in the *Los Angeles Times* (Williams 1988: 1). "Kalimantan at this time is part of the Wild West . . . like parts of America in the 19th century," despaired the Minister of the Environment (Gellert 1998: 82). Indonesian frontiers were shaped to the model of other wild times and places. Nor was the American West the only moment to be reworked and revived. There is the dark Latin American frontier: a place of violence, conflicting cultures, and an unforgiving nature driving once-civilized men to barbarism, as Domingo Sarmiento, soon to be president of Argentina, argued in 1845 (Sarmiento 1998). This savage vision of the frontier has continued to percolate through later frontier optimism. There is the nation-making frontier, as famously articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner in his 1893 address, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (Turner 1994). Wild, empty spaces are said to have inspired white men to national democracy and freedom in the United States. Amazing for its erasures, the power of this formulation is suggested by the fact that U.S. historians remained in its thrall for nearly a hundred years.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the story of frontier progress was remade in an internationally colonizing form after World War II in the concept of the technofrontier, the endless frontier made possible by industrial technology. The closing of national borders

need no longer just lead to nostalgia; the technofrontier is open and expanding. In the guise of development, the technofrontier dream hit Indonesian centers hard in the late 1960s. By the 1990s, it had dragged its older frontier cousins, those entangled stories of the wild, to the rural peripheries.

Frontiers are notoriously unstable, and it is fitting that Kalimantan landscapes should have a role in forging new frontier conceptions. The frontier arrived in Kalimantan *after* environmentalism had already become established not just among activists but also in government and corporate public relations. No one could be surprised this time to find that frontier-making is destructive of forests and indigenous cultures. Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn wrote that in the Amazon, heroic development plans unexpectedly turned to smoke, mud, and violence: "The generals had unleashed forces beyond their control, and now the Amazon faced its apocalypse" (1990: 141). But in New Order Kalimantan, the Amazon apocalypse was already known. Plans were set in motion to save the environment in the process of destroying it. Tree plantations were introduced to restore deforested and degraded land. Only then was the landscape deforested and degraded to make way for the restorative tree plantations. Giant mining conglomerates were licensed to save the land from the depredation of wild miners, yet legal and illegal prospectors were inseparable. "They go where we go," a Canadian engineer explained, "and sometimes we follow them" (Williams 1988: 1). Indonesian timber and plywood tycoon Bob Hasan hosted a 10K "Run for the Rainforest" and raked in international environmental prizes.<sup>6</sup> "Indonesians don't destroy their forests," he told reporters, "We are just given a little time to manage [the forest] for others" (Vidal 1990). This is the salvage frontier, where making, saving, and destroying resources are utterly mixed up, where zones of conservation, production, and resource sacrifice overlap almost fully, and canonical time frames of nature's study, use, and preservation are reversed, conflated, and confused.

By this point it should be clear that by frontier I don't mean a place or even a process but an imaginative project capable of molding both places and processes. Frederick Jackson Turner describes the frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (1994: 32). It is a site of transformations; "the wilderness masters the colonist. . . Little by little he masters the wilderness" (33). It is a space of desire: it calls; it appears to create its own demands; once glimpsed, one cannot but explore and exploit it. Frontiers have their own technologies of space and time: Their emptiness is expansive, spreading across the land; they draw the quick, erratic temporality of rumor, speculation, and cycles of boom and bust, encouraging ever-intensifying forms of resourcefulness. On the Kalimantan salvage frontier, frontier intensification and proliferation lurch forward in a hall of mirrors, be-

coming showy parodies of themselves. Time moves so quickly that results precede their causes, and the devastation expected behind the line of frontier expansion suddenly appears, as it seems, ahead of its advance.

The Kalimantan frontier is not the enactment of a principle of commodification or conquest. The commodification of forest products is centuries old in this area, and while the new frontier draws on the earlier trade, its appearance is not a logical intensification. The frontier is not a philosophy but rather a series of historically nonlinear leaps and skirmishes that come together to create their own intensification and proliferation.<sup>7</sup> As these kinds of moves are repeated, they gain a cultural productiveness even in their quirky unpredictability. Thus, Marianne Schminck and Charles Wood (1992) describe frontiers in Amazonia as a series of ironic twists. Planned communities lead to unplanned settlement; resource nationalization leads to private control; land titling leads to forgery; military protection leads to generalized violence. Such twists are more than irony: They predict and perform their own reversals, forming productive confusions and becoming models for other frontiers. In Kalimantan, related paradoxes produce frontier degradation and salvage. The frontier is made in the shifting terrain between legality and illegality, public and private ownership, brutal rape and passionate charisma, ethnic collaboration and hostility, violence and law, restoration and extermination.

### *Legal, Illegal*

Shifting cultivation is illegal in Indonesia, despite the fact that it is the major subsistence technology for many rural people, including Meratus Dayaks. Perhaps that is why, as I hiked down the Meratus Mountains into the eastern coastal plains with Meratus friends, the lines of legality were not clear to me, and I was hardly aware that the immigrant loggers I passed were out of bounds, wild men. As soon as we hit the old logging roads, we found them, singly or in groups of three or four, each with a small chain saw or a water buffalo to haul out the logs. Their living places were bed-sized bamboo platforms along the road with only a sheet of plastic hung over to keep out the rain; they seemed to have no possessions but a coffee pot and a can of mackerel, poor man's sardines. We stopped to drink sticky, thick coffee, loaded with sugar, and to talk of the pleasures and dangers of the forest world they knew. They chanted the prices of wood, the names of logs. They spooked themselves, and us, with tales of stolen chain saws and armed men on the roads. They were always planning to leave in a few days, when the earnings looked good, and before fiercer men arrived. Even as quick-moving transients, they gave us a human face for the frontier.

My friends thought the men worked for Inhutani, a government timber company, and while this turned out to be technically wrong, they were right that lines between public, private, and criminal were unclear. These loggers have both legitimacy and access. They sell their logs to the big logging companies or to small but perfectly legal wood processors. Where environmental regulations keep the companies off mountain slopes or village claims push them back, that's where the wild loggers go. They fill out logging economies of scale, and their earnings are the only prosperity logging is likely to bring to the province. Their chain saws come to them through networks of renting and profit-sharing that cross local, ethnic, and religious lines. They tap the slender ends of arteries flowing with capital from rich urban entrepreneurs, conglomerates, and—at that time—the family of the president branching in thinner and thinner capillaries out into the forest. Usually, the police and the army do not bother them, although the police and the army can be unpredictable. Many pay fees to Meratus village heads to give them permission to cut in village forests, and while villagers complain that village heads keep it all for themselves, this privatization is common, even proper for village subsidies.

And yet, both despite and because of all this respectability, these lonely loggers carry and spread the wildness of the frontier. Even in sitting with them, chatting with them, we partook of that wildness. They encouraged our fears of armed men; oh, no one will attack you, they joked, because they will assume you are carrying a lot of guns. And who can tell the difference between a logger and an armed thief? Each time we came upon another man, another logger/thief, we stopped, hoping to domesticate him with our chatter. Perhaps he wouldn't attack us; perhaps he would alert us to the presence of other logger/thieves. Soon our nerves were jangling from all those cups of coffee, and by then my friends and I formed a silent pack, each huddling in his or her own unspoken fear.

They modeled frontier behavior for us, teaching us the value of wood until my Meratus companions looked at familiar forest trees with eyes like cash registers. Oh, that one could bring me a million rupiah, Ma Salam sighed, interrupting our conversation about environmentalism. In writing their names or initials on the logs they cut, the wild loggers had introduced the new practice in this area of writing one's name on trees—to claim the tree, to hold it or sell it to a logger with a chain saw before someone else did. The proliferation of naming brought new identities for trees and men, wrapping both in fearless assertion and violence, for, people said, armed men came by and cut the name off the tree, or cut the tree above the mark, and wrote their own names on the logs. If you confront them with five men,

my friends said, they will come at you with ten or twenty. Sell quickly and move on to write your name again.

Who were these men, so human and yet so transiently identified? They came from everywhere and spoke the common language of trade and calculation based on the hope of a quick windfall. They were called *penyingso*, "chain saw men," or *pembaluk*, "square log men," after the shape of their logs. No one knew them as wild, but they were men without ordinary culture. Appendages to their equipment and their products, they had names but no houses, families, meals, work schedule, or ordinary time. In this stripped-down human form, they communicated across cultures, arranging ethnic collaborations. They offered a hot human connection to still the chills of fear. This thrilling connection was an anesthetic, blocking out the damaged world in which they operated—a world already left behind by bigger frontier makers, the soil sloughing off the hills, trees falling, waters muddied. Entering that damaged world, can't you see the resources waiting to be claimed?

It is difficult to find the words to discuss this kind of transethnic, translocal collaboration and the regional resource dynamics it sets in motion. Resource economists and bureaucrats recognize no localisms; to them, the world is a frontier. There is no point in asking how frontiers come to be; they are nature itself. To counter that perspective, anthropologists, rural sociologists, and geographers have drawn attention to non-frontier-like (or even anti-frontier) environmental social forms, such as common property, community management, and indigenous knowledge. They have returned attention to the cultural specificity of capitalism and state bureaucracy.<sup>8</sup> This important and quite wonderful work has come to dominate local and regional analyses of environment and society in Kalimantan; scholars point to the long-term social making of the rainforest, to a community "ethic of access" that sustains forest commodities, and to the bizarre stereotypes of government planners.<sup>9</sup> My own work has developed within this dialogue.

Yet in contrasting community conventions with state and corporate schemes, there is little room for discussing the call of the wild, with its regionwide collaborations for aggressive resource grabbing and the seemingly unstoppable spread of the frontier. One might call this "the tragedy of the tragedy of the commons," that is, the tragic result of state and corporate policies that assume and enforce open-access conventions as the flip side and precondition of private property.<sup>10</sup> By refusing to recognize alternative forms of access, these policies will alternatives to disappear. But this is a tragedy that cannot be well described with the vocabulary of management, property, and access rules. From the perspective of the abandoned logging

roads, the divide between community and state-corporate standards feels nostalgic: too little, too late. The logging road and its illegal-legal loggers from everywhere call me toward more dangerous country.

One look back: Grand schemes never fully colonize the territories upon which they are imposed. If the frontier is an environmental project, not a place, it can never fill the landscape. Away from the logging road, there are trees, fields, and villages. The frontier could move on; the forest might regenerate. Still, those industrial tree plantations are truly huge, and through them the frontier claims powerful national and international players.

### *The Public Private*

Riding from the provincial capital up the east coast and toward the mountains in an airless, overcrowded van with the music so loud it closes down my senses, there is more than enough anesthetic; yet the difference between legal resource concessions and the wild is perfectly visible here. The road runs for miles through land without underbrush or animal life but only neatly planted tree stock, row on row on row. The transmigration villages placed here to provide the labor force for these future trees are similarly orderly, blank, and anonymous; in striking contrast to everywhere else I've been in Indonesia, the passengers get on and off at these nameless stops without looking at us or speaking. Sometimes we stop in noisy frontier towns, full of gold merchants, truckers, and hungry, aggressive men. But soon enough we are back among the silent army of young trees. This is the discipline that boosted Indonesia—for awhile—among the emerging Asian tigers. Under the banner of political stability, discipline made economic indicators soar.

Appearances are important here. No weeds, no trash timber. It is unclear to what extent appearances were the New Order economy's most important product. Oil palm, the darling of the export-crop set, was sponsored by foreign and domestic plantation subsidies; perhaps the companies will have moved on before the oil is pressed.<sup>11</sup> The pulp plantations were financed by the national reforestation program, the answer to environmentalists' concern for the rainforest. New international agreements offered plantation timber as the solution to rainforest destruction; timber companies put in plantations, sponsored by the government, to earn the right to cut down more forest, useful for future plantations.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the young trees await future pulp factories. And as they wait, what will befall them? Many of the acacias are cloned from the same parent stock, making them highly vulnerable to disease.<sup>13</sup> They are affected by a rot that causes hollow boles, an apt image for an economy of appearances.

There have been government corporations here, and there have been private ones, but most fall awkwardly across this distinction. The oil palms were said to belong to the wife of then president Suharto, Mrs. Tien Suharto, who died in 1996 but before her death was widely parodied as Mrs. Tien (Ten) Percent, after her voracious interest in the economy. The loggers told villagers who complained about the invasion of village forests to "go ask Mrs. Tien." The president's family served both a material and a mythical role in the plantation economy. The capital they controlled was both public and private. It was the confusion of these categories that allowed frontier investment to flourish. Here national interest merged with that of the president, the army, and the corporations.

Even the staunchest of neoclassical economists admit that it was difficult to distinguish among domestic, foreign, and government ownership in New Order Indonesia, given the mix of investors, the central importance of patronage, and the slippage back and forth between military and private enterprise. The confusion proliferated at every level. Foreign was domestic: Foreign aid formed a major portion of domestic revenue, and foreign firms worked through domestic partners. Public was private: The explicit goal of the government was to sponsor entrepreneurship at every level. Even peasant subsidies in the 1990s were individual entrepreneurship loans. Licenses and concessions were both public and private. Civil servants were paid a low base salary and expected to gain the rest of their living from perks and benefits of their discretionary authority.

You could call this corruption, or you could call it, as one North American corporate executive, gracefully submitting to government demands for a share of his company's enterprise, dubbed it, "Indonesia's political, economic, and social environment."<sup>14</sup> One must also consider these public-private arrangements in relation to the worldwide post-Cold War infatuation with the market. In the 1990s, most every country redoubled its endorsement of the market, and New Order Indonesia was exemplary. The bureaucracy was the market; its goal was to promote entrepreneurship. The military was the market; soldiers had the muscle to make the best deals. Environmental management was the market, offering another chance to claim resources and promote trade. The fluidity between public and private was a fertile space for the capital, the deals, the plans, and the appearance of the economy itself. The president's family and friends were exemplars of what every citizen was supposed to be doing; their capital flowed out through transregional networks in complementary small and large deals.

This dynamic was said to speed up development, and speed things up it did. Secrets passing through personal ties encouraged speculation in which investments preceded contracts; for those tracking money and resources, an

impatient anticipation emerged, speeding up time. A boom-time excitement was stimulated by the fluidity of deals, trickling down and then streaming between official coffers, foreign firms, and those-in-the-know. Rumors spread the excitement, and the wild men flocked to the frontier following or anticipating news of gold strikes and quick timber harvests, before the plantations rolled in. In this productive space, quick, erratic, anticipatory frontier time intensifies and spreads, ricocheting back and forth between centers and peripheries, and getting ahead of itself in death-defying leaps. Here alternative, appearance-based scams—disciplined or wild—are born, and the only promise that must be kept is of fabulous, unearned wealth.

### *Roads That Empty the Territory*

Between the tree plantations and the mountains are networks of more- and less-maintained logging roads, with their heavy cargoes of legal logs by day and illegal logs by night. For bosses and managers, the roads shrink and simplify the territory, making it quicker to get from here to there. For most everyone else, the logging roads expand landscape emptiness, separating off- and on-road sites and creating obstacles between once-connected forest places even as they speed the trip to town. The roads are also conduits for migrants, fugitives, and thieves, who expand both danger and wildness for everyone who lives or visits there.

Natural treasures themselves become fugitive in this landscape of movement and flight, just as once, people said, a man stumbled over a nugget of gold as big as a rice mortar and marked the place oh so carefully to come back later with help—but when he did, nothing was there. Masculine magic and charisma are required, for even safe in one's possession, treasures disappear. Thus, every man on the road with a splinter of gaharu incense wood or a palmful of immature swifts' nests unwraps it from its plastic bag, shows it like a secret talisman, wraps it, stows it carefully in his pocket, chants the price, pulls it out again to rewrap it, trying thereby to stabilize its presence on his person. And how much more flighty are the incense trees and swifts themselves.

Take the swifts. The saliva nests they build in limestone caves are the key ingredient of Chinese birds' nest soup and fetch startling prices even locally: a million and a half rupiah for a kilo of the white clean ones and 800,000 for the debris-filled black.<sup>15</sup> In this area, they have long been associated with fugitive luck and danger. In the 1980s, people told me that the only way to find birds' nests was to bring a freshly sacrificed human head to the spirits who could reveal them. Now, with armed men on the roads, the birds' erratic flight has intensified beyond the reach of headhunters, as have attempts

to hold them in place. Where military men have found productive caves, they have posted guards and signs: "This is the property of the army." Meratus who consider themselves traditional owners hurry to guard remaining caves, building their homes and clearing swiddens in the dark glens facing the caves, never leaving them. Still, they are outmaneuvered by the men on the roads, who come around with guns and flashlights and demand entry. They peel off the birds' nests before they are fully built, ensuring that the birds will not return. Quick harvesting leads to quicker harvesting, and nests the size of kidney beans are removed, depriving the birds of any place to raise their young. In this fugitive landscape, armed men are the best part of the law, and parodies of property appear. One Meratus man who had moved in front of a cave to guard it showed me the letter written by the most recent gang to have come by to rob the cave, which warned off future gangs on the principle of this group's precedence. My Meratus host got nothing, as did the swifts, who could only fly to other fugitive locations.

Men arm themselves with old war stories, and invulnerability magic from the 1958 rebellion has been revived, with its metaphors of penises as weapons and semen as spent bullets. As much as I tried to avoid too simple an ecofeminism, it was difficult not to conclude that an emergent masculinity fueled this regionally spreading dynamic, with its ability to unite men across lines of local culture and religion in a competitively intensive virility. Men arouse each other on the roads with stories of women who will do anything ("and then," he said, "she tore off her bra"). They work themselves and each other into a constant state of masculine anxiety, forever talking deals, opportunities, and prices in the sped-up time of the chase. They forget day-cycles, lifecycles, and seasons. They talk back and forth and challenge each other to greater efforts.

Hiking the logging roads in the hot sun, I find it difficult to refuse a ride from the men in the truck. But crammed into the cab with the crew behind a windshield covered with stickers of busty naked ladies and my male Meratus friends stuck in the back with the water buffalo, fear hits me like an avalanche. Within 30 seconds, they are feeling my arms and legs and breasts, and I must concentrate on how to get them to let me off at the next cross-roads, where I heave a sigh of relief that I made it out, again, this time. Yes, says a wizened Meratus friend, they grab your breasts even if you are a wrinkled old woman, they must have no eyes, and every woman must learn to jump out of the truck. But a younger friend replies to my stories with bravado: Why didn't you do it? Weren't they handsome enough? I had heard similar bravado from young men when a peer was cowed by soldiers: If they had come at me, I would have shown them something! Indeed, one's only choices are to hide or to play. Women can be resourceful too, and prostitu-



tion brings new resources to the frontier. But this is a world formed by an intensive, peculiar, exaggerated masculinity.

This is a masculinity that spreads and saturates itself with images and metaphors, amulets, stickers of naked women, stories based on the confusion between rape and wild sex. Its moving force is perhaps best seen in the imagistic effects of the "water machine," the high-pressure hydraulic pump, small enough for one man to carry and connect to any local stream, but whose power in the spray emerging from the taut blue plastic piping can gouge a hole four feet deep into the land and thus expose the gravel underneath the clay, gravel mixed, perchance, with small flakes or nuggets of gold. What charismatic force! And what possibilities it unveils.

The water machine, introduced in this area around 1990, is the key technology of small-scale or "wild" gold mining. It is much too expensive for an ordinary Meratus man, but networks of renting and share splitting, with borrowed funds and imagined profits split among more and more men make it possible for many ambitious men to join a mining group, or more aggressively yet, to bring the machine and a team upstream toward home. Nor are Meratus the only players. The miners, like the loggers, come from everywhere, building makeshift settlements along the logging roads with names like "Kilometer 105 and a Half." At their excavations, they erect camps of bamboo platforms hung with plastic sheets; they have coffee pots, sugar, mackerel cans. But I know some of these people; they are Meratus farmer-foragers. I know they are perfectly capable of stopping anywhere in the forest and, in half an hour, building a cozy, rain-tight shelter of bamboo, palm leaves, or bark. I know, in other circumstances, they would carry rice; they would hunt and fish and gather wild fruits and vegetables and make a tasty meal. But here, surrounded by familiar forest, they observe the proprieties of rain-soaked plastic sheets and a nutrition of coffee and rancid fish. It feels like nothing so much as "culture" in its most coercive, simplistic form: a way of life that draws us in, ready or not, sensible or not.

Among the huddled mining shelters, men and women disagree. Women join the profit-sharing groups, panning the gravel with men until their own jealous menfolk arrive, sending them back to the village. The men attack the land with new vigor, sharing the washing with other women, and women sneak back to join the gold parties of strangers.

But what is the result of all this passion? Despite obsessive attention to secrets and signs, much of the gravel exposed yields no metal at all; and when it does, the gold flakes are quickly spent in the extortionate prices of coffee, sugar, and cigarettes. No one I heard of had made much money; meanwhile, water machines broke and huge debts were accrued. Most strikingly, the land lay pock-marked and deeply eroded beyond recovery. Those trees that

remained clung tottering by the tips of their roots, their bases airily exposed. Broken streams formed muddy pools; even grass was banished. "They have ruined the land for many generations," said the old people. But perhaps it doesn't matter, if the industrial tree plantations and their transmigrant labor force are coming anyway. Their mission is to make and restore degraded lands; why not get started?

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Frontier men and resources, I have argued, are made in dynamics of intensification and proliferation. Confusions between legal and illegal, public and private, disciplined and wild are productive in sponsoring the emergence of men driven to profit, that is, entrepreneurs, as well as the natural objects conjured in their resourceful drives. These men and objects are contagious, recharging the landscape with wildness and virility. The frontier then appears to roll with its own momentum.

## II. Crisis—and the Confusion of the Senses

In 1997 and 1998, the economy of Indonesia was hit by a great financial crisis that spread across Asia. The internationally evocative term *krismon* (*krisis moneter*, "financial crisis") was coined in the newspapers, but the term *krisis* also spread on less sophisticated channels. By the summer of 2000, the term *krisis* had reached remote South Kalimantan villages. I heard it used to refer to all kinds of bad-news events, from family breakups to entrepreneurial failures to regional political upsets.

In the village of Kalawan, times have been bad indeed. These are not the bad times broadcast around the world to portray the Indonesian "crisis": the fights over imported food, the violence against Chinese shop owners, the empty urban real estate. The crisis in Kalawan is deeper, at least in the sense that it could not be solved with the stabilization of the rupiah or even a change in the regime. Since the late 1980s, logging had "opened" the region: to armed men, legitimate and illegitimate; to entrepreneurial schemes, big and small; to migrants and transmigrants, with their superior citizenship claims; to proselytizing Pentecostals; to the destruction of subsistence livelihoods and the voiding of local rights; and, indeed, to panic and despair. Since the early 1990s, oil palm and pulp-and-paper plantations have spread closer and closer, drawing surveying lines through Kalawan people's orchards and fields, and unloosing waves of imported transmigrant laborers to further denude the Kalawan landscape. Then the fires of 1997 burned down

everything on one side of the road and much on the other, leaving a charred scar. Since then the rice has failed three times, and Kalawan people have become accustomed to discussing the distressing prices of those bottom-of-the-barrel rices, broken and red or black from improper storage, that have emerged as the staple. There is not much hope here, except, for some, in heaven . . . and for others, in the latest resource scam.

The krisis in this area, then, has been long in brewing. Indeed, there is a basic continuity between “development” here and “krisis.” Development required the making and using of “resources,” and resources cannot be made without violent upheaval. But frontier proliferation can get out of hand. Post-1997 frontier dynamics have challenged investors. The withdrawal of the New Order army as the guarantor of corporate greed has had drastic results. Community groups and gangsters have seized mines and timber camps. Illegal resource extraction suddenly overwhelms the legal. All but the bravest investors have considered backing out.

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Crisis is a time for realignments within capitalism. Things are out of control; individual firms, and perhaps whole sectors, will go under, even if capital as an abstract idea may move on, unscathed. Fortunes hang in the balance. Capitalists must make big decisions: Can they take advantage of the confusion? Should they pull out?

Everyday processes of frontier-making become crises when, in contingent concert with regime disintegration and international “loss of confidence,” frontier violence and destruction take on a new magnitude. The business-as-usual obfuscations and confusions that make up frontier dynamics are magnified. Investors become vulnerable to frontier instability in the same way that residents and immigrants have been. What was “development” and “opportunity” in Kalimantan when trauma remained a small distraction is “krisis” when it emerges larger than life.

Media representations play a part in making crisis by changing focus from figures of rosy profits to landscapes of disruption. They reverse the scale of each: Frontier wreckage that looked small in the shadow of bright economic forecasts now takes up the front page of the newspaper. Kalimantan is lumped with Africa as a sacrifice zone. Let them kill each other, the authorities say: Tribes will be tribes. Their subtext reads: Capitalists beware!

It makes no sense to blame disruption on its poorest participants. If fingers must be pointed, let us begin with corporate and military elites. Yet their provocations have been effective: An apparatus has been put into motion that mobilizes chaos. There are no more anesthetics; confusion and

pain are now free to show their faces. Suddenly powerful, they reach out to touch the ruling classes. Will the frontier rock the center, revealing global capitalism in its dirty underwear?

Chaos: a frontier spun out of control, its proliferations no longer productive for the authorities. This section explores the technical, sensuous features of such chaos. In chaos, sense disorientation itself becomes a historical agent, drawing people and landscapes in its path. How might we track the agency of the senses?

### Smoke

The smoke of the fires of the 1997 El Niño drought year and beyond created a crisis of visibility.<sup>16</sup> What should be visible and what should be invisible? Proper standards of visibility were contested and overlaid. Should Indonesia be responsible when airplanes in Singapore cannot fly because of the haze? Is corporate responsibility proved when environmentalists with satellite photos and Global Positioning System technologies make visible the smoke that emerges from plantations? Is the government creating more haze by blaming swidden farmers for the fires? And have the corporations successfully clarified property law by making the space of their plantations visible—by burning down their village competition?

As Emily Harwell (2000) has noted, most of the arguments about the fires stayed resolutely at a very high scale: the aerial view of the landscape. Opponents disagreed about the causes and consequences of the fires, but nobody cared much about the view from the ground. No one demanded that villagers affected by the fires become participants in the debates. Yet, perhaps such a demand would have made the situation only more difficult to decipher. Smoke created no clear perspective from above or below; the only difference involved the set of potential arsonists most available to blame. Many villagers have testified that corporations started the fires hoping to burn village forests for plantations. But often they used this story not to protest, but rather to catalyze more stories: about how village neighbors burned each other's forests down, about how villagers burned plantations.<sup>17</sup> No breathing space emerged for solidarity. Some stories were realistic; others ranged into the fantastic. Rumors were everywhere, and suspicions aroused. Smoke itself was the protagonist.

In Kalawan, my friends told me, the fires came from the south, from the Kodeco plantation complex. Yes, the company had started the fires, they thought; it was clearing land for *sungkai* and *damar* plantations. Then carelessness and jealousy fanned the flames. Three men on a fishing trip must have left coals in their campfire; the fires had gone out when they started

again in that area. A young man they knew had gone hunting and must have dropped a cigarette, for the flames took off there. Certainly, it was dry. But then, jealousy flared. People who saw their own forests burned were jealous that other people still had fruit trees; they took fire to them. Our conversation took on a new intensity here, as my companions vied to tell me of the meanness of neighbors. I was unclear if we were still talking about carrying real coals or whether we had moved into the realm of sorcery. At the same time, stories poured forth of people dousing their houses in water brought up, bucket by bucket from the river, hour after hour. There was hard work and courage here. And suspicion and anger. The fires were not a natural occurrence, they said. Only through happenstance, more gracious than human plans, had the rain come to put the fires out at last—at the doorway of the house where we now sat. Even then the smoke and soot obscured the view.

The karst formations where the swifts build their expensive nests had burned in the fires. Even if the birds were still there, my friends said, you couldn't get to them; there were no handholds now that the trees were burned and the karst had turned to dust. Yet even as we spoke thus, a young man in the household went out to gather nests. You can't see them; you can't get to them; but, yes, people gather them every week, smaller than a fingernail clipping and worth almost nothing; an economy of the invisible.

Smoke and soot: a challenge to visibility and planning at every level, from the humble to the great. When times were good in the national and international gaze, it seemed that investment ushered in clarity. For the first time, we—the self-proclaimed global management—knew where those resources were: We could count them; we could know their potential; we could talk about caring for them; we could use them. It was said that plywood tycoon Bob Hasan had a computer program that showed every harvestable tree in Kalimantan. "Computers, robotics, contour interpretation, satellite technology, can all help identify what trees are where," he told a reporter (Vidal 1990). Yet these tools only show certain things. Human residents and their rights became invisible. In 1997, however, this trick collapsed, and obscurity became the common complaint. At the bottom of the heap, villagers struggled to survive within the smoke. Above them, contrary regimes of visibility openly competed.

Why did the plantation companies burn down the forest when they had been warned by the government that drought would make the fires spread out of control? Imagine for a moment a contradiction between capital and governance. Governance requires rationalization, clarity, and order. Capital, in contrast, thrives where opportunities are just emerging. The exceptional profits that allow a firm or corporate sector to get ahead are made where

bureaucratic visibility is not yet firmly in place. In the deregulation zones where government is at the end of its tether, capital can operate with the hyper-efficiency of theft. Capital cooperates in the spreading of governance measures that facilitate and legitimate this theft; some visibilities and rationalizations develop rapidly, while other economic standards are fluid and even purposely muddied. In the midst of contrasts between clarity and haze, discipline and free-for-all are uncannily bundled together. Obfuscation appears as a state plot, and as a people's uprising. Either way, proliferation is the result. Whose side should we be on?

No one, I think, wanted the fires to be so big and so destructive. But what is to stop proliferation from getting out of hand?

### Poison

Klerat Pellets: 0.005% w/w brodifacoum pellets.

Klerat is the original single feed anticoagulant rodenticide.

Klerat Pellets are active against rats and mice, including those resistant to first-generation anticoagulants, such as warfarin. A lethal dose can be ingested as only part of a single day's food intake. Rats and mice normally die several days later, so bait shyness does not occur as the rats do not associate the symptoms with the food they have eaten. As multiple feeding is not necessary, "Klerat" can be used most economically and safely when small quantities are applied with an interval between applications.

—<http://www.sorex.com>, "International"

~~After the fires of 1997, the rice plants grew healthily enough and flowered, but the grains never developed. There was no harvest. By the next year the rats had come out of the forest. They infested the fields and ate everything before them. The plantation company sold the people rat poison, telling them to spread it on their fields at least three times every month. My friends said, "It kills the cats; it kills the dogs. But it doesn't affect the rats. They come back every night in greater numbers."~~

Some rats come in great clans, spreading over the fields as evening arrives. They cry "oi, oi, oi." Mouse traps are not effective. Cats are not enough.

"What kinds of rats?" I asked. My friends were using the Indonesian *tikus* rather than the Meratus *wagang*, and thus it was easy for them to avoid the biological specificity of Meratus wildlife classifications. "All kinds of rats," they said. "Tiny ones no bigger than your toe, and giant ones as big as your calf; white ones and grey and black." With the burning of the forest and the clearing of the plantations, there was nowhere else for them to go but the

village fields and orchards. Indeed, I had never seen so much wildlife there. In every trip to relieve myself in the trees, I would scare a mousedeer or watch a colorful tree shrew scamper away. I was reminded of a flood I witnessed in Florida: On every mound of dry land, armadillos and rabbits and mice shared space with birds and foxes. There was no place else for the animals to go. They wouldn't last long.

The plantation, they say, sells rat poison named "kill a rat." I hear overtones of death, sweeping from the English-speaking north. At home, I find the poison "Klerat" on the Web, from the British firm Sorex, a product of its international line. This is a second-generation anticoagulant poison, formulated for rats that have become resistant to warfarin. Elsewhere on the Web, I find complaints that it is killing British owls and California wildlife, even as the rats become resistant again. I'm sure it is effective in killing off a broad spectrum of Bornean tropical rodents and other small animals, possibly sparing the cosmopolitan Norway rats, who seem quick to adapt to almost anything.

Fires that sweep across the forest; rats that sweep across the fields; poisons that sweep across the rats: They have called up the plagues. Each plague follows the simplifications and reductions of the last to leave the landscape more barren.

After the rats, a pestilence of tiny grasshoppers appeared.

### Seizures

Little signs had begun sprouting in Kalawan. On each signboard appeared a man's name and two numbers: the length and width of his plot. These were not Kalawan men. They were newcomers, arriving to claim property. Their plots were tracts of forest, brush, or grass; all that showed of them were the little signs.

Yet these plots had not been unclaimed. There is no unclaimed land in Kalawan; that's what makes it a settlement. But the technologies of "claiming" are not those recognized by the Indonesian state or regional authorities. No one, for example, had thought of Kalawan land as a series of ownable plots. In the 1980s, the village as a collective had claimed a territory in which elders must be consulted to determine rights of use. Newcomers asked for permission to move into the village; elders negotiated disagreements about land use. Personal territories were marked by the plantings and histories of old users and claimed by their descendants. Some of these territories overlapped and supported diverse kinds of claims, reflecting the variety of ways that fields, brush, and forest could be used. This was not considered a problem.

In the 1990s, the Korean Development Company (Kodeco) put a logging road through Kalawan, and the village was forced into greater regional visibility. The police began to sell plots of land to immigrants, and particularly to Javanese transmigrants brought to work on the tree plantations but eager to move off-plantation to enter the more profitable trade in natural resources. Kalawan residents protested. The land was Kalawan orchard land, tended by its owners and charted for eventual reuse as farms. They asked customary leaders to intervene. But no one dared to go against the armed forces. "State land," the soldiers said. If you disagree they shoot you. What could we do? Life is for a moment; death lasts until the end of time." The land was sold out from under them.

Kalawan became an attractive site for immigrants, and old Kalawan residents began selling land themselves before others could sell it for them. But who had the right to sell which land? The man who married in from another village sold the land of his wife's family. The neighborhood head sold his neighborhood. Who could interfere? Meanwhile, two different plantation companies drew their property lines through the village, separating "Korea" and "Indonesia," as residents put it. Some of my Kalawan friends worked for the survey teams, showing them the trails, and losing their lands for a few days of cigarette money.

A paroxysm of greed seized the village. Young men rushed to sell local resources, and, when they ran out, to join the army. Men in army uniforms, real or fake, ransacked the houses, stealing valuables. "If you don't wreck and rampage, your rice pot will be empty," someone said.

"If there's money in it, people will do it," Uma Adang grumbled. "If they have one million, they want two million. If they have two million, they want three million. Up to tens of millions. They don't stop to think. They just want it to multiply: gold, clothing, anything 'modern,' electric motors, motorcycles, motor vehicles. Kalimantan is sick."

### Sin

Property regimes come into being with domestic realignments. In Kalawan, family values were asserted in a defensive spasm of fear. When most everything has been lost, it is easy to demand more and more control over less and less.

Misah had sex with her boyfriend. I knew because everyone was talking about it. Their teacher had caught them. When they had not shown up in class, he had left the other students to their own devices. He spent the afternoon stalking the couple, following them silently to Misah's house and peering through a window as they chatted. When they lay down, he pounced. He

called an emergency village meeting in which he described in the most excruciating detail everything that he had seen. His report provoked a crisis. The couple must be married off immediately, and in acknowledgment of sin. They had disgraced their community.

In Kalawan, there are only two kinds of teachers: Muslims and Christians. Both hold themselves above the local community of pagans. Both sit in chairs and eat pastries with their coffee, while others sit on the floor. Both send the children home if they are a few minutes late to school, even if they have hiked through the jungle for an hour in a storm to get there. My friends used to make fun of them, gently and with respect for their willingness to teach the children. But in the light of *krisis* the villagers saw themselves in the gaze of others, and they seemed poor, backward, and without protection. Sinful and without civilization. There were no more jokes about the teachers then.

"Misah is an animal," her kin said, "she's not even human." Women's sexuality has so often been posed to configure battles between kindreds and communities. But here the teacher's accusation had turned the battle into a defensive siege. Either Dayaks were capable of moral standards or they were not. There would be no kin supporting Misah; she must be an icon of disrespect. My friends raged about her bad behavior. And I marveled: These were the same women with whom I had joked so often about sexual matters and otherwise. How had they become such small-town moralists?

A few years before, Uma Adang had mimed how the pious at prayer peeked out from under closed eyes to see what others were doing. She demonstrated how a tone-deaf chorus sang "Hallelujah" while bemused villagers lined up for post-service refreshments. We had laughed. Now, civilizational disciplines didn't seem so funny. Under the circumstances, everyone must learn piety.

"At least she could have finished class 5," my friends said. I wasn't sure that the memorized inaccuracies of the school texts would have done her much good, but the sizzling atmosphere suppressed such irreverence. "Why can't she continue school anyway?" I ask with false naivete. "Of course the teacher throws these students out," they reprimand me with finality. "It is sin." We would have no more parody of the teacher's discipline. If he says it is sin, it is sin.

"Dayaks must have a higher standard than others," says Uma Adang. "It's different for [Muslims and Christians] who live in the city; they are sophisticated. Dayaks are the older sibling [of Muslims and Christians]; our law is higher." In the confrontation of ethics, local custom is left a role as a defensive standard of value.

"There are three *suku* [groups]," explains Rusli, "Dayaks, Muslims, and Christians. The Javanese are Muslims. 'Indonesia' is the same—Muslim." Now Dayaks have become a minority in Kalawan. Propriety is what they

have. People should keep their houses clean and obey their parents. Teenagers who go to school should mind their virtue.

"I don't think you'll come back," said Uma Adang. "There is no more culture here." *Kebudayaan*, the official state term for "culture," had become a code word between us some years ago for our shared work in savoring the revitalization of customary law and the resurgence of community. But by 2000, customary law was a remnant. The spreading frontier had buried such nonproliferation regimes.

When there is nothing left, there is still the shadow of civilization, inspiring pious disciplines. And, while trouble is unlikely to come out of Kalawan, even the piety of the powerless can get fiercely out of control.

### Body Odor

By 2000, indeed, whiffs of pious violence could be detected across Indonesia, pitting ethnic and religious groups in new, morally inspired hatreds. Even in Kalawan, people knew that Dayaks in West Kalimantan had mobilized to protect the reputation of their women from the disrespectful gestures and violent intrusions of migrant Madurese. Dayaks were driving Madurese out, killing them if necessary.<sup>18</sup> People in Kalawan have identified as Dayaks for a long time. But this was an exotic version of ethnicity: charismatic, passionate, and frightening.

My closest Kalawan friends heard about the Dayak-Madurese clashes from relatives who had moved to West Kalimantan and who had come back, briefly, to visit. I heard their stories some weeks after the visitors left, but the tales were still fresh as they detailed the tellers' sense of a breath-stopping fear—and the need for a brave response.

By the time I heard the stories, there was one detail that stood out, to be repeated over and over: The Dayaks of West Kalimantan, my friends said, could identify Madurese by smelling them. Madurese and Dayaks mixed in public spaces, such as transport buses. It was difficult for strangers to tell one from the other. But when buses were stopped by militants during these wars, Madurese and Dayaks were separated, despite attempts on each side to disguise their names, their clothes, and their language abilities, because they could not change their body odor. My friends showed me what it might have been like, touching me and one another with a finger and sniffing—and then laughing in amazement at the very idea. The children caught on to the game, wiping a finger on first one and then another, and smelling. They ran around giggling, giddy with the new idea, practicing. The adults were equally intrigued. Imagine, sniffing out your enemies in a literal sense!

Body odor as ethnicity was too powerful an idea to fade. In the mass of strangers conjured up by frontier culture and intensified by crisis, how else might one identify one's friends and enemies? Everything else could be mimicked, or so it was said. A poor man's DNA testing, and no authority could standardize the results. This was a technology of identity that could reach out across separate strands of fear and discontent to conjure some common ground of discomfort: It's them.

Body odor ethnicity reappeared in the 2001 Dayak-Madurese violence in Central Kalimantan.<sup>19</sup> It accompanied ethnicity-making ritual and fashion: The "red bowl" of blood and feathers passed from village to village to mobilize a Dayak force; the red head scarves and rattan bracelets of Dayak combatants. All were codes to make mass ethnic conflict legible. Yet, of these, smell is the most intriguing. Smell is elusive. It is difficult to describe. It arouses inchoate emotions and carries deep and often confused memories. Smell brings emotional force to difference: Some body odors make us relax; others offend us. Yet smell is not easy to categorize. The *one* smell that opens the door of recognition has no cognates; it is unique. No two people offer that same smell, however closely they are related. Smell is not a good guide to social status. Smell undermines the mirage of category accuracy even as it provides it a close-to-the-body story.

Smell, like smoke, draws our senses inside obscurity. Something is going on but we don't know what it is. We immerse ourselves in it, engulfed in its unknowns. We steer loose from familiar distinctions and commitments, joining the flow of the frontier.

From afar it is easy to see the destruction, the violence, the consolidation of property rules and ethnic boundaries, and the rise of new political disciplines. Observers wonder how people could have been induced to join this madness. I have argued here for the importance of an assault on the senses: the frontiers of capitalism, spun out of control.

### *Still Alive, But Captured by the Enemy*

Looking up from the confusion, one can only grunt, struggling to remember the precision of mathematical symbols, the numbers of the dead.

One: Natural resources are not God given but must be wrested from previous economies and ecologies in violent extractions.

Two: Such violence leaves none of us unscathed.

Three: This assault is no neighborhood storm. It gathers force from afar, entangling multiple local-to-global scales. For more on this, dear reader, please read on.

## "They communicate only in sign language"

### *[Friction in the commodity chain]*

Everyone knows a commodity: It is the material good of capitalist production and the object of consumers' desire. Commodities seem so familiar that we imagine them ready made for us throughout every stage of production and distribution, as they pass from hand to hand until they arrive at the consumer. Yet the closer we look at the commodity chain, the more every step—even transportation—can be seen as an arena of cultural production. Global capitalism is made in the friction in these chains as divergent cultural economies are linked, often awkwardly. Yet the commodity must emerge as if untouched by this friction.

A lump of coal travels from a mine in Kalimantan to a power plant in India. Before it achieves an existence as a lump of coal, it is part of the landscape under a village field. Somehow it must be coaxed or coerced out of this landscape. Once mined, it still must travel to a warehouse and from there to a port city, where the coal ships can dock. It must be sorted and graded, and managers will have to make sure no one mixes the poor-quality coal with the good. It must meet specifications. If it sits too long in the warehouse, or in the ship at harbor, it will lose all its value to storage and docking costs. At the other end of its journey, it must convince the power plant managers that the contract has been met. All along the journey this lump is "coal." Yet at each stage it is appraised for different properties; if it will stay in this commodity chain, it must be ready to meet these varied demands. It requires not a vague and transcendent "coalness" but rather a step-by-step negotiation of the possibilities at hand—for digging, sorting, transport, and so on. It is transformed as coal-the-diggable, coal-the-sortable, coal-the-transportable, until it eventually becomes coal-the-burnable. In these shifts the lump of coal rubs up against other participants in the chain: unhappy villagers, conveyor belts, contracts. In its shape, its cost, and its composition, coal is made in the friction of the commodity chain.

The managers who facilitate this process can tell us: To produce a com-