The London School of Economics and Political Science

THE DUG-UP HEART
Becoming a Nun in the Company of Others

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis explores the self-making journeys of Indonesian Catholic nuns as they unfold in the company of others. In its intimate, performative, and institutional capacities, being in company, I argue, is the method by which nuns are made, both as united, interchangeable subjects, and as vibrant individuals. Regularly reassigned to convents throughout the world, encouraged to adapt to diverse communities, and tasked with bearing joy to others, women learn that the path to sisterhood requires strong self-knowledge and a powerful reckoning with the heart. This reckoning can only be accomplished through the embodied participation of other people, especially the small cast of characters who share a convent. Through traditional ethnographic and experimental performance methods conducted during two years of fieldwork in Flores Timur, I explore how the sociality of company elicits the layered, mutable, and mysterious dimensions of personhood. While close participant-observation revealed the everyday intimacies and agonies of convent life, experimental performance ethnography workshops harnessed skills widely in evidence in the convent to illuminate nuns' embodied, intersubjective strategies of attention and mutual becoming.

Hailing from kin-centric, mobile, and impoverished eastern Indonesia, nuns learn early in their formation that all people are endowed by God with special talents, bear the wounds of childhood trauma, and inhabit a unique style: three elements that constitute their characters. In the convent, nuns play off and into each other's characters as they attempt to maintain a moral mood of calm and joy. They hope to carry this mood on their visits to Indonesia's multi-religious communities, where they aim, amidst all their development and missionary projects, to just be present. Company, they feel, is an act of service and a crucial part of what makes them who they are. Ultimately, I suggest, their example may expand our own horizons of the social dynamics of self-becoming.

For my womb sisters,
Clare Colleen and Brighid Kathleen

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As a graduate teaching assistant on Introductory and Theory courses in anthropology, I had the pleasure of teaching exceptional students. They opened my eyes anew each day to the mystery of 'little things'. Relearning anthropology through their eyes was a blessing.

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thesis done, but sadly I was not fast enough. My aunts and uncles and all my cousins form a world of love and warmth that is always with me, even when it is out of sight.

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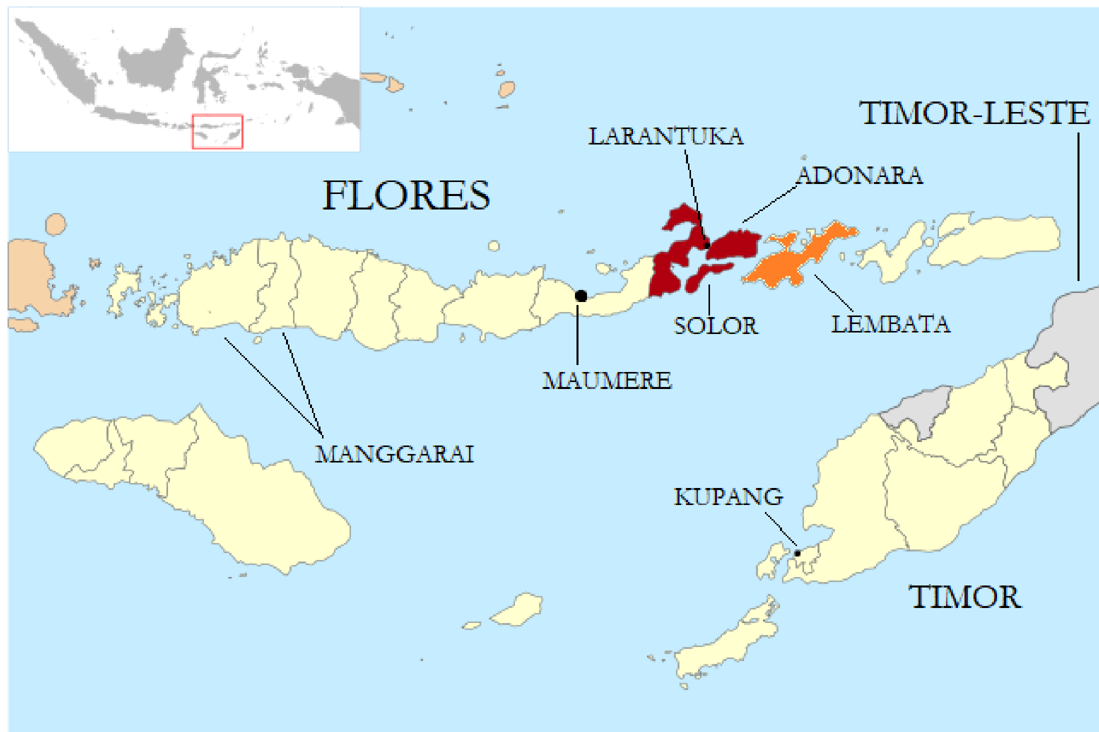
And finally, in the eleventh hour, I send deep, heartfelt gratitude to my companion, Pedro, who changed everything.

MAP



East Nusa Tenggara. Inset shows location of the province in Indonesia. The area coloured red is the regency of Flores Timur. The area coloured red and orange is ethnically Lamaholot.

RECURRING CHARACTERS

Lewoina Convent, Larantuka

Sister Pia – Mother of Lewoina, later Mother of Lahurus Convent. A woman approaching sixty originally from highland Manggarai, she is a model of piety and an impeccable hostess. She is strict about self-presentation and appreciative of hierarchy. Affectionate with the vulnerable, she is also a savvy businesswoman who does not shy from authority. A consummate performer, she manipulates her voice subtly to manage emotions. Suffers from severe headaches following a motorbike accident that removed part of her skull.

Sister Diana – Mother of Lewoina after Sister Pia's departure. Native Lamaholot in her mid-forties originally from rocky Solor. Deeply sensitive and empathetic, she is easily moved to tears by the suffering of others. When she walks, she sways side to side. Her thighs chafe together and the stresses of convent leadership form knots in her shoulders. She speaks in unfinished sentence fragments. Harsh and tempestuous at times, she is generally familial and approachable, but her lack of grace and eloquence invite critique from others.

Sister Nicola – Senior Sister at Lewoina. Lamaholot originally from volcanic Lembata, in her early seventies. Joined the PRR as a young girl and trained under the guidance of the founders. Spent a career in electricity and the preparation of communion wafers. Now retired from work, she tends to the ducks. Diligent in her prayer life, she enjoys watching television. As her body ages, she is frequently afflicted with ailments and is always grateful when others try to care for her. She looks forward to retiring from the working convent and settling in the elderly care home.

Sister Clara-Francesca – Junior Sister at Lewoina. Lamaholot originally from Lembata in her late twenties. Lively and talkative, praised for her creativity, she is also seen as being somewhat easily influenced. Her habits and style tend to change slightly based on her company. A childhood injury left her deaf in one ear. Formally assigned to manage the production of communion wafers, she preferred other work, especially garden work and economic bookkeeping. Loves being outside, among the flowers.

Sister Mattelina – Junior Sister at Lewoina. Originally from Timor-Leste in her mid-twenties. Stocky, fair and very sweet. Speaks the local pidgin more comfortably than formal Indonesian. Accepts her tasks with no complaint. Seen as humble, but also too submissive. Somewhat pampered as a girl, she is occasionally homesick. Patient and unpretentious, she is a fast friend of many of the female employees. She is good friends with Sister Nicola and the two enjoy watching soap operas together.

Sister Vivina – Originally Mother of the Mother House, later moved to Lewoina to manage finances. Slightly older than Sister Diana, she is ethnically Dayak originally from urban Kalimantan. Fair-skinned with shiny black hair, which she wears styled in a slight pouf emerging from her veil. Lively and light-hearted, she has found herself in several dangerous conflict situations, occasionally lying about her ethnicity to escape harm, especially rape. Somewhat sickly, her energy often

drains completely, leaving her dim-eyed and lethargic. In her spare time, she tends to her dog and plants cacti to beautify the convent. She speaks in a high sing-song and peppers her sentences with wordplay. Extremely quick-witted, she is a great entertainer. She has a nose for news and gossip and is terrified of cockroaches. She never loses her temper.

Sister Osanna – Medior Sister of Lewoina, moved from a convent in Maumere. Somewhat younger than Sister Diana, she is also Lamaholot, originally from Larantuka. Impatient and quick-tempered, she is also quick to forgive and seek forgiveness. Talks swiftly and with total confidence in a mix of Indonesian and the local pidgin. Appreciates hard work and practical knowledge, but dislikes 'theory'. Moved to Lewoina to take over the kitchens, she enjoys experimenting with new recipes in her free time. She is very good at explaining Lamaholot beliefs and customs to people unfamiliar with them. The idea of ghosts makes her shiver.

Wendy – A young woman working at Lewoina convent, helping in the retreat house. In her early twenties, originally from a coastal satellite village near the Larantuka-Maumere border. Very kind and congenial, Wendy has many friends and suitors. Later, moves to Jakarta for work.

Mother House, Performing Group

Sister Maravilosa – Junior nun in Sister Clara-Francesca's cohort. Originally from Timor. Assigned to assist the Order's secretary. Responsible, perceptive and smart, she meets every order with an understanding nod. She has a broad smile and dislikes conflict.

Sister Arcangela – Junior nun slightly younger than Sister Maravilosa. Originally from Papua, with family in Papua New Guinea. Speaks in a formal, crisp accent through an almost-perpetual smile. Eager to please, she occasionally baffles her peers. Struggles to understand instruction and to remember things, although she skips through failure admirably undaunted.

PRR 'Lifecycle'

Title	**Position**	**Time**
Candidate (*calon*)	Expressed interest in joining the PRR, submitted application. Candidates living at home or in a PRR convent near their home.	Can happen any time after a girl has graduated secondary school. Candidates are typically 18-20 years old and their time as candidates may last anywhere from a few days to a few months
Aspirant (*aspiran*)	Admitted to PRR, gathered in Mother House.	~ 3 months
Postulant (*postulan*)	Moved to Postulancy, formally inducted into PRR. Receives a modified habit (shorter sleeves)	1 year
Novice 1 (*novis I*)	Moved to Novitiate, receives new name. Receives veil.	1 year
Novice 2 (*novis II*)	Kept 'inside' the Novitiate, largely in silence. 3 weeks work placement.	1 year
Junior Sister (y*unior*)	Makes temporary vows. Receives medallion. Assigned to working convent. Vows remade annually.	~ 7 years
Medior Sister (*medior*)	Makes perpetual vow. Receives gold ring. Given increased responsibilities.	~ 30 years
Senor Sister (*senior*)	Ages out of responsibilities. Likely moved to Mother House or care home.	Until end of life

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

All definitions from An Indonesian-English Dictionary (Echols & Shadily 1989), *with a few exceptions. These are my own explanations and are marked with an asterisk.*

acara – agenda, program / *short performance presented as part of a feast
adat – custom, tradition / customary law
adik / *ade* – younger sibling
anak – child
Bapak – father, formal address to an older man
bebas – free, unhampered, unimpeded
belajar – study, learn
bersama – together with, collective
biara – convent
buat – do, make
calon – candidate
curah hati – to speak freely / *to spill the heart
ekspresi – expression
formasi – formation
gaya – energy, force / style, form, manner
gembira – glad, happy, cheerful
    bergembira – rejoice, be full of spirit
hadir – be present
halus – refined
hati – liver / seat of emotions / heart
hening – clear, silent, quiet
kakak – older sibling or cousin, term of address or reference for a person somewhat older
karakter – character
karya – work, labour, activity
kasar – coarse, rough, crude, uncouth
kaul – vow
kaul sementara – *temporary vow (junior nuns make these annually)
kaul kekal – *perpetual vow (made once, secures a nun in the order)
kebersamaan – togetherness
kenal – know, be familiar / be acquainted with
kesamaan – sameness
komunitas – *nuns' dwelling space
konggregasi – congregation
malu – shy, bashful, embarrassed / respectful, humble / shame, ashamed
Mama – mother, term of address for women the age of someone's mother
masuk – enter
medior – *a nun who has made her perpetual vows
menggali – dig up, excavate, unearth, exhume / delve / discover

misteri – mysterious
mulai – begin
novis – novice
om – uncle, term of address for an older man
panggilan – call, summons / calling, vocation
pelayanan – service, waiting on / care
pembantu – helper, assistant / domestic servant
pemimpin – leader, guide
postulan – *postulant, a *calon* at the first level of formal training
probasi – *probation, six-month period of reflection to prepare for perpetual vows
ramai – bustling, lively, festive / noisy, loud
religius – religious / *a member of the Catholic religious class
sahabat – friend
saja – just, only
sama – same, equal
sayang – pity / love / darling
sederhana – simple, plain, unpretentious
suku – ethnic group
Suster – Catholic nun
tahan – endure, put up with / last, hold out / hold
tahu – know
tarekat – (Islamic) path for mystics to follow / an order of mystics
teman – friend, companion
umat – the members of a religious community
yunior – *a nun who has made her temporary vows but not yet her perpetual vows

NOTES ON STYLE

This research took place primarily in the national Indonesian language, Bahasa Indonesia and in the Indonesian-Lamaholot pidgin of Larantuka, Bahasa Nagi*,* with generous smatterings of regional languages, especially Lamaholot and Manggarai. PRR nuns speak to each other primarily in Indonesian. Foreign words are italicized and are all in *Bahasa Indonesia*, except where otherwise indicated.

There are several words key to this thesis that are borrowed from English and given new life and meaning. Italics for these words signal Indonesian usage.

In Indonesian, Catholic nuns are referred to as *suster*. This applies both to direct address and in reference to the category of nun. *Suster* neither sounds like nor references the Indonesian words for kin sister (*kakak* / *adik*). Because I want to preserve the non-associations Indonesians make between Sisters and sisters, I employ the English term 'nun'.

This thesis is punctuated with photographs, all my own. I have not included captions for these images as they are meant to act atmospherically, like scenic design, rather than didactically. Most relate directly to the surrounding text. I have made a few adjustments to preserve anonymity.

Chapter Seven: Expression includes embedded videos that require an internet connection. The rest of the thesis may be read unproblematically from a hard copy.

All character names, with the exception of historical figures, are pseudonyms. Dates are generally omitted to prevent identification of interlocutors based on their convent.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Because it had become all-but-certain that the Mother of the Lewoina convent was to be reassigned (finally) after twelve long years of service, the nuns of the Puteri Reinha Rosari whispered about who would replace her. They laid their suspicions out along lengthy after-dinner talks and texted them to their friends in other cities. Many sisters secretly coveted the position, but most guessed that it would fall to someone who had experience working in the order's centre, the 'Mother House'. The convent at Lewoina was huge, its work demanding, and its place pivotal for the order's maintenance. It required a 'good nun' who was also a strong leader. Few imagined it would fall to Sister Diana.

Sister Diana, who self-described as 'coarse' (*kasar*), stood in stark contrast to her Mother, refined, pious, perfectly-behaved and universally-beloved Sister Pia. Everything Sister Pia represented seemed unfulfilled in Sister Diana. Sister Pia commanded respect through her attentive care for others. Sister Diana was often scrolling through Facebook on her mobile phone. Sister Pia forgave and forgot. Sister Diana shouted until she was hoarse. Sister Pia attended to her prayers and duties even when plagued by chronic headaches. Sister Diana slept in and skipped prayers, saying she had been 'working too hard.' Sister Pia strode to the front of the room to make speeches, host, and entertain. Sister Diana shrank in the back. Sister Pia knew what a person really wanted before they finished saying three words. Sister Diana sometimes seemed not to follow from one sentence to the next. No surprise then, that few suspected the Superiors would even dream of appointing Sister Diana to such a pivotal position.

Things looked different from amongst the small company of Lewoina's nuns. Without ever saying it outright, Sister Pia made it clear that Sister Diana was her choice for a successor. She groomed her for the role, taking her along on every task and becoming increasingly strict with her. 'When I'm gone,' Mother Pia kept saying, 'you, little sister, have to be strong. You can't phone me every second.'

When the day came for the annual announcement of reassignments, I was prevented from going—there are many things about convents that laypeople should not witness. The first wind I had of the official news was the laughter in the hall, almost hesitant. I stood with two of the convent's employees, the tools of our trade sitting dormant, props in our hands, as we pricked our ears for the outcome. Sister Pia was reassigned to Timor. Sister Diana was promoted to Mother of Lewoina. Everyone else in each of the order's eighty-three convents was shocked.

When they heard the news, nuns in other convents erupted in shocked laughter 'Sister Diana is Mother now?! She makes everything chaos (*gara-gara*)'. Still, one concluded, 'at the very least, Diana knows people' (*paling tidak tahu orang*).

For us in Lewoina, though, the mood hovered between joy, sorrow and resolve. It would be several months before Sister Pia left, but the little 'family' of Lewoina was already mourning her loss. The laypeople who worked at the convent–men and women, young and old–emerged sedately from their stations to congratulate Sister Diana. No one mentioned Sister Pia's impending move. Everyone held back tears, terrified smiles on their faces. The convent toddler, son of a woman who worked in the retreat centre and her husband who tended the convent livestock, a little boy who called all the nuns 'grandma' (*Oma*), hung on her neck, her leg, her arm, begging to come along. Later, she would turn over this memory again and again, wondering 'who told him?' 'Maybe he just had a feeling', I would say. 'Mmm', she would nod, 'maybe.'

The annual announcement that reassigned Sister Pia included no provision for more nuns to be added to the Lewoina convent. The nuns living there couldn't believe that their keystone and principal engine would be removed with no replacements, leaving only an elderly nun disappointed she wasn't moved to the care home, a pious-but-impressionable (and also half-deaf) junior, a young sister from Timor-Leste who barely spoke Indonesian, and a 'coarse' and inexperienced Mother to manage this huge estate. To the nuns, the prospect was overwhelming, nearly inconceivable. Caught between terror and thrill, Sister Diana smiled and giggled like a schoolgirl flirting with danger.

Even the employees had their doubts. 'If Sister Diana becomes Mother,' one predicted, 'everyone will leave. We'll all leave. No one will be able to endure it.'

After many trials, however, Sister Diana proved everyone–except Sister Pia–wrong. Over the course of two years, the rest of us watched her transform from a hard-headed Sister to a well-respected and well-loved Mother of her convent community. Transformations like this make up the whole of a nun's life as she journeys from a 'village' girl to a cosmopolitan agent of religious authority. How these transformations happen and why they matter are the questions of this thesis.

My research is into the embodied subjectivity-making of a congregation of Catholic nuns called the Puteri Reinha Rosari, often referred to as the PRR. The order[1] was founded in

[1] Technically, there is a difference between Catholic congregations and orders, but this difference is not reflected in common parlance, neither in Indonesian nor in English. In this thesis, I use both words.

eastern Flores, Indonesia. Its members—some five hundred women—now live in small convents across the country and beyond: they have mission convents in Europe, Africa, and America. Throughout this thesis, I reveal how they are formed by the act of living together, by their avid desire to become 'good nuns' and by their ephemeral attempts to know and grasp each other's internal selves, a process that I understand as playing out largely through non-verbal means, in expressions of emotion and mood, of guesswork, play and performance.

MONASTIC LIFE

Although there have been numerous missionary orders in Indonesia from the colonial period, most members of the PRR hail from Indonesia's heavily Christian region of East Nusa Tenggara, with smaller numbers from other Indonesian islands (Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua) as well as from abroad (Kenya and Timor-Leste). The congregation has a formal hierarchy that nuns greatly respect. Once every year, the superiors of the organization announce who will be moved and to where. This is the moment in which Sister Diana was announced to be taking over for Sister Pia. Each nun has her own dedicated work (*karya*), which may be anything, but commonly include careers in nursing, finance, teaching, pastoral work, cooking or gardening. Each convent provides services specific to local needs. In her life, a nun may live in a dozen different places—some urban, some rural—and have learned the languages and customs of those places. She may have lived with a hundred or so different Sisters. Some nuns get along. Others do not.

Christian monastics have served—theoretically, imaginatively, and historically—as prototypes for some of our most enduring theories of subjectivity. They haunt the margins of Weber's (1905) formulations of asceticism, Goffman's (1961) explication of total institutions, Turner's (1969) discussions of liminality and communitas, Foucault's (1977) history of discipline, and—implicitly perhaps—in Bourdieu's (1977) extension of the 'habitus.' In these accounts however, it is the form of their life, and not the lives themselves, that seem to matter. The image of monastics closed off in ascetic communities, subjected to an overarching rule (Agamben 2013), and strictly gendered (Bynum 1987: 15–23) has proved, it appears, good to think with.

Contemporary ethnography on Catholic nuns has fleshed out this theoretical picture with delicate and nuanced attention to life as it unfolds. This body of work has shed light on individual experience, especially women's motivations for becoming nuns and their psychological engagements with the call (Corwin 2012; Corwin & Erickson-Davis 2020; Lester 2008; McKenna 2006). It has also revealed processes of monastic community-building and its intersections with local politics (Aileen-Donohew 2003; de la Cruz 2015; Sanchez 1983), drawing attention to the ways moral self-making happens intersubjectively within national contexts (Claussen 2001; Lester 2005; Scherz 2014, 2018; Trzebiatowska 2013).

While this work illustrates politically-situated, intersubjective development of deeply-felt and deeply-desired selves, it does not fully acknowledge the fact that these selves unfold in the company of others. In concert with their fellow Sisters, in service to their local communities and relying on the intervention of God, women try to transform themselves into 'good nuns', exceptional subjects whose virtue manifests through the practice of personal and communal piety. At the same time, they try to transform each other as well as the quality of their communal life, their moral atmosphere, in which they are all held. For Catholic nuns, committed to life together, intersubjective encounters happen only in relation to company—embodied, theatrical, communal, affective, and unexpected. In company, I aim to show, nuns uncover their hearts, form each other and become themselves.

I write from my time living among eastern Indonesian Catholic nuns to illustrate two crucial aspects of subjectivity that may be especially revealed by the monastic experience: a deeply felt sense of self that develops from the experience of living in the company of others. Eastern Indonesian Catholic nuns undergo a lifelong process of self-becoming as

they transform from 'village' girls into cosmopolitan subjects and icons of religious authority. Regularly reassigned to new convents, encouraged to adapt to diverse communities, and tasked with bearing divine joy to others, women learn that the path to becoming a nun requires strong self-knowledge and a powerful reckoning with the heart. These two features of life feed on and craft each other in creative, embodied, and mysterious ways. Women become nuns in Indonesia by learning to 'uncover' their hearts to reveal the uniqueness of their selfhood as well as illuminate their particular path to social service. This specific process of self-becoming happens in the company of others who are subjected to the same precepts, obligations, and expectations. Within this community, they attempt to 'uncover' each other as well, to determine who each individual 'is' and what unifies them as a community. Such discovery is the ongoing groundwork for nuns' transformations, as it serves to pinpoint the ways in which nuns can improve and grow as good, moral, and religious subjects.

Because of the explicit ways in which they formulate their lives as mutually committed, nuns provide an excellent opportunity to unravel the workings of company in processes of self-making. But their example does not only apply to monastics. Rather, I argue, the influence of company, seen so clearly in PRR lives, operates universally. The self is uncovered in the midst of our company. We, simultaneously, comprise the company in which others become.

Company, in this thesis, directs attention to the importance of a mid-level mode of sociality. Drawing both on the structural and affective aspects of theories of community and relationality, I show how small, shifting collections of diverse people, with their

mutable moods and personalities profoundly transform both the lived experience of being oneself and the direction of one's vocation. Because nuns are constantly trying to 'uncover' themselves and each other, and because their lives are geared towards particular modes of virtuous sociality, they are well-suited to help us understand the complexities of becoming in the company of (specific and changing) others.

COMPANY

I argue in this thesis that the process of becoming Catholic nuns in eastern Indonesia is best understood through an analytic of 'company'. This term signals three realms of meaning: the organizational development and management necessary to maintain a company, the intense and time-bound intimacies of theatre companies as they work together and play off each other towards the realisation of a performance, and the affective experience of shared presence—all that is captured in the phrase 'to keep someone company'. Immediately we can imagine ways in which these three realms overlap each other: how affect directs corporations as much as reason (Rudnyckyj 2011), how creative performance hinges on meaningful co-presence (Madison 2007a, 2007b), and how the ineffable qualities of sociality emerge from the limits and bounds of structure, bureaucracy and hierarchy (Turner 1969). To name a few.

These ideas also overlap and combine in PRR experience. 'Company' is my own term, but the PRR cherish a series of related values. Togetherness *(kebersamaan)* is a core feature of their lives and a ruling moral principle. This may be the feature that most characterizes nuns' lives, bringing about their most poignant experiences, and their most challenging dilemmas. One feature of 'togetherness' is the idea that nuns each have their own character (*karakter*), a notion with moral as well as performative connotations. The entire group of the PRR is called a congregation (*konggregasi),* another term that implies company, co-presence. 'In the congregation,' I often heard nuns recite, 'we become one' (*menjadi satu*). They speak often of being present (*hadir*) and receive Communion (*komuni*) daily. Their quarters are called the communitas (*komunitas).* Here they live, sleep, eat and relax with one another, activities which may also, occasionally, generate the effervescent co-feeling of anti-structure (Turner 1969). These terms overlap and signal the embodied, structured, moral, and performative resonances of being together.

'Company' is also my own term when it comes to the anthropological literature, which is replete with elegantly-wrought theories of community, sociality, and co-presence.

Anthropologists use these terms in many different ways, a proliferation whose capacious definitions suggests a set of related concepts. Amit shows how the various uses of 'community' engage three associations: joint commitment, affect or belonging and forms of association (Amit 2010). Similarly, Long and Moore find in the myriad definitions of 'sociality' important through-lines that contribute to, but do not fully comprise, 'a dynamic matrix of relations through which persons are constituted in interactive and mutually constitutive ways' (Long & Moore 2013: 19). Both Amit and Long and Moore look to ethnography as the means to explore the breadth and diversity of these concepts, to examine 'the interaction of joint commitment and affect-belonging across a variety of different forms of association' (Amit 2010: 362) and to eschew 'any bounded 'definition' of what comprises human sociality' (Long & Moore 2013: 20). By identifying some of the themes that emerge from the diverse use of terms like 'community' or 'sociality'—themes like belonging, affect, commitment and relationality—while refusing to constrain the concepts to only these, the authors open space for ethnographic direction, comparison, and analysis, space with room for both the individuated subject and the company she keeps.

Inspired by their example, I sketch here my theory of company, one I have learned through ethnographic fieldwork with the PRR in Indonesia. I see company as a form of sociality, a form that is related to community, yet distinct in several ways. In general, in this thesis, 'community' refers to the structure of living and commitment that characterizes nuns' lives while 'company' refers to the lived operation. Community is the convent, the neighbourhood, the virtue (and mandate) of togetherness. Company is the experience of living with others, of sharing presence, of playing off one another of witnessing a mutual transformation, of digging each other up and of learning to 'just understand' (*mengerti saja*). PRR nuns are put together in certain formulations, certain communities, in the hope that something will happen. What actually happens depends on who, depends on the emergent quality of company.

In developing my theory of company, I am influenced by Harry Walker's ethnography on the Amazonian Urarina. Walker argues that persons are formed not only in the presence of others, but by the cultivation of intimate relationships of accompaniment, and 'the literal introjection into the self of qualities and relations defining a variety of 'others'' (Walker 2013: 3). It is by eliciting affects of tenderness, apprehending the attributes of powerful others, and learning to 'stand-leaned-together' that Walker's Urarina interlocutors are individuated and become themselves. Although his ethnography is

Amazonian, Walker argues for general patterns that may be working in, or familiar to, other human lives, suggesting that a person is a field of affections and attachments. This approach to subjectivity highlights how thoroughly saturated each is in the lives of specific others. Some of the specific details of Urarina sociality are outside the bounds of PRR experience in eastern Indonesia,[2] but others resonate remarkably well. In later chapters, I will discuss how the PRR seek to 'dig up' each other's hearts, and to 'grasp' each other's trauma, style, and career. I will simultaneously insist that their greatest understanding comes not through narrative knowledge but through meaningful co-presence. 'The basis of sociality and cooperation,' Walker writes, 'is less a matter of mutual comprehension than of being with others who are subtly but irreducibly different from ourselves' (Walker 2013: 212).

Company, I argue, helps us understand the overlap of concepts like 'community,' 'sociality,' and 'accompaniment,' as well as the Indonesian Catholic concepts of 'togetherness,' 'communion,' and 'presence'. Company characterizes nuns' lives, drives their actions, and sinks deep into their hearts, such that their subjectivities are forever (and continuously) altered. Through the employment of this analytic, I hope to show that nuns become who they are through participation in a hierarchical institution that differentiates them in the process of uniting them while living together in small convents, where intimacies deepen and emotions take their course, and all are practised and understood through alternations of playful performance, ethical reflection, and mysterious spirituality. The ephemeral, ever-changing experience of being together, especially as lived (as the PRR do) with a determination to make it a virtue, is the fundamental means by which these women become nuns.

Based on deep ethnographic and luminary comparative efforts, existing work on sociality has developed five points: (1) that social relations are the field within which persons are formed; (2) that the material body in relation to others generates and experiences affects that may direct the flow or quality of sociality; (3) that sustained sociality requires a form of commitment; (4) that this form of commitment is bolstered by a shared (if oft-contested) basis for morality; and (5) that sociality is aspirational and ideational as much as it is present, emergent, and experienced. In what follows here, I chart some of the

[2] One such example is the dyadic relations which figure prominently in Urarina theories of accompaniment. Although dualism has been noted as an important feature of life in Flores (Forth 2001), among the PRR it was at the very least not obvious and at the very most actively discouraged. I discuss this in more detail in later chapters.

territory that informs these ideas, focusing on the themes of commitment to community, the co-creation of personhood, and affective dimensions of company. I focus on these themes because of their prominence in PRR sociality. I develop each of these themes in conversation with the literature on moral experience. Three particular strands in this literature, I suggest, help us further articulate the importance of company to the development of specific subjectivities, in this case Indonesian Catholic nuns.

Commitment

PRR nuns participate in a mode of intentional sociality requiring formal commitment to community in the monastic tradition of the Catholic Church. The theological scaffold—of sacrificing the self to the service of God through prayer or social work—maintains its power even as the changing times and policies of the centralised Church have resonated differently in different parts of the world. The particular twist each religious order places on the monastic mandate for life-together is not, of course, the only way in which convent company is moral. It is necessary, but not sufficient for the PRR to share presence. They must also have 'togetherness' (*kebersamaan*) a way of being that carries connotations of particular affects and covers the different relationships and commitments a nun has to each of her fellows. Centred not only in convents, but in webs of moral communities, what is moral shifts not only with circumstance, but with relationality.

Morality happens in company, with others. PRR nuns move creatively through different spaces, within different assemblages of people, carrying with them a sense of self that is consistent, yet open to transformation (Hollan & Wellenkamp 1994; Mattingly 2014). Co-presence with other people is the basis for moral experience, even as it produces myriad

forms of life and morality (Benson & O'Neill 2007). The effects of togetherness on moral action can take the form of policing each other's dispositions (Briggs 1971; Rydstrøm 2003), providing experimental ground for one's own moral development (Mattingly 2014), or lending one's presence to ease another's suffering (Desjarlais 2014). The ability to be affected by others, however, relies not only on sharing presence, but on desiring and committing to communal values. While these shared values may sometimes lie unnoticed, scholars have suggested that ethical action requires conscious reflection and awareness of values and available choices (Robbins 2004; Zigon 2007).

And while commitment to shared values may lend structural purpose to a company of people, 'company' can also be a core value in itself, one that unites people, despite other conflicts. Working with a slightly different vocabulary (community), and in a slightly different location (Ambon, also eastern Indonesia), Hagen lays out a case in which 'company is the focus of much of Maneo awareness' (Hagen 2006: 12). Hagen moves from seeing 'community' as a fixed place or group[3] to see it rather as a contingent moral field within which people orient their action. His Maneo interlocutors formally live in organized settlements, while also keeping independent homes in highland gardens, where they are (mostly) outside the moral demands of communal life. Like many eastern Indonesian peoples, the Maneo have ideal-structural forms of relatedness, forms connecting people through kinship, descent and marriage. In showing how Maneo navigate the different obligations of these forms contingently, according not only to normative morality, but also practically, according to circumstance and desire, Hagen alerts us to the ways in which specific individuals in their fullness (including their structural position) alter the course of major decisions and ethical action.

More than this, I argue, the company of others *are* the cause, effect and meaning of moral action. It is because of others, in their specific and individual, general and collective capacities that the moral emerges at all. Commitment to company, then, becomes commitment to living (peacefully) with specific others. Its demands become demands of learning to navigate the unfolding tensions that people produce between themselves. In Maneo and elsewhere, the ongoing moral project that is company requires individuals to manage disruptions and to project faith in each other.

[3] He is writing against those who see community as an object fixed in place, compelled through political charisma (Tsing 1993), figured through the spread of symbols (Anderson 1983) that gain power beyond the sum of their parts (Durkheim 2008 [1915]), that is experienced as an equalising flash of group identity (Turner 1969).

Hagen's Maneo interlocutors build separation and the possibility of exit into their communal life—to persistent success. In another arrangement, Fletcher (2016) illustrates the moral pull that 'being together' in community has for neo-Evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest. For these Christians, intentional community is something to be cultivated and practised in the face of American capitalism's pernicious individualism. Yet, Fletcher also shows how their practises of community—being together in time and space, pursuing reconciliation through the dogged performance of sincerity—further entrench the familiar idea of a hermetically-sealed individual who is responsible for managing herself.

These two kinds of communities are glaringly different. Hagen's Maneo interlocutors live flexibly with others, while Fletcher's sign communal life into a contract. And yet, both cases are about the pull of company through obligation and desire. The specific moral aspects–normative and affective–of company critically influences the transformation of its members because they result in the formation of different kinds of person and they reveal different ideas about what company is—and what it ought to be.

The PRR, who have a specific outline of what company ought to be enshrined in their constitution, share a kind of kinship with the utopian projects of intentional community (eg Fletcher 2016; Schram 2013). Clear statements about the moral obligation of company prefigure the ethnographic observation of the tension between ideas and reality, engendering questions that 'focus on the uncertainties arising in the intersection between the idea and actualization of sociality' (Amit 2010: 358). While this approach promises to capture ambiguities and attend to diverse 'modes of connection', it also shares with other representational approaches an emphasis on the ideational and an attendant dichotomy between ideal and practise. Hagen's work, however, reveals how people themselves expect and anticipate tensions in communal life, yet still commit to it. Describing his interlocutors as 'community realists', Hagen shows how tensions arise not from any rift between ideal and actuality, but from the very nature of community as expected and practised in central Ambon (Hagen 2006).

Community as experienced in Ambon, Flores and elsewhere is contingent upon the specific individuals with whom one lives. People know, expect, and accommodate for that. This is exactly why an analytic of 'company' is useful. By looking at why, how, and to what effect people persist in living together with *specific* others, we not only paint a clear picture of companionate modes of sociality, we also open a space for thinking beyond the representational, where experience matters as a method for morality and

transformation. By looking at commitment not to community, but to company, we begin to see how such an orientation already opens people to being changed by each other.

'Company' as both a moral ideal and method for bringing about moral individuals and communities, offers us a new stance on an old anthropological question: the relationship between an individual and the group. Fletcher's interlocutors practise near-constant reconciliation, expressing sincerely their particular issues with one another and striving to listen and adapt to each other accordingly. In her analysis of this scenario, Fletcher reveals a relational mode that finds its meaning in the tension between the individual and the whole (Fletcher 2016: 59–63). Her work echoes tensions in other Christian communities. Michael Scott, for example, demonstrates how moral sociality among the Arosi of the Solomon Islands serves to thwart the shattering diversity latent in matrilines each with their own ontology (Scott 2007). Joel Robbins reveals how Christian focus on individual morality vies with traditional morality of sociality. The tension between the two and the way Urapmin focus on it, with each other, facilitates their resubjectification as sinners. At the same time, their commitment to each other as a community reframes individual transgression as a communal problem, one that might equally be transcended by communal action (Robbins 2004). In religious communities, as in PRR convents, the value placed on company may be so high, that it figures centrally in their individual and group identities. Rather than an ideal of community, we have what Sennett calls 'the vocation of community' which transforms the issue into 'how one might develop a sense of inner purpose by communal cooperation' (2012: 263), that is, how a self might cohere as a moral being because of the committed company of others.

Even where communal life is not experienced as a calling in the same way as it might be by Catholic nuns, it often exercises a moral pull. Focusing on company, helps us to see morality as 'a force that inheres between people …it induces people to view situations from others' perspectives and to deliberate about choices' (Hagen 2006: 19). Attention to company encourages us to reckon with individual moral action according to people's changing relations to each other, while keeping in view the prefigured values that people may use as touchstones in their shifting relations to each other. Through this lens, commitment to sociality emerges as a morally-salient process of difficult, creative, mutual participation.

Company must be sustained through everyday relations and commitment fostered through the affects and emotions that circulate between those relations (Hagen 2006: 8).

The flashes of communitas that emerge in ritual lose their lasting effects if not complemented with intimate personal relations in the everyday. This kind of common-sense thinking is part of what is behind many intentional communities. The over-romanticisation of communality may presage many of its challenges.

RELATIONALITY

This question of mutual participation resonates with now long-running conversations on the permeability and relationality of personhood. Strathern's (1988) development of a Melanesian theory of multiple and partible personhood, anthropologists have investigated how persons might come into being because of the participation and contribution of others, with 'a concept of personhood that focuses on the social relations through which personhood is created, maintained and transformed' (Robbins 2019: 46). By focusing especially on the exchange of bodily substances, this literature unearths how personhood emerges in relation to others who stand in specific, defined relation to the person (e.g., Myhre 2019).

Relational perspectives to personhood help us grapple with the relationship between selves and company in a way that transgresses any straightforward individual-in-a-group formula. Walker's work, for example, draws our attention to the intimate, embodied, inescapable effects that other human beings have on oneself, not least in its differentiation from others. Long and Moore's suggestions point to the various ways these relations might be figured or come to matter across time, space, and even the course of a person's life. Their approach to sociality is open enough to account for the emergence of diverse kinds of personhood.

The understanding, of Walker and others, of personhood in their fieldsites as fundamentally relational, where there is no baseline person, contrasts others where the individual self feels undeniable. Sally Anderson, for example, writes about Scandinavian schools which aim to cultivate democratic values and good fellow-feeling through the practice of company in classrooms. For children, however, the experience of company may feel less like the creation of a new personhood in themselves, and rather more like a moral imposition on selves that are undeniably individual (Anderson 2021). This tension is not so much between ideal and actuality, as it is between conflicting values, relations, and subject positions within the school community.

Because some of its strongest articulations often appear as stories of intimate dyadic relationships (e.g., Al-Mohammad 2010), the relational model of personhood helps us see, strongly, the effect that specific individuals have on the trajectory of the self. The thick description required to demonstrate the strengths of a relational model of personhood makes it difficult to unpack the contributions of a (slightly) larger, (slightly) less permanent set of people. Some approaches to bridging the gap include triangulating institutional morality, public discourses, and embodied habitus (Zigon 2008) or tracing how aspirations are linked to competing obligations to others (Fordham 2016). These approaches often meditate on the place of friendship as ethnographically meaningful relations that establish the contours of morality for people it its sway (e.g., Zigon 2013). Friendship and the triangulation of different-scaled realms of influence will play in our discussions of PRR self-making.

Another approach articulates how moral character develops as a repertoire playfully cultivated in relation to the emergent character of others. Building on his observations of a German theatre company as they collaboratively discover their characters, Tinius argues that their process reveals a working understanding of personhood that is fragmentary, a-linear, and capacious. 'Character,' he suggests, is not an object of moral coherence, but a repertoire—a morally-infused capacity for selecting from various behaviours, affects and habits. As actors develop their craft, or—the metaphor extends—as people work on their moral 'characters', they not only build up this repertoire of capacities, but also hone their performance in response to the choices, habits, and actions of others in their company (Tinius 2018). Similarly, Hastrup (2004) notes how the Shakespearean actors with whom she works develop their characters in coordination with each other. Unlike Tinius' interlocutors who may work with the same company of people for their whole lives, but like PRR nuns who move convents frequently, Hastrup's interlocutors continuously

change company, as one show closes and another opens. To understand this frequent change in the people with whom one builds character, Hastrup invokes the notion of 'theatres of action', 'framed spaces of social encounters and historical events' through which individuals are 'collectively and relationally defined' (2004: 14). Both Hastrup and Tinius remind us that the notion of character development from this theatrical standpoint is not merely metaphorical. It is not only fictional characters that emerge and transform in the course of creation, but actors themselves who are recast and indelibly altered.

Like actors, PRR nuns move through framed spaces as if they were 'theatres of action'.[4] As they move, each new convent they enter gathers together new assemblages of individuals and necessitates the formation of new relations and adaptation to new company. Their lives are structured as a pattern of repeated, unrepeatable performances, in the midst of which their characters must be shown, judged, and transformed. Through their mutual performance, reflection, and recognition, through these new arrangements of company, their personhood is altered, deepened, and recast in the habit of the whole. 'Social actors', Hastrup observes, 'are accessories to the fates of others, in their being mutually implicated in the plot-space of their actions. Characterization is always collective' (Hastrup 2004: 258).

Company draws on the familiarity fostered in shared 'plot-space' that is continuously discovered through co-presence, world-making and recognising each other within its bounds. This sociality draws on shared historical memory, but it is also invented through the embodied sharing of an emergent social world within which people recognise each other as persons (J.C. Robbins 2019). We can see this in ethnographies of corporations. Levin, for example, argues that organizations change only when their members change in unison. Through mutual participation in each other's' lives, people not only transform each other, but transform the worlds within which they live, changing the very feel of company (Levin 2013). Here, we see the creative blossoming of social worlds through the mutual effort of its members as well as the meaningful effect of that social world on both the definition and experience of personhood through the mutual experience of company.

Company and personhood, I suggest, are mutually constituted. From the moment they enter the convent, women are crafted into nuns through acts of unification and of differentiation. Nuns are summoned forth in the process of discovering who they are,

[4] Although they draw on different metaphors, Hastrup's 'theatres of action' is not so different from Mattingly's 'moral laboratories'. Both index the abstract effects of particular places and the particular people who occupy them.

and in realising that they never were (exactly or only) who they felt themselves to be. This ongoing discovery is impossible outside of the directed and spontaneous experience of company in their small convents, just as it is inseparable from particular relationships with other individuals who form their company. Yet there is something about the play of the group together, something related to yet not entirely commensurate with individual relationships between nuns, that also affects the transforming self. Becoming in company, like acting, lingers in the balance between individuality and social resonance to create its unique power and its social meaning.

This is as simple and straightforward as it is a personal and collective challenge. 'Our ethical lives are entangled and enmeshed into the lives of others', Al-Mohammad writes, 'and this enmeshment indicates not only that our existential coordinates are eccentric but so too are our ethical coordinates and responsibilities' (Al-Mohammad 2010: 441). Again, acting companies provide telling examples of how this happens as they experience their craft as an empathic mode of ethical evaluation as they are 'swallowed up' by the 'characters they incarnate' (Hastrup 2004: 291), alter 'interpsychic' worlds through performative critique of politics and race (Kondo 2018), or reflexively debate the nature of personhood (Tinius 2018). Their example points to the ways that self-becoming in the company of others involves, but also transcends, the personal experience of group dynamic and the cultivation of specific relations. They also indicate how that becoming involves an embodied submission to the affective and moral experience of others, a willingness to inhabit the positions of others and have them inhabit yours, as well as an expectation to perform to common moral standards and to be critically assessed in their light.

AFFECTIVITY

The value of company as an analytic lies not only in its ability to capture the relationality of people in the process of forming or eliciting each other, suspended between social values, shared worlds, and competing obligations. It also lies in its affective dimensions, the feel a group of people have when gathered together, the moral weight of affective atmospheres, and the place of those atmospheres on forming a person.

As they move between structured fields of experience, nuns and actors may occasionally enter that tunnel of liminality that can open up the possibility for 'a spontaneously generated relationship between leveled and equal total and individuated human beings'

(Turner 1974: 202). In its conscious set-apartness from 'everyday life', experience in the theatre space or the convent may (and often does) elicit sensations of timelessness and good fellowship which can bond participants. Rather than making too much of Turner's theory of communitas, nor wanting to prescribe it as a framework for understanding company, I invoke it rather to point to a key feature of company that makes it distinct from a straightforwardly relational model of personhood: a decentred approach to affectivity that takes the group as its ground and target.

The theory of company I am building draws upon, yet diverts from Throop's work on mood as personal atmosphere that hangs somewhere between intense, fleeting thought-emotion and intentional, conscious moral deliberation. Mood here reflects a perhaps unconscious moment of moral crisis and suggests the potential for transfiguration. Moral moods thus signify an as-yet-unarticulated sense of existential moral uncertainty. Directed at goals and more directed at ontology, they say something about the morality inhering in certain forms of life and the moral hierarchy perceived between different forms of life (Throop 2014). Work amongst the PRR, however, suggests a shift in focus from mood as an individual experience, albeit one that can draw others into itself, to mood as a product of company. This shift, I suggest, amplifies the moral stakes of mood.

The PRR value moods of quietude (*hening*) and gladness (*gembira*). Achieving these can sometimes feel easy and natural for nuns, while at others it is much more difficult, requiring enough humility to transform contrary emotions within oneself, and enough sensitivity to others' emotions to unite one with the other. Throop's work indicates how mood is tied to intersubjectivity, other-knowledge, and empathy, showing how other

people can pick up on our moods before we ourselves can. And while moods may start as personal problems, they may easily suck others into their orbit (Throop 2014). At the same time, he shows how moods do not result in a mass sameness, but rather maintain the difference between individuals. The pain of empathy arises in part from knowing that one can never fully feel the pain of the other, and by extension never grasp their fullness as a person alter to oneself (Throop 2010).

This sentiment is echoed in several varieties of ethnographic theatre-making, often taking on an increased moral urgency because of the issues of representation and collaboration that theatre—as an embodied and collaborative medium—forces to the front (Madison 2005). The performative approach to another, inherently affective, suggests that 'we cannot *become* another, we can leap *towards* another, through scrupulous attention, effort, hard work, and respect for difference' (Kondo 2018: 106). The ethnographic struggle of 'how and by what means I can make the audience that *is* there feel a *sense of being present* with the Other in the Other's actual absence' (Madison 2010: 125) is reinforced by the incommensurability of experience, even as we are drawn into each other through affect and mood. A place (a rehearsal room, a convent, a workplace) 'generates, affects and harbors emotion', becoming 'not a neutral place, but an emotional landscape' (Madison 2010: 126) within which people act together. Company, generates affects through co-presence and identifies them as arising from people who are different from—and yet vulnerable to—oneself.

Company reorganizes the sensory elements of personhood, compelling one to inhabit another position or to notice another's absence, and further inviting critical engagement with one's own personhood. Writing about a verbatim theatre production,[5] Long demonstrates how affective dimensions may be manipulated to place audience, actors, and interlocutors into what he calls an 'ethnographic sociality', a sociality in which members are cast as each other and—unable to fully occupy the other's position—compelled to reflect on the relations between (Long 2015). This is a morally-infused sociality that relies on the intentional reorganization of the sensory engagements of personhood in the liveness of shared company. It is the making of a new social world, one framed by the 'theatre of action' which allows this kind of sociality to emerge in the first place.

[5] Verbatim Theatre is a genre in which the playscript is composed entirely from 'found' material, typically interviews (Hammond & Steward 2008).

Working in and thinking about company as always framed by 'a theatrical scene that stages specific ways of portraying, understanding, and including the other' (Giordano 2014:22) awakens us to the moral affects inhering in different institutions and constellations of persons conditioned by familiarity. In its conditional and aspirational possibilities, thinking through (or working in) a theatre medium provides a means and method for exploring the shifting and conflicting means of power in the broader community. In the ease of long familiarity and playing together, companies of people develop the capacity to play, critique, challenge, and change these means of power. Performative processes serve not only as modes of affective representation, but as affective fields in which to work out conflicting stories, perspectives, and moralities (Fabian 1990).

In their study of a collaborative working collective, Resch et al identify three fantasies that underpin people's desires to live and work together, which they call spiritual (involving a sense of purpose), entrepreneurial (involving a sense of growth), and 'tribal' (involving a sense of belonging). Each of these fantasies have their communal goal and their person-based application. The fantasies breed both enjoyment and suffering, but it is just this fine line between enjoyment and pain, they argue, that gives the collaborative-working model its appeal to those who engage in it (Resch et al. 2021). Following in this tradition, Sennett writes, 'We want to imagine, instead, community as a process of coming into the world, a process in which people work out both the value of face-to-face relations and the limits on those relations … Though community cannot fill up the whole of a life, it promises pleasures of a serious sort' (Sennett 2012: 273).

Beyond the roles, or even the relations, of individuals within a community, Hagen argues that 'what is crucial to fostering sociality is how moral intent is perceived and how culpability is deflected' (Hagen 2006: 19). The tension between commitment to company and its affective dimensions betrays how people account for the reality of emotions, building conflict into their ideas as to how community *should* work and their attempts to navigate its waters. Hagen's Maneo informants keep houses separate from each other in the highlands, where they can flee when the pressures of community become too intense, and to which they can return when they seek company once more. Fletcher's friends hope to 'normalise conflict'.[6] Anderson's interlocutors collaborate with disagreeable situations out of a sense of duty. She argues that the realisation of communal ideals (like 'good fellowship') relies on a complicit audience, willing to suspend some values for others, but that this willingness does not imply that the values are shared. Rather, some suffer when practicing core community values, and so do not so easily fashion the self (Anderson 2021).

Moral Company

Despite the troubles that company can bring: the burdens of commitment, the strife of relations, and the turmoil of affect, people like PRR nuns, like most of us, choose to live in its embrace. This may be, as Aristotle contended, because of the pleasures it brings, but it would be a mistake to imagine that such pleasures are the end-goal. To do so would elide the complicated relationship of conflict and delight that being in company entails.

[6] This is also very similar to the Korowai, as described by Rupert Stasch (2009).

Rather, I argue, that company is a fundamental way through which selves are formed. We all share company with others who alter our sense of self, our ability to act, and our aspirations for sociality. That people commit to company to varying degrees, I suggest, is caused by diverse engagement with company as a *moral* theatre of becoming. The moral demands of company indicate that committing oneself *fully* and *permanently* to its care indicates a strong *desire* to be subjected by others. This, I will show, is precisely where PRR nuns fall.

While all selves may form, in some part, through the interventions of company, PRR nuns and others like them, figure its moral fulfilment as a virtue in itself. Their work and lives are more than influenced by company, they are aimed at moving it—committedly, relationally, affectively—toward their vision of the good. These visions, their self-transformations toward their realization, have profound effects on their company and on members of the communities in which they work. As I track their efforts, then, this research participates in Robbins' (2013) call to keep studying ethnographically how different people conceive of and move toward the good.

Through company, PRR women are trying to become good nuns, an effort which involves an intensification as well as a subjectification of the self, and which requires strengthening relational bonds and the moral feel of sociality. In many ways, their transformations are akin to women's pious self-transformative projects elsewhere (Gade 2004; Mahmood 2001). They depart from these portrayals, however, in their efforts to grow and transform as a community: to unify, to adapt, and to live together as 'families' in a spirit of togetherness. For this reason, I put forward a theory of becoming in company that draws less on ethical self-making projects and more on moral experience (Mattingly 2014; Zigon & Throop 2014).

The company nuns keep is omnipresent because it is a structured, defining feature of their lives, lived-in and desired. Company, for PRR nuns, is part of both the conscious ethical project and the perhaps less-commented on, but no less known, no less active, environment within which nuns become who they are and towards which they pitch their earthly existence.

OVERVIEW

Unravelling the workings of company among the PRR is a lot like their own method for self-discovery, digging up the heart. Each chapter reveals a new layer. I begin, in the next chapter, with an ethnographic introduction to the PRR, as well as to myself, my positionality and the performance methodology in which I (tried to) work.

Chapter three continues the introduction, describing the background of the PRR, situating them in their regional, national and global context. I present the history of Catholicism in Indonesia that has led to the existence of the PRR and influenced the kinds of relationships they have with the laity. I then introduce some of the values and issues local to Flores that shape most PRR nuns before they even join the convent. These values affect the baseline of personhood as it is transformed in the convent. They also direct the character of the order, marking it as distinctly Florenese. This regional focus intersects with broader patterns of Indonesian nationalism, spirituality, and mobility. Through this history and ethnographic context, I argue that the Florenese origins of the PRR contribute significantly to the order's style, while the intersections with broader Indonesian themes facilitate PRR adaptation to diverse communities.

Chapter three introduces important themes that the subsequent chapters will uncover, layer by layer, to understand the significance of company to the process of becoming a Catholic nun in Indonesia. Chapter four picks up on one of these themes: Indonesian ideas about the permeability and knowability of the self as they intersect with the cosmology of the global Catholic Church. Through it, I show how these ideas interact with nuns' burgeoning understandings and experiences of the unseen spiritual world. I argue that nuns' self-formation is riddled with 'mystery', in three senses: theological, organizational and relational. Some of the central tenets of Catholicism are officially described as 'mysteries' and aptly so—they proffer paradoxes and questions more than answers and compel nuns to pursue knowledge that can never be gained, unity that can never be achieved—not in this life, anyway. This abstract—but often intimately felt—sense of mystery is hemmed in (and made understandable) through the discipline of a religious order.

In this hierarchical religious order, mystery extends to mundane matters. Knowledge is not equally held; it is kept and shared according to rank, trust and intimacy. The bureaucratic powers-that-be are deeply woven into and expressed through the relations of the convent. While nuns' roles are deceptively straightforward, their ability to 'grasp' each other's knowledge and 'self' is not. This is the crux of the chapter, dealing with how

one's self is a mystery, as are the selves of others. Despite a working theory of ultimate mystery, nuns still chase understanding of others. While ultimate knowledge may seem impossible to achieve, left to the purview of God, there are moments of almost-eerie intersubjectivity. Among the PRR, other-understanding sometimes seeps forth in a 'feeling' *(feeling)* of 'sameness' (*kesamaan / ada yang sama)* that emerges–mysteriously–on its own. Such mysterious 'fittings' (*cocok*), however, do not emerge spontaneously. Instead, I suggest, the prolonged intimacies of living in company provide the necessary ground out of which surprising sameness can spring.

While chapter four presents the mystery underpinning and uplifting PRR experience, chapter five introduces a twist, showing one way in which PRR selves are made more explicable and understandable through the idiom of trauma (*trauma*). As part of their continual self-formation, PRR nuns must 'excavate' or 'dig up' (*menggali*) their hearts. This practice resonates with broader Christian theologies of discernment, confession, and reconciliation. It is also a method of knowing the self and reckoning with its wounds. Nuns learn to interpret their childhoods as marred by emotional *trauma* sustained in the company of kin. Once acknowledged, this trauma must be addressed through conscious efforts of care; nuns use each other's known *trauma* as means of 'just understanding' (*mengerti saja*) each other. In this way, people and actions that might otherwise appear mysterious, come into a space in which the specificities of individual experience are respected and acclimated to. In this setting, the transformation of a person comes into view as a mode not only of communal healing, a form of care without cure, but also as 'a presence and a holding, an acknowledgement' (Giordano 2014: 205).

Through acts of acknowledgement and gentle pushes towards healing, the idiom of *trauma* makes the company surrounding a nun directly responsible for her self-formation. In this respect, PRR *trauma* emerge against a backdrop of Indonesian state concern for human development. At the same time, it evinces Florenese traditions that invoke a spiritual company, one in which the acts of kin—living and dead—can affect an individual in the present. It also participates in transnational and trans-religious theories of the integration–as well at the mutual distinction–of the body and the soul/self/spirit. By pulling these threads together, I hope to advance what is already known about the vernacularisation of psychological terms in Indonesia by showing how they hold up the ubiquitous, but under-theorised, role of company on Indonesian selves in the midst of becoming.

In this chapter six, I reveal how PRR understandings of themselves and each other are built on assessments of character (*karakter*), a concept understood in both its moral and its performative dimensions. While PRR nuns believe character can and should be developed, they also maintain that it must build on elements that may be uncovered. PRR nuns believe that every person is endowed by God with special features that include elements of personal character and style (*gaya*) as well as excessive skill (*kelebihan*) which hint at an intended work/career (*karya*). PRR nuns, especially superiors, are tasked with eliciting these God-given aspects of the self through reflective practice, performance, and experimentation. The specificities of each nun's character, must intersect with and highlight the particular Catholic and Florenese virtues that the PRR value. Chief among these is the virtue of company, 'togetherness.' Through this discussion, I aim to highlight how the formation of a PRR nun is the formation of a moral person in both her individual and communal aspects. Through her individual becoming, she learns to enact critical social values. Likewise, it is through other nuns' efforts at grasping her unique self that she can emerge in this way.

To this point, we have oscillated between two concurrent approaches to theories of self-formation in company evident among PRR nuns. The first positions the self and the other as mysterious entities, ultimately (and ethically) unknowable. The other aims to disambiguate the holistic subject through practices of differentiation in company, articulating her specific *trauma* and how it affects her specific character and work. Chapter seven aims to unite the two approaches through a theory of PRR attention. In 'uncovering' this, I was aided in experimental performance ethnography methods that happened to illuminate strategies of PRR attention. Here, I argue, that several factors conspire to make (young) PRR nuns particularly attuned to other people's bodily habits, adapting to them easily until aspects of others' experiences might be grasped, momentarily. Although others remain mysterious, these tiny, every day, immediate graspings facilitate a kind of embodied understanding. The constant and instantaneous practice of embodied attention, moreover, contributes to the moral 'feel' of company in the convent, giving body to the ethic of 'togetherness'.

Explicit performance was a construct of the performance ethnography methods I used, but one that capitalised on—and illuminated—everyday performances amongst the PRR nuns who regularly mimic, tell stories and act as each other. These practices, I argue, show how attentive bodily adaptation accentuates rather than elides the personal qualities of character discussed in the previous chapter. This is partly because of the ways that PRR

values of creativity (*kreatif*) and expression (*ekspresi*) intersect with contemporary Indonesian concerns with human development, concerns that play out within a neoliberal capitalist framework and in the language of vernacular psychology. Through embodied practices of attention, I argue, PRR nuns come to feel the differences between them, even as they simultaneously incorporate aspects of each other's character into themselves. Company, I suggest, is the literal and figurative framing within which these mutual transformations occur.

Chapter eight builds on this theory of attention and expression, expanding our horizon to show how they affect nuns' work outside the convent. Looking at nuns' work of 'service' (*pelayanan)* in their surrounding communities, brings us into moments in which nuns seem to explicitly cultivate experiences of company with the laity. Nuns ground their service in an ideology of presence; by visiting people and by sharing time and space, they hope to alleviate the everyday suffering that people experience in Flores Timur and beyond. Their efforts are notably gendered–visiting, listening, and encouraging people to 'spill their hearts' (*curah hati)* are feminine modes of sociality. While their visits are meant to be acts of Christian (and Florenese) service, and act of devotion and relief to others, PRR nuns are just as transformed by the company they encounter outside the convent as are the laity themselves. Through their embodied habits of attention and attunement, discussed in chapter seven, PRR nuns adapt to local ways of being, learning to act through them, and attempting to empathise along their contours.

As introduced in chapter four, there are limits to knowability and the consonance of company. These limits are especially revealed in their interactions with members of other religions, particularly Muslims in the urban centres of Java. From some perspectives, PRR accompaniment is not as innocuous or virtuous as they make it out to be. Instead, many adherents of religions other than Catholicism view nuns, in their conspicuous dress, as ostentatiously 'other' (*lain*), representatives of a threat to personal (Muslim) sovereignty in Indonesia. Through their engagements with people of other religions in these settings, nuns also come to experience themselves as other. This, I argue, is because of the particular kind of embodied attunement that nuns develop ensconced in the relatively safe confines of the convent, where commitment to company encourages virtues of openness and attunement.

Chapter nine draws together the themes of the previous chapters through discussion of one final structural element of nuns' lives: their frequent moves and reassignments.

Because PRR nuns are frequently reassigned to new convents in new places, the specific constellations of a company of nuns also changes. Rather than becoming detached from each other or disillusioned with sociality, nuns reengage with their fellows in each new place. This happens through processes of openness, digging-up, and grasping discussed in earlier chapters. Past experiences of living with other people in other places dwell within PRR bodies and are expressed through performative narratives, narratives in which others are made (almost) present through impersonation/acting. Nuns, I suggest, 'root' themselves in their initial cohort, in their company of 'friends' (*teman*), in a mode of sociality that works within and against notions of kinship that infuse the congregation. 'Ready to be sent wherever' (*siap diutus ke mana saja)*, nuns' movements and efforts at company-making in new places exist within a moral economy of humility and hierarchy. Nuns' experiences of their own transformations are marked by moments of separation and reunion, of fluctuating assemblages of people, and of shapeshifting moral moods. As they track their own formations through performances in which the other seems to act within their bodies, PRR nuns demonstrate the core argument of this thesis: that selves form in, through and because of company. The specific characters that make it up, the affective textures of being together, and the capacity to adapt to shifts in both push PRR nuns to become the people they will be.

In my conclusion, I consider the ways that the PRR material speaks to broader conversations in anthropology, especially the ways we think about the nexus of subjectivity and sociality. While the PRR case, because of its structure of community and its moral commitment to togetherness makes company explicit as an analytic, many of the processes and commitments laid out here can be found in other settings. Company, I argue, is not just the way that Catholic women become nuns in eastern Indonesia, it is the way each of us becomes who we are.

CHAPTER 2: BECOMING

On a night of fieldwork I will never forget, an audience of hundreds gathered in a churchyard in Larantuka, Indonesia to watch a band of students present an epic drama of the origin of the PRR. As one with the audience, I too pressed in on the torchlit lane, increasingly captivated by the wild physicality of actors portraying early nuns, the shadow play of convent-building and earthquake devastation, the flickering patterns of traditional sarongs adorning traditional dances, the fluctuating sound of music as it traversed eastern Flores' imagined ages, the stylized voices quoting histories and poems, and the flight like swans of white-clad women. Hours later, when the epic had ended and the performers stood panting before us—the boys' bare chests gleaming with coconut oil—the PRR Superior General rose and thanked them, profusely and sincerely, 'for showing us who we are.'

Who the PRR are, in this representation, are a working religious order who emerged from a stranger queen and the earth of Flores Timur: eating its cassava and hand-pounded cornmeal, dancing its traditional dances, and shouting its cries of anguish and joy. The play emphasized that PRR nuns are eastern Florenese women—consecrated, yes, and possessing mysterious grace—but Florenese none the less. The play also reminded the audience that the PRR existed thanks to the labour of Florenese laypeople: people who contributed materials and time to build their convents, who sent prayers to lift their spirits and children to swell their numbers. The performance was a powerful reminder to PRR

nuns that their service was more than charity: it was a responsibility to 'answer' the gift of the native Lamaholot people. It was also a powerful reminder to the laity that the PRR's continued existence relied on the hospitality and charity of the people of east Flores. It reinforced the idea that the nuns committed their lives to them and that the laity ought to continue their work to support them. The play also suggested that the PRR's continual success, the growing numbers of nuns as well as the strong relationships between nuns and lay communities, was itself a mystery with divine roots. To 'dig it up' required the company of actors, the company of nuns, and the company of us, the audience, that bore witness in that dusty churchyard.

The Superior General was not Lamaholot. She was not even from Flores. Yet, to her, this play represented what she, too, was. This is what she wanted to underline, to speak out to the enormous crowd that had gathered to witness the performance: she saw who she was, who the PRR are, through the performative representation of other members of her community. In giving her thanks in the manner that she did, she emphasized the communal intersubjectivity of being: the act of becoming in the company of others

Why Do Women Become Nuns?

When faced with this question, as I often am when I discuss my research with others, I tend to present a series of what I secretly call 'easy answers'—socioeconomic trappings of an enduringly mysterious desire. 'This is the second poorest, most Catholic, region of 17,000-plus island Indonesia', I might start. 'Girls join to escape poverty or becoming housewives, to earn prestige for their families, to access higher education, to travel the world, to fulfil the dreams of a relative, or to "complete" something that was planted in

their youth (namely, religion)'. These are not bad reasons—not at all. Nuns themselves use them to explain why they, as they say, 'entered the convent' (*masuk biara)*. In fact, they will often claim even 'littler' reasons: they thought they would look pretty in the outfit, they wanted to ride a motorbike, their friends were doing it… etc. Telling you why she first entered the convent, a nun will often laugh at herself saying, 'it was so basic!' (*sederhana sekali!*)

But these reasons, true as they may be, do not tell the whole story. They are actually a bit of a misdirection, albeit one that speaks to some of the themes I will develop in this thesis. In answering the question, 'why do women become nuns?' with 'easy answers' I grasp at my questioners, I apprehend them for certain kinds of people—people who may take poverty as an understandable reason for devoting oneself to religious service—and I place them in a particular kind of relationship (a secular one), to my religious friends in Indonesia. Moreover, I 'reveal' myself as a 'social scientist,' and not, for example, as 'a Catholic woman.' I lean towards, grasp at, and often misrecognise the other. I express myself in some ways and cover myself in others. I laugh and smile and subtly transform myself, my interlocutors, and the relations between.

Sometimes, before certain (Catholic) audiences, I invoke 'the call' (*panggilan*), which, in language, historical accounts, and fictional portrayals, often appears as a dramatic moment in which a divine voice reveals to an individual her path in life. All that is left is to say 'yes'. And while some nuns do, in fact, experience their calling as a specific moment, a memorable pull, a new directive, for most, what it means to 'be called' develops over a lifetime. They were called before they were formed, are called and re-called throughout their lives, which, of course, are made up, like the rest of ours, of many, many moments of mundane experiences, practical actions, and fortifying revelations.

Their calling, they believe, remains in the hands of God, a divine Other. In this sense, it always is and remains a mystery. It is their duty, they feel, to follow this perpetual, unusual summons to the best of their—humanly imperfect—ability. In the everyday, their calling emerges framed in modest things like beauty or motorbikes, as well as in worldly concerns like economic and gender inequality. At the same time, a sense of the divine, of being called, blessed, and imbued with traces of its working, lifts the everyday up, gives it a sense of something *else*.

Deepening (and complicating) this circular relationship between divine calling and everyday life is the fact that the way nuns must pursue both is in company. I mean this in

a very specific way. PRR Sisters live together in convents: living, praying, eating, working, and striving to follow the call–together. In the midst of all their work: teaching children, healing the sick, planting gardens, assisting priests, managing neighbourhood conflicts, fixing the electric lines, laying pipes, bathing pigs, they are tasked with helping each other hear and follow their own unique call, within the bounds of the unified model of their particular religious order and the materiality of life in eastern Indonesia. That is, they strive to know themselves as God intends them—and only them—to be and they rely on one another to help them do this, both to reveal who they are as individuals and to act as the method by which they can become.

Life in company is where most unsuccessful candidates fail. It is not the tough hours or the impossible mission, not the celibacy or the clothes, not the strict rules about propriety and piety, nor the lack of control that prove to be the most difficult part of religious life. Rather, it is 'togetherness' that proves to be the most challenging as well as, arguably, the most central feature of their earthly lives. That is what this thesis is about: becoming a nun in the company of others.

PRR Religious Formation

In this section, I outline the PRR's process of religious formation: the formal process by which girls become nuns. This process is simultaneously one of acclimating an individual to a pre-existing subject position ('nun') as well as cultivating a reflexive, virtuous self within her.

When young women first join the PRR, they are typically in their late teens to early twenties. They have graduated high school, achieved recommendation letters from their parish priests and approval from their parents. They have submitted an application and often had an interview. They usually know someone in the PRR already: an aunt, maybe, or a teacher. Because of these broad similarities, girls who are accepted into formation already share certain commonalities of subjectivity with one another—they are already going in the same direction, a notion we will explore in chapter six.

They spend their first few months at the order's founding convent where they are known as aspirants. During these months, they are warmly welcomed and proudly displayed. They are given simple and menial tasks to perform as a group: washing dishes, decorating the chapel, or sweeping the floors. In November of the year they enter, aspirants move to the formation convent where they are inducted as postulants, declaring themselves ready to perform the three vows that all Catholic religious make: poverty, chastity, and obedience. There is, they are told, a long, difficult journey ahead of them.

At the induction ceremony I attended—as well as at several other PRR rites of passage—the congregation celebrated the initiates' cultural and character diversity while simultaneously marking their entrance into a unified company. Most PRR nuns from the area attended. The attendees ate food the new postulants had prepared following recipes from their hometowns, watched their ethnic dances, and admired the poems they had written and displayed.

'Who am I?' (*Siapakah Aku Ini?)* asked each one. The new postulants' answers mixed personal narrative with adoration of God, statements of love and commitment to follow the mystery of their lives. The elders beamed with joy and cried as they shook the hands of their young proteges; a line of fresh-faced girls pressed the hands of white-robed women—their new Sisters—their noses as they processed by. In this display of initiation, the order emphasized the unity to be made from diversity, the importance of each girl's individuality and self-awareness, and the affective morality of the life they share.

During their time as postulants, girls learn the basics of PRR life: the hours, the prayers, the work, the singing, the history, the etiquette and the idioms. A year and a half later, if all goes well, they advance to the level of novice, receive their new names and don their first full habits: the clothing that will signify who and what they are for the rest of their lives as nuns, which is usually the rest of their lives on this earth. They move next door and continue their training under new leaders. They take classes in sewing and in the history of the Church, they have psychological interviews and free-writing sessions, they master every kind of housework, they play music, write skits and make handicrafts to sell. They say their prayers in Indonesian, Italian and English. They learn to keep their bodies and their spaces clean and tidy. They go out in pairs to visit the neighbours. Sometimes they are praised, sometimes they are chastised. Throughout it all, they learn to inhabit a distinctive 'form-of-life'.

For most of their second year, novices do not leave the formation convent, instead, they spend their time in silence and contemplation. Out of the midst of this silence, each second-year novice receives a work placement (*praktek*) for three weeks at one of the convents in Flores Timur. This period not only begins to prepare them for life in a multi-generational working convent, but also allows their elder sisters to help uncover their particular talents. At the end of the year, the Superior General herself will interview them and determine whether they are ready to make their first temporary vows. The sick are sent home, the ill-qualified deferred. Most are accepted. At the time they make their first vows, new nuns are at their most pious: they know the importance of keeping themselves chaste and humble, of making sacrifices and renouncing their desires. They can tell you about their willingness to go wherever they are sent (*siap diutus ke mana saja)* and to do whatever task they are given. When girls become nuns, they are well-versed in the ideal model of a virtuous religious life, and yet life in the convent puts it all to the test. Life in company forces piety into practice. 'Just wait', the cohort above them teases, 'for the suffering of the convent!

After this, they are known as 'juniors' (*yunior*) and must renew their temporary vows annually.[7] After a period of about 5-7 years, they enter a six-month period of contemplation called 'probation' (*probasi*) at the end of which they make their perpetual vows (*kaul kekal*). They are then considered 'mediors' (*medior*) and are expected to carry the bulk of responsibility in the congregation. At this point, nuns are typically in their mid-thirties. For the first five years or so, they may be called 'baby mediors' (*medior balita*)[8] informally, mainly because of the intense learning curve that they undergo in the transition from obedient juniors to leading mediors. Nuns mark their twenty-fifth, fortieth, and fiftieth anniversaries with periods of reflective retreat, followed by large feasts in the congregation and in their home villages. At some unspecified point (when they seem old enough), nuns become seniors. Eventually they die and are buried in the cemetery at the convent where I lived.

Why Do Women Remain Nuns?

It is one thing to narrate the moment of entry, quite another to understand why nuns persist in their calling. Undoubtedly, it has much to do with the early training that nuns receive, as they practice through the material of their bodies to imagine themselves anew (O'Connor 2007). In her ethnography of novice nuns in Mexico, Rebecca Lester (2005)

[7] Each year, they must reflect on their calling and determine whether to stay or leave the order. Juniors who determine their vocation lies elsewhere are released with the nuns' blessing. Nuns who leave after making their perpetual vows are not looked upon with such benevolence.

[8] *Balita* is actually an Indonesian acronym applied to children *bawah lima tahun*, or 'under 5 years.'

outlines the process of initial formation: a recursive cycle of learning, reflection, and embodiment in a place like a hall of mirrors, where the mirrors are other people all simultaneously being (re)formed. But this process shifts dramatically when nuns make their first vows and are removed to working convents, where they live not in a 'hall of mirrors' but in intergenerational 'families'. What happens after initial formation? Why do women continue as nuns? How do they manage and thrive? These questions drive my discussion in this thesis. While I try to tell this story in a way that honours the specificity and diversity of PRR lives, I also point to ways that their experiences might shed light on others. The PRR story is important because of the way its processes of self-becoming and subjectivity-making articulate and amplify the complex relationship between 'little things' and abiding mysteries, between self and others, that, I suspect, lie at the heart of many of our lives.

Still, theirs is also an Indonesian story. Although they hold a variety of mother tongues, PRR nuns speak to each other primarily in Indonesian.[9] They operate within national values, help alter national expectations, and find the divine in an Indonesian material world. In this sense too, their lives are generalizable, understandable, and shot-through with meaning beyond their immediate grasp. Founded in Flores in 1958, the PRR consider themselves to be one of Indonesia's first indigenous Catholic orders, and so they are. Like my friends who ask tough questions, PRR nuns both know and don't know why girls join their ranks. They have no special mission, no origin in the wealthy centres of global Catholicism, and no formal recruitment system. The best they can offer a young candidate is a roof over her head (probably) and three meals a day (maybe). Yet year after year, their numbers modestly, but steadily grow. This itself is a mystery happening in their everyday.

The PRR, like most Catholic religious orders, blend strict practical hierarchy with an ethos of spiritual democracy. The order's superiors often reassign member nuns to new convents. The frequent moving of people and reconstitution of convent communities complicates the conventional pictures of communal life in general and convents in particular. I lived mainly in a convent in a neighbourhood I call Lewoina (pronounced lewo-ina and meaning 'village of women' in Lamaholot) on the outskirts of Larantuka, a

[9] This is fairly common for religious orders, which each have their origins in a particular place, and so have a 'mother language' in which they conduct all of their internal business with each other. Thus, Indonesians who join the Little Sisters of the Poor speak to each other in English, even if they are stationed in Indonesia, and the Religious of Mary Immaculate living in London speak to each other exclusively in Spanish.

port town famous among Catholic Indonesians for its annual processions and known more generally as the stronghold of Catholic culture in the country. The convent was home to between four and six nuns and between ten and twenty lay employees at any given time. While I lived in this convent and was primarily interested in following the nuns about their business, I also became part of the neighbourhood community: an eclectic collection of local migrants and long-term residents. There were several PRR convents in Larantuka and many others within easy travelling distance. This meant that there was regular mixing between our convent and others as nuns from each dropped in for a visit, consultation, or help. The density of convents in the area allowed me to take occasional trips to other convents, staying for an afternoon or for a week to understand what life as a nun was like in different places and with different constellations of people. This thesis, then, is in part a fragmented, multi-sited ethnography of the fragmented, multi-sited lives of these religious women.

In Catholic discourse, the laypeople, or the laity, are people, especially Catholics, who do not become nuns, monks, or priests. In Indonesian, the word nuns use is *umat*, a cognate of the Arabic term *ummah*, which refers to the global Islamic community. In Indonesian, *umat* is more common than the English gloss I use, and not only in religious settings. It often has a broad connotation, meaning 'the people'. Those who, like my interlocutors, do become nuns, monks, or priests, are dubbed the 'religious class' (*kaum religius*), or simply 'religious'. This works as a noun, as in 'She is a religious'.

The PRR have two main kinds of relations with the laity. Like many other religious and charity organizations, the PRR 'go out' 'into the community' to serve. They also bring

people in—young people in need of schooling or neighbours in need of daily wages. The difference between the two is one of intimacy and duration. The service nuns perform 'out there' lasts for less time, is often for a specific task, and involves an intimacy that might not extend beyond the time of service. In contrast, people who live or work in the convent become part of their family, and are not only vulnerable to, but constitutive of its moral mood (Throop 2014). The people who live or work in the convent are key figures for PRR self-becoming as it is often on, at or through them that nuns discover the depths—and the limits—of their hearts. Because of the intimacy involved in these relationships, and because such people are often included in the embrace of a convent 'family', I discuss them alongside nuns' relationships to each other throughout the thesis. I reserve my discussion of the relationships that PRR nuns have with those 'outside' their convent households and the role they play in the self-making processes of PRR nuns as well as the role PRR nuns play in their own processes of becoming to chapter eight.

PRR nuns follow a daily regimen of prayer, work, communal dining, recreation, and rest. They often hold to and find solace in this structure, but just as often it remains an ideal model. Lapses are sometimes ignored, but just as often become the source of seriously personal, moral debates and confrontations. PRR nuns, in my opinion, live deceptively simple lives, struggling to deal with pressures, expectations, and anxieties from all sides while also perfecting their selves (inner and outer), suppressing their egos, and manifesting an atmosphere of joy. Living their life according to this rule brought me to

severe illness[10] in less than four months of fieldwork. And yet, most of them experience religious life as the truest fulfilment of their personhood. It is to religious life they are called and it is religious they are meant to be.

I was raised Catholic and, unlike many of my peers, the religion sat well with me. As a young girl, I loved the stories of the women saints—Saint Rose of Lima, who wilfully defied family and rejected suitors to devote herself to Christ, and Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, whose perseverance in the face of massacre and disfigurement inspired even French missionaries—were my favourites. My friends in secondary school teased me that I was definitely 'most likely to become a nun'. Perhaps moved by their good-natured jests, perhaps influenced by my religious education classes, as a teenager, I did indeed go through my own idiosyncratic journey of discernment. Should I become a nun? Terrible dreams followed: I was a nun and felt trapped and unhappy in the convent, I lost my faith, I had affairs. Gathering the courage one day to tell these dreams to my father, I felt bodily relief to hear him say, 'Well Meg, maybe you're just not called to that life'.

A decade later, I would tell that story in exactly that way to Sisters of the PRR who, like my old school friends, disguised genuine, care-filled curiosity in light-hearted jests. 'Rose will be the first Western PRR!' they would announce to me, to each other, voices laughing, eyes probing. Or else, introducing me to strangers: 'This is our new candidate from America', struggling to disguise their mischievous glee as my new acquaintances greeted me with a mix of confusion and respect. Eventually, I learned to follow these jokes with my own, laughing and saying, 'Yeah… their perpetual candidate!' *(ya... calon kekal!)*

This was my position among the PRR. I was, in many ways, like the nuns, or at least like their eager recruits. I was a young, single, Catholic woman who arrived from afar without her family but with a working knowledge of Indonesian, curious about religious life, and submitting herself to the care and instruction of the order. It is no wonder that I prompted both confusion and camaraderie. I was not a nun, but I could have been. I acted like one, but didn't look like one. I asked questions about spirituality, but claimed I wrote 'from a social-cultural perspective'. The gap between us, although unsurprising, at times troubled me and at other times intrigued me. I was playing a part, but one that seemed based on my own past, interests, and desires. Was my easy misrecognition, the way I played the part, a problem? Was it somehow inauthentic? These are questions of performativity, recognition and belonging that, I came to understand, arise in the

[10] Typhoid fever and panic attacks compounded by mild sexual harassment.

experience not only of the foreign anthropologist, but of PRR nuns as well, whose work, we shall see, is not so different from ethnography.

We both struggled with 'the special tension between a claim to belonging based on performance in a context where belonging is understood in terms of uncrafted authenticity' (Boellstorff 2007: 112). Boellstorff here is speaking of the value in Indonesia of things that are *asli*—authentic or original—in contrast to things that are earned or performed. The transgender people (*waria*) with whom he works, like the PRR gain recognition not through claims of belonging, but by performing 'good deeds' (*prestasi*), a word more commonly translated as 'achievement.' The state and its citizens amplify this word as a way to link achievements to morality to national subjectivities (Dove 2011; Hegarty 2017; Long 2007). The nature of these acts marks them as particular kinds of subjects, just as their quality speaks to their moral character.

Authenticity is a difficult thing to claim or chase when you are actively seeking self-transformation. Their struggle reveals the extent to which performative action and recognition by others conspire to draw the contours around subject positions. Caught up in my own expectations of what a convent would be like—orderly—and how a woman living with nuns ought to behave—demurely—I was not only surprised to find things, in fact, quite different, I was troubled on an existential level in those early months. I would be told to be in the chapel at four AM sharp, only to end up sitting alone the next morning, anxious and confused. I would be told that I must always eat with them, only to be dismissed at the next mealtime so the nuns could talk in private. In expecting nuns to be 'true to their word' in a literal sense, I tried to recognise in them an image I (and others, I imagine) had of Catholic nuns. The affects I experienced—anxiety, confusion, frustration—might have signalled a 'moral disruption' in my efforts to become a good ethnographer and to come to belong amongst the PRR (Long 2019; Zigon 2007).

As part of my efforts, I tried to perform the role of the nun who could be but isn't by doing things like not wearing makeup and demurring from giving an opinion. I agreed with everything and now the nuns were confused, as I eluded recognition under their categories of both 'woman' and 'researcher'. Over time, through living together and committed efforts to suspend our preconceptions, we transformed our categories to fit each other. When I think of nuns now, these are the women and this is the form of life that comes to mind.

I expected the convent to be ordered, but it was chaos. Nuns did not stick to their schedules or rules, did not do what they said they were going to do, and did not share personalities, desires, or priorities between them. The convent space itself was extremely porous; people, animals, and spirits came and went almost at will. The same actions could be encouraged one moment and forbidden the next. The same people could be on the brink of permanent discord one day and sharing hearty friendship the next. I rarely knew what was about to happen and, I now realise, neither did the nuns.

Within this chaos, there was order, order structured not around rules, time, and piety, but around an understanding of selves. This understanding is connected both to authenticity and to achievement, but is focused more on becoming together, in company. The PRR employ certain concepts to understand each other, concepts that form the contents of this thesis: origin, mystery, trauma, character, expression, service, and movement. While they employ these concepts discursively at different moments, in conversation or debate, how they add up is not always clear. In this thesis, I lay out how these concepts operate as categories of recognition only within the flexible and creative embrace of company, an embrace as willing to shift its own qualities as to transform its members.

For me, the story of PRR transformation has much to say to the method of ethnography and the person of ethnographer. Rather than striving for self- or other- understanding on the basis of authenticity or achievement only, becoming in company happens through an open process of intersubjective moral action and embodied understanding. In this, nuns and ethnographers alike travel a path of belonging that works on the premise that we be perceived as sincere (Jackson 2005). This kind of understanding, becoming, and

belonging demands a move beyond recognition according to categories, to a kind of recognition that grasps the other in her interiority as well as her exterior actions. This, I argue, is what company affords.

PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY

The suggestion that people become themselves through the co-presence of company is at once obvious and difficult to reach. It requires ways of knowing that are equipped not only to account for the body, but to engage its full faculties. The PRR, like many people, already know this as they insist that physical presence allows you to 'know others' in a way that also respects their mysterious alterity. Ethnographic praxis engages with a similar ethic. We insist on sustained fieldwork in which we are present with others as a way to 'feel in the gut', know, represent, and hold the experience of others (Jackson 2013). Performative methods, I suggest, help unpack exactly what is happening when we are in presence with others: where does our attention go, what do we feel, how do we know, and when do we hold back from intercepting another (or allowing ourselves to be intercepted)? Embodied methods, I argue, allow us to see what company is (a constellation of people and the atmospheres they cultivate between them), what it does (act in moral valences to open (or close) selves to others), and why it matters (by creating the conditions for mutual constitution through the performative tessellation of character and experience).

I was inspired by nuns' performative methods of understanding each other and uncovering themselves to incorporate performative methods into my participant observation. With the blessing of the Superior General, I organized performance workshops with a small group of young nuns as a way to get at some of the expressive, embodied ways that nuns related to each other and came to know each other.

In plotting my methods, I was inspired by previous work in performance ethnography. Popular theatrical formats representing ethnographic research—documentary or verbatim theatre—reproduce claims to objectivity, despite practitioners claims that performance ethnography is a critical methodology that aims at decolonizing academic knowledge (Snyder-Young 2010). In departures from these genres, others have proposed approaches to performance ethnography that might present aesthetic alternatives: beginning from sensory experiments with material objects found in the research fieldsite (Giordano & Pierotti 2020), putting the body in space to discover relationships and

tensions through their spatial relations (Hamera 2013), or working with physical expressionism to evoke interior experience (Kazubowski-Houston 2010).

A core theme of the literature on performance ethnography, and a significant motivation for its practice, is privileging the body as a means of communication and a site of knowing (Csordas 1990). It mobilizes the expressive possibilities of the body, in part to provide a fuller representation of experience (Ackroyd & O'Toole 2010; Saldaña 2016; Schechner 1985; Turner & Turner 1982), destabilize the comfortable position of the written word in academic research (Conquergood 1998, 2002; Rusted 2012), to reveal or disrupt the uneven dynamics of ethnography (O'Connor & Anderson 2015; Pollock 2006; Prendergast 2014; Snyder-Young 2010). Experience and expression figure as conceptual tools of performance ethnography with methodological and theoretical implications. While ethnographic plays consciously shape their subject matter in 'fictional' ways, by privileging the body they 'de-fictionalise' it in others. Here, the body is not replaced by print on paper; performance ethnography works by 'putting the body on the line' (Pollock 2006: 325).

Advocates for performance ethnography often root their defences in its potential as liberatory or decolonial method because of precisely this feature. It does not reduce bodies to words, nor does it fix them in place (Gatt 2015). Moreover, it is an inherently collaborative medium, one that might include the subjects of research in its crafting. Both approaches—devising performance in the field as a way of knowing that sits within/alongside classic participant-observation (Kazubowski-Houston 2010) or drawing upon fieldwork materials to devise a representation outside the bounds of in-process fieldwork (Giordano & Pierotti 2020; Hartblay 2020) thrust the ethics latent in all ethnographic fieldwork to the fore (Zagaria 2016). These arguments have spoken both to crises of representation in anthropology as well as the desire to decolonise the discipline through collaborative expression (Gatt 2015). Despite its liberatory potential however, performance ethnography does not inherently prove liberating.

The surprise of this might even bear the tinge of moral failure. Kazubowski-Houston (2010) felt that her application of performance ethnography with Roma women in Poland failed because she was unable to collaborate with women in the making of the performance. She also felt her experiment failed because the performance attracted an audience who were already inclined to support Roma women and to empathise with their plight. Kazubowski-Houston, then, felt a failure of this kind to be a moral one, violating

two of the central ethical claims of performance ethnography: collaboration and activism. Her feelings of failure persisted despite the ethnographic discoveries that emerged through her performance practice, discoveries regarding the embodied suffering of Roma women and the nature of power in ethnographic research.

It has become conventional for ethnographers—performative and otherwise—to reflect on their 'positionality' and to be 'aware of all the power dynamics' (gurudev 2021: 320). This ethical practice often draws on intersectionality theories and posits an idea of personhood as the point at the meeting place of many variously-valenced identities. If it does not take a fixed idea of power dynamics, which are often presented as being 'negotiated', this line of thinking represents a fixed idea of what power is.

On the contrary, Kazubowski-Houston's efforts to introduce an unconventional research method to informants and audience members enlivened her to the way in which 'different kinds of knowledge about power were being constructed at each stage of the research process' (Kazubowski-Houston 2010: 192). These constructions of power, as well as Kazubowski-Houston's own perspective of performance ethnography were grounded in specific ideas of what a person is as well as locally-salient modes and meanings of expression in which certain sentiments were felt to be too painful, too dangerous, too raw, or too personal to put into words.[11] At the same time, the methodological unfolding altered these assumptions and produced new understandings of the subject as well as an important complication to the oft-touted political and ethical superiority of performance ethnography. Kazubowski-Houston concludes her story with an aspiration: 'I want my future ethnographic journey to be an ethnography of discovery, in which both the research participants and I learn the ways of doing ethnography together, starting anew for each project and each set of circumstances–even if the project does not result in a performance at all' (Kazubowski-Houston 2010: 195).

My own experiments with performance ethnography with young PRR nuns in Larantuka were fated to follow a similar route. I left for the field with hopes of devising a play with nuns for nuns that would mobilize bodies to explore the things that made their lives matter. I wanted to work with the nuns to 'script' this imagined play, developed from their bodies, thus working their translation of body to page into my work. I then hoped

[11] Kazubowski-Houston draws primarily on Polish expressionism and follows in the devising tradition of such ground-breaking theatre artists as Jerzy Grotowski, Joseph Chaikin, and Jacques LeCoq, who each developed theatrical aesthetics that privileged the body (Kazubowski-Houston 2010).

to take this script back to London where I would seek theatrical collaborators, rework, and restage it for a London audience. I wanted this hoped-for performance to be the other half of this thesis, which I initially proposed would act primarily as a methodological intervention into anthropology. I hoped to use this project as a way to make explicit the ways in which PRR relationships with each other affect their self-formation as well as the ways in which acting might help one person grasp another. This was my grand scheme, one that I was personally excited about, having pitched both theatre and anthropology at the centre of my professional ambitions since the time I entered university as an undergraduate. It was also one that I felt to be extremely important for anthropology, for the reasons outlined above.

It started off well. I floated the idea past nuns early on in my fieldwork and received enthusiastic responses. Over several months of good, old-fashioned participant-observation, I not only had the chance to broaden my understanding of PRR performance genres and what they were used for. I also was able to master the ways and importance of requesting permission (*minta ijin*) from the proper people. In the congregation, as in Indonesian bureaucracy more generally, as anyone who seeks research permissions in the country may attest, one must follow the correct path (*ikut jalur*). Following the correct path smooths the way, helping one achieve one's goal and avoid offending anyone.

My research in its total had to be vetted and approved by the Superior General. I was, moreover, encouraged by first Mother, Sister Pia, to 'always tell the Superior General everything' that I planned to do with my research. Accordingly, I arranged a meeting with the Superior General to *minta ijin* to work on a performance ethnography with a small group of nuns. I related, in brief, the anthropological debates about embodiment and methodology that I was interested in exploring. She was very excited and immediately summoned Sister Vivina who, at that time, was the Mother of the order's centre. Sister Vivina, it was well known, was a great entertainer herself, quick witted and open-natured, she was the kind of 'dramatic' that seemed occasionally unable to refrain from performing, much to everyone's delight. The two nuns arranged for me to meet with a group of nuns 'each Thursday' at the Mother House. For the Superior General, the project offered nuns the opportunity to learn new skills or develop latent talents. She wondered if I might also expand my programme to include the elderly, as it would give them a chance to 'do something' and 'be creative'. I, of course, agreed.

Although I had hoped to play with nuns of all ages, when I began 'rehearsals' the only attendees were a small group of juniors who seemed to have been assigned to it. Some seemed excited, others unsure, but all filed into our first rehearsal with the kind of seriousness reserved for school classes. They called me 'Miss' rather than my usual Indonesian name among the nuns (*Nona Ros*, or, more intimately, *kakak. ade* or *oa)* and answered my provocations in formal Indonesian, beginning each statement with a stock rhetorical phrase like 'Well. For my part…' (B*aik. Bagi saya*…). I moved us into physical nonsense games to try to move away from this frame, which—miraculously, it seemed to me at the time—'worked'. We were moving with our bodies and I felt it wouldn't be long before we had built a physical style and repertoire together which we could use to explore nuns' embodied experiences of subjectivity in each other's company.

For this to happen, however, we needed some consistency, something I had not worried about when I imagined working with a group of nuns who ('of course,' I thought) were used to a regular schedule on a project which had been assigned a specific time by the Superior General herself. But I should have known, based on my several months living within the apparent chaos of this workaday order, that such regularity was never to be. First of all, the phenomenon of near-constant movement, travelling, and reassignments together with the Mother House's central position in the hierarchical map of PRR

convents, meant that junior nuns came and went constantly. Each rehearsal, the constitution of our little company changed.

I also failed to account for the frequent 'filler' tasks that junior nuns are enjoined to perform, tasks like attending Masses at neighbours' houses to honour their dead (each convent receives several invitations to such events each week and feel obligated to send someone, which usually ends up being a pair of the most junior nuns). I arrived for rehearsal many times to discover that the company was temporarily disbanded, off decorating the church or filling the chairs at a neighbour's feast.

The situation was compounded when, a few months later, Sister Vivina was reassigned to Lewoina and staid, even-tempered Sister Catalina took her place. The change in power required a renegotiation of permissions. The Superior General and her deputy were both abroad at the time, in Canada and Kenya, doing their rounds of all PRR convents. Sister Catalina herself refused to grant permission without a superior's input, an act which does not in itself constitute disapproval, or so I reminded myself, trying to dispel the blatantly disapproving mood into which I was being sucked. Fortunately, my former bed-mate and fourth-in-command, Sister Patricia, who we will meet in chapter eight, was not on rounds, but was holding down the fort at the Mother House. She graciously coordinated with Sister Catalina for the renewal of rehearsals in exchange for some of my time teaching English to the juniors. I was very pleased, but, unfortunately, this official approval did not translate into a smooth comeback. Sister Catalina cancelled two out of every three rehearsals.

Still, I persisted, mostly in my own interest, but also because of the enjoyment the regular attendees got out of the rehearsals, as discussed in chapter seven. Interest, as with everything in this thesis, actually lay somewhere in between the two. My theoretical and academic interest was fuelled by their brilliant—to my mind—improvisations. My personal interest was enlivened by a lasting affection for them and desire for their wellbeing. I loved being in their company.

We managed to meet a dozen or so times and, with a few months left in my fieldwork, we identified an appropriate moment towards which to build a performance. The nuns frequently presented skits as part of their feasts, a tradition called 'bringing a show' (*bawa acara*). Three nuns in the congregation were due to celebrate their fiftieth anniversaries in the order shortly before I left the field. There would be a big feast and certainly lots of *acara*. We started working on a semi-biographical piece of theatre that would represent the life journeys of these three nuns as they started together, took up different *karya*, and reunited in the Mother House, now, near the end of their careers.

Sister Catalina cancelled any potential performance of ours, citing the need for the juniors to focus on preparations for the feast and the fact that those being celebrated (*sang yubilarium*) were old and would doubtless be exhausted after the Mass, precluding the need for any performances. She instructed the juniors to relay this decision to me, which they did, their spokesperson speaking in a quiet voice. I was seriously disappointed and I felt it, painfully, in my throat, a feeling I saw immediately taken up in the other's bodies, my pain augmented and reflected in them. Or was it the opposite? I still don't know. When the feast day came, weeks had passed, enough time for me to wrangle my emotions and humble my pride, to witness the other performances—which did, of course, come—with some semblance of the graceful humility required of PRR nuns in the face of rejection and humiliation.

Like Kazubowski-Houston, I felt I had 'failed.' I, too, spent a lot of time and energy reflecting on why, digging up my heart to uncover the root of that disappointment, a process which revealed, to me, on a personal level, some of the 'lacks' in my character that balance my 'talents', the importance of which will be discussed in chapter six. Lacks like a failure to 'feel' hierarchy in the same way I 'feel' other people's emotions. Lacks like an unwillingness to fix, plan, and direct, with the same fervour I move and improvise. Lacks like an internalised aversion to conflict, an unwillingness, perhaps, to, as strong Lamaholot women say, 'throw it all out and store nothing in the heart'. While the ultimate

PRR nun—and ethnographer—would, perhaps, have been adept at manifesting both, performing them into being, both sets, the talents I hold and the talents I lack can be mobilized to become a 'good' subject of either kind. This relationship between becoming in ethnography and in the convent through a moralised and capacious definition of the subject will continue to prove important throughout this thesis.

My failure, although it feels emotionally akin to Kazubowski-Houston's, is different in one crucial aspect. Her sense of failure responds to the moral demands of an ethnography called upon to act politically and collaboratively to stem suffering and end oppression. My sense of failure responded not to this ethnographic ethic, but to a theatrical demand to culminate in something. Ironically, in my failure, I had succeeded precisely where Kazubowski-Houston 'failed', at the place where she directed her future aspirations. In entering into—yet failing to master—PRR ways of expressing within hierarchy, I learned, along with my participants and in their company, how to do the ethnography I was doing.

This part, the part about using performance as an in-field ethnographic method, did, at least, prove fruitful, but the aim to develop a play to show for the nuns and to bring back to London never panned out. The reasons why revealed the importance of several of the themes covered in this thesis, including mobility, character and expression. Over time, I came to realise that the young nuns who acted with me were grasping at me, experimenting with what I wanted, what was expected of them, and what would make the meetings 'good'. Many times, I could feel them aching after my emotional state or stretching their minds to intuit my thoughts, as I ached and stretched toward theirs.

Between the rehearsals themselves and the painstaking, political process of making them happen, I 'uncovered' much of what I have represented in this thesis, which is part of why I continue to argue for an embodied, performance methodology in anthropology and why I have settled on company as my overarching analytic. Ethnographic fieldwork is a professional practice into which we enter our entire beings; there is nothing in ourselves that is off limits, nothing that might not suddenly be called upon to sense, witness, analyse, resonate or interpret. The worlds we enter are alive with sensations, vibrant with voices, and shot-through with mystery.

I say worlds and we talk of field*sites*, but what we actually enter is company. We join ourselves to shifting constellations of other people who are differentially engaged in forming themselves and their worlds. Our entrance, we know, inevitably alters that

company, but so too, we notice, does that company alter us. The people we come to know, the company we keep, those who keep us, inform, dictate, and challenge our ideas change us, sit within our beings even after we leave.[12] Within these different companies of people, our academic companies included, failure can mean so many different things. Experiments in ethnography might fail in so many ways, they might fail to produce a performance or move an audience; they might also fail to engage locally resonant embodied ways of knowing in the research process. But thinking, moving, and pushing through this failure can illuminate much of human experience that remains below surface, undealt with, and unexpressed. And so, I would like to conclude this chapter with a suggestion, *sederhana sekali*, that academic supervisors continue to encourage their students, as mine certainly did, to do this pushing, to work out in both words and body, but always in company, how performance works not just as a mode of expression, but as a way of knowing, not just as a form of representation, but as a methodology. And I would encourage performance ethnographers to persist. *Coba saja*, the nuns would say, 'just try'. *Mulai saja*, just begin.

[12] I am reminded now of the many, many times I have seen anthropologists riled into passionate debate because, it seems to me, of a clash in values between their separate companions-in-the-field, values which have taken a seat in their bodies.

CHAPTER 3: ORIGIN

Sister Diana was conceived on Solor, a small island to the southeast of Flores. When her mother was pregnant, she craved shellfish, mostly the small kind that you pull fresh from the reef. Pregnancy cravings like these are said to stem from the unborn child and her desires; the saltiness of these little creatures in turn fed the baby's character.

At the time of her birth, her parents had two sons, but they longed for a girl. Her mother was in labour for seven days, an event Sister Diana dramatized for us one morning, spreading her legs in her chair, gesturing her hands down the path of her own unused birthing canal:

> Seven days she wrestled. Seven days. She went back and forth between life and death. So, she made a pledge to God.

At this point, Sister Diana gazed up to the ceiling, and took on the character of her young mother, grey with pain, pleading:

> 'If this child is a girl, I'll offer her up to the Lord. She will become a nun.'

She switched fluidly between her characters: her mother and herself as PRR Sister in the present.

> As long as I live, she tells me, 'Guard yourself. Do not take a husband'. She's afraid! 'If you take a husband, you will not live long'.

Sister Diana's mother made a promise to God on her behalf and a promise to God is not to be tested. Not long after this promise was made, the infant who would become Sister

Diana was born. Her mother fell ill, so a neighbour nursed the newborn. Sharing 'one breast' forged a familial relationship with this woman's children, a pattern that is familiar across Indonesia.

Sister Diana's family followed another pattern familiar to the region. They poured all of their resources into their eldest son's education, seeing him all the way through to a Masters' degree in the hope that he would secure a job good enough to sponsor his younger siblings' schooling, momentarily delayed. Unfortunately, Sister Diana's brother died at sea, leaving his family broken-hearted and economically insecure.

Years later, Sister Diana would still recall the next part of her story with passionate tears in her eyes: how her father was out every night fishing, how she and her sister would sell his catch door-to-door before school to earn enough money to pay for their classes, how eventually she was forced to give up her education entirely. She began making the short ferry journey to Larantuka to sell vegetables and fish in the port town's busy market. When the city decided it needed to 'clean up' its image, the young woman who would become Sister Diana was swept up with the rest of the sellers, her produce smashed to bits. Sitting on the steps of a new shop, shocked and unsure how to even get home, she happened to meet a PRR nun. The Sister took pity on her and offered her a job in the convent kitchen.

Working and living in the convent, she became ever-more attracted to religious life. One day, the Superior General pulled her aside, told her she had noticed her sitting in the back of chapel while the nuns said their prayers. 'Do you want to become one yourself?' she wondered. The young woman admitted she did, but that she lacked the requisite education.

This part of the story, too, would move Sister Diana to tears in the telling, this time not in sorrow, but in gratitude. For the Superior—the most powerful woman in the order—arranged for her schooling, even took care to send her further east, to Lembata, so that she might avoid the shame of going to school with the children of neighbours she knew. She was in her twenties and re-entering middle school.

She lived with relatives of the Superior, a young couple who would later tell me—with tears in their own eyes—how Sister Diana helped their marriage and fostered their spiritual lives. 'She treated that house like a convent', the wife told me. 'We had a rota for cooking—even my husband!—and every night she would light a candle and we would pray together. She insisted we do things *together*'.

School was difficult and often embarrassing, but the young woman eventually finished. Returning to Larantuka, she was admitted to the PRR. One year later, she received her new name, one she would keep for the rest of her life. She became Sister Diana.

Sister Diana's origin story carries expressions of regional patterns, sketching a picture of what life is like for Florenese women before they enter the convent. While Sister Diana's story is unique in many ways, it still affords insight into ideas potent in Flores: ideas about the communal nature of personhood, about the ethical demands of family and community, about the embodiment of sympathy, about poverty and mobility, about the institutional presence and personal experience of Catholicism, about gender, and about the moralised influence of economic/aesthetic policies shuffling out from the nation's centre.

Sister Diana's story starts to reveal why 'company'—although it features heavily in so many of our lives—is so central to the becomings of PRR nuns. Their lives start cradled in Florenese ideas of company: that a baby has unconscious desires expressed through her mother, that a family sacrifices for each other, that members of a household practice 'togetherness'. These ideas are then formally emphasized by the PRR as an organization.

Sister Diana's story helps us begin to frame an answer to the question: How much does it matter that these are nuns living and working in Indonesia, within an order based in Flores? While pieces of this question will be taken up and expanded in subsequent ones, in this chapter I will make the modest argument that the PRR's Florenese origins matter for two reasons. The first reason is self-identity. The PRR define themselves organizationally as a Florenese order, actively embracing many of the overt values and trappings of the island. Moreover, individual nuns view themselves not as abstract subjects, but as thoroughly encultured women. Their home 'culture' (*budaya*) helps them define themselves and understand each other. This is in part a politics of recognition that reduces incommensurable difference to familiar categories (Giordano 2014).

The second reason falls out more along the lines of embodiment and practice. Because the PRR—both organizationally and individually—are so steeped in Flores Timur, so are many of their ways of working amongst different people in different places. That is, their mutual self-making unfolds in a particularly Florenese way, even when they are in Jakarta, Rome, or Nairobi. Meanwhile, in Flores, their Floreneseness binds them to locals, many of whom claim the PRR as 'our order'.

One of the PRR's founders, Sister 'Mother' Anfrida, SSpS, lived by the motto, 'just begin' (*mulai saja)*. Elder PRR nuns remember the way she applied this motto to tasks as small as learning how to weave and as large as opening a new convent. It is a motto that PRR nuns occasionally relive at big feasts or in moments that test their endurance. 'Just begin' has come to mean, for the PRR in this era, something more than to begin a pre-set task. Many take it as an injunction to 'just arrive' and to allow a community to suggest what it needs, either directly or indirectly. Once a problem appears, the 'beginning' comes with figuring out how to solve the problem; of moving beyond the literal and metaphorical guest room into the kitchen beyond. This is the root of the PRR's major acts of service and what they would call their individual work (*karya)* and their order's mission (*misi*). The PRR's method of service, and the way they become themselves, is not necessarily one of stepping into a predefined role, but of discovering a locally-defined need and endeavouring to alleviate it. In this endeavour, PRR nuns try to open themselves to local ways of doing things. In opening themselves in this way, they also begin to let local people and places affect their own paths of self-becoming.

The object of this chapter is to demonstrate how PRR selves are formed through particular conjunctures of region, nation, and world. These conjunctures, I argue, are then carried in PRR bodies and enacted on others. Complicating this unidirectional picture, however, is a point of conjuncture that has to do with the mutability and vulnerability of the self. That is, PRR nuns are just as open to being changed—and having their basic understandings altered. The creative, open possibilities of mutual becoming in this setting reveal both the importance of cultural origin for religious subjectivities and the role of company in forming the understandings of personhood that are the very foundations of self-becoming.

This chapter introduces some of the themes that will become important in later chapters and discusses the values and concerns that occupy the hearts of eastern Indonesian women even before they become nuns. Because Catholicism features as an important piece of the lived environment, not only for PRR nuns, but also for the Florenese more generally, this chapter will begin with a brief history of how Flores became 'the Catholic island' (Erb 2006: 209) in a country where most people identify as Muslim. This history will lead us into a discussion of the Catholic Church as an agent of development in Flores and will land on the topic of the gendered roles of Catholic religious. This discussion of the history of the PRR as religious actors in the company of others will lead us into the second part of the chapter, in which I discuss aspects of subjectivity and sociality in Flores

and the ways in which they share in and diverge from broader national streams of thought and action.

Map showing the distribution of religions in Indonesia. The pink island is Flores. The brackets within which it sits delineate the province of East Nusa Tenggara.
Original map © Marshmir / Wikimedia Commons /CC-BY-SA-3.0

SITUATING FLORENESE CATHOLICISM

While some Florenese communities, like many others, consider themselves to be the 'source' and centre of all humanity,[13] from the perspective of the state, Flores is pretty peripheral. It does not even have the recognition that comes from being on an actual border, where state attention can sometimes be summoned (Sakai et al. 2009). It is an island in the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) and one of the very few in Indonesia that is majority Catholic; the others are its immediate neighbours.[14] Catholicism contributes substantially to Florenese sense of a coherent identity despite incredible diversity (Allerton 2009; Schröter 2010) contributing to their positioning 'at the edge of the powerful Muslim majority' (Prior 1988: 315).

Most Indonesians are Muslim and, despite the country's size, most live on the island of Java (52% as of the 2020 census). Unsurprisingly, Islam influenced the beginning of the

[13] These communities include some Lio (Aoki 2003) and the Rajong in Manggarai (Erb 1998).
[14] Flores officially remains more than 85% Catholic (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

Indonesian state, and continues to direct policy today. Debates over the nature of Islam and inclusion in Islamic community have enabled an exclusionary politics wherein only certain orthodox expressions of religion are formally permitted. For full citizenship, Indonesians must profess one of six recognised religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Indonesia's blasphemy laws, initially directed at protecting public morality from 'deviant' strands of Islam, are occasionally launched at non-Muslims, sometimes to spectacular effect (Menchik 2014).

I raise the state of majority religion and population density at the same time because of the way religion and geography are intertwined. Indonesia's particular history of religious development, together with its participation in maritime trade, mission, and colonialism has meant that religion in the country sticks pretty closely to regional bounds. Demographically, Catholics make up only a small minority of Indonesia's population: a little over three percent, or about eight million individuals (Kementerian Agama RI 2021). East Nusa Tenggara is the only region where Catholics comprise a greater percentage of the population than any other religious group. Legacies of colonial racism and political centralisation sometimes mean that eastern Indonesian Catholic nuns and the people they serve are triply marginalised: geographically, religiously, and ethnically.

As the most visible representatives of Indonesia's Catholic community, nuns are acutely aware of the institutional and vigilante violence that emerges as a by-product of the national exclusionary politics expressed in the regionalisation of religion. However, they do not usually object to its logic. Like the Muslim politicians who sit at the table, PRR nuns desire 'a polity where individuals, organizations, and the state are partly responsible for one another's moral condition' (Menchik 2014: 619) and view state-enforced monotheism as a means to that end. Florenese Catholics' simultaneous marginalisation by and participation in Indonesian religious politics stems from a long history of Catholicism in the country, the key points of which I outline below.

CATHOLICISM IN INDONESIA

Catholicism debuted in Indonesia in the early sixteenth century in the persons of Portuguese soldiers, traders and the odd seafaring priest (Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008). En route to the famed spice islands, the Portuguese established a small colony and fort on Solor (Andaya 2010: 402), the same island where several centuries later Sister Diana's mother would devote her daughter to God. After some initial skirmishes with Dutch and Muslim challengers, the Portuguese found a home for their religion in Larantuka. Indigenous religious beliefs in the area: in a single deity that dwelt 'above', where the good would also dwell in afterlife, as well as rituals that included reverence for certain sacred objects and the use of water made Portuguese Catholicism palatable and intriguing for many in the Larantuka area (Andaya 2013; Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008). In 1596, a seminary opened, with fifty entrants (Andaya 2010: 402). Larantuka's place as the Catholic centre of Indonesia began.

The Portuguese arrived in Flores Timur at a time when they were a fearsome world power, staking an audacious claim to more than half the world (Andaya 2013). As the nineteenth century crested and their power waned, they were forced to sell most of their holdings in the East Indies to the Dutch[15] and a new mission age began (Aritonang & Steenbrink 2008). The Dutch implemented a regime of religious separation; European missions received clearly delineated domains. As part of this, the Dutch removed the few

[15] They kept Timor-Leste, thereby preventing it from integrating with the rest of the Indonesian archipelago, a colonial division that provided the frame for the mass violence that the Indonesian army would perpetrate in Timor-Leste in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

remaining Portuguese Dominicans that had dominated Flores for centuries (Steenbrink 2003). In their place, they sent Jesuits, and later, the German-based order, Societas Verbi Divini (SVD) (Steenbrink 2013: 113). The SVD quickly became the region's most influential religious order (Andaya 2013; Schröter 2010). A Catholic religious society committed to the theological principle of 'inculturation', discussed in more detail in the next chapter, they pressed into the Flores highlands with the object of 'recasting…local culture from within by Gospel values' (Erb 2006: 225; Prior 1988: 46).

If Portuguese Catholicism settled easily in Larantuka thanks in part to pre-existing religious beliefs, the Catholic Church in the Dutch era endeared itself to people in Flores by coming to their defence in times of tribulation. It was SVD missionaries, for example, who in 1920 encouraged the people of Manggarai to protest against their Muslim overlords living off-island. And it was an SVD-educated man who was subsequently made the first Manggarai king (Erb 2006: 209). The category of 'king', however, was largely a colonial invention, aimed at stemming indigenous resistance, facilitating colonial governance, and smoothing the path for the export of spices and minerals (Fox 2011: 148; Schröter 2005: 319). Thus, Catholicism's progression in Flores was double-sided: the Church aligned itself with suffering people while simultaneously colluding with—even organizing—a controlling and extortive state.

The centuries-long colonial drama of what would become Indonesia continued with Japanese occupation during the second World War. Although their wartime mission in Indonesia was ostensibly to cultivate allies for a new Asian world order, nationalism was encouraged in Java and Sumatra, but discouraged in the outer islands (Reid & Ōki 1986), a move that played off colonial distinctions between the archipelago's 'civilised' and 'primitive' peoples which continues to have salience today. Japanese occupation permanently interrupted Dutch bureaucratic hegemony (Anderson 2009 [1956]). The Japanese interned all Europeans, including Dutch priests, collecting them centrally in Java.[16]

The Japanese did not, however, intern Asians or Eurasians (Touwen-Bouwsma 1997). This situation created the conditions for the first generation of native priests to ascend to positions of power, namely the two native Catholic priests who existed at that time: Albertus Soegijapranata of Java and Gabriel Manek, SVD of Timor. They were hurriedly

[16] German priests, however, were not collected. One, Paul Arndt, contributed significantly to the ethnography of Flores (Arndt 1956, 1959).

elevated to the level of Bishop and the former colonies were divided between them, religiously speaking, Soegijapranata held the west while Manek shepherded the east. Soegijapranata would go on to serve as a strong proponent of Indonesian sovereignty and independence from the Dutch (Suhadi 2014: 28)[17] and Manek would go on to found one of Indonesia's first indigenous Catholic religious orders: the Puteri Reinha Rosari.[18]

Under Manek, the SVD retained an almost exclusive religious purview of Flores until the Indonesian independence movement began blooming in Java in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Steenbrink 2015). The Dutch imprisoned independence activist and future first president, Sukarno, in Flores. While in prison, ministered to by local Catholics and sitting under a palm tree, he had a dream of what would become the five pillars of the Indonesian constitution. Among these was the definition of Indonesia as a monotheistic—but not Muslim—country, a move that would accommodate Indonesia's religious minorities.[19] His time on Flores in solidarity with many Florenese, we might imagine, helped form his opinions on the religious direction of the new nation.

During the revolutionary period, Catholic intellectuals in Java founded one of the country's major newspapers, *Kompas* (Suhadi 2014) and contributed to the drafting of Indonesia's constitution, helping to ensure a certain amount of religious freedom. With the lifting of Dutch restrictions on missions after Indonesian independence, foreign religious orders streamed into the country. Each was required to go through a process of 'Indonesianization', adapting their personnel and styles to the new nation (Steenbrink 2015). Manek, however, took a different route. He enlisted the help of a Dutch nun to assist him in founding a native congregation of nuns. In 1958, the PRR's first cohort was twelve girls, quickly reduced to only three. They were taught practical and intellectual pursuits: singing, business, farming, housekeeping, sewing, praying, modesty, silence, Indonesian, English and religion. They adopted the purpose of their patron, Mary, to become 'servants of the Lord' and adopted the Latin motto *da mihi virtutem* (give me strength) (Beding, SVD 2007: 84–91).

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[17] '100% Catholic, 100% Indonesian' was his rallying cry, one that summoned Catholics to join with their Muslim compatriots in the revolutionary cause while simultaneously reminding Muslims that Catholics ought not to be excluded from belonging to the nascent state.

[18] The Japanese instituted another policy that would create the conditions for one of Manek's main areas of focus—and later one of the PRR's most impressive services—when they relegated lepers to remote and inaccessible places, cutting them from kin networks important in the region and interrupting any effort of contact—including burning the new Bishop's boat (according to a local historian).

[19] Of course, his allowance for state recognition of religion it would also cause myriad problems for non-recognized and local 'streams of belief' in subsequent years.

Manek established the PRR as a diocesan order, meaning that the PRR would fall under the authority of the local bishop and contribute to the needs of the diocese. In order to work in a new place, the PRR must be invited by the bishop. When Manek was lifted to the position of Archbishop of Ende in 1961,[20] he therefore left the young order in the care of his co-founder, Sister Anfrida, SSpS. She remained their leader for twenty years, early years in the development of an independent Indonesia.

While the fledgling order got its feet off the ground, the Catholic Church in Flores continued to act as a leading agent, acting in response to local and state concerns. The Church fell into step with the changing political regimes, emphasizing nationalism and revolution during Sukarno's reign, development during his successor Suharto's New Order, and reformation after Suharto's fall (Prior 2011a: 133, fn. 50).[21] Prior views this critically, wishing the Church could act in keeping with its morals, even if that put it at odds with the state. He had horrors on his mind: in 1966, the Church failed to prevent the massacre of 'communists' that raged through Indonesia, seeing several hundred people killed (by other Catholics) and buried in mass graves (Barnes 2003; Prior 2011a, 2011b; Steenbrink 2015: 21). Indonesian Catholics also encouraged the occupation of Timor-Leste from 1975-1999. Despite brutal massacres in the territory, 'integration' was supported by the Church in Indonesia and not discouraged by leaders in Rome (Steenbrink 2015: 315). This complicity, horrifying as it may be, nevertheless reflects a commitment Florenese Catholics feel for their country. This heritage shows itself today in the proud nationalism displayed by Florenese Catholics–including PRR nuns.

While the anti-communist massacres were no longer a topic of everyday talk by the time of my fieldwork, the humanitarian crisis caused by the violence in Timor-Leste did occasionally arise. Many PRR nuns are from Timor or have family there–one of my

[20] In 1961, Pope John XXIII appointed the PRR's founder, Bishop Gabriel Manek, as Archbishop of Ende (another town in Flores) (Jebarus, Pr 2017: 163). Internal politics conspired against him and sometime afterward, he was accused of having an affair with the PRR nun who prepared his meals. Despite lack of evidence as well as stout eyewitness refusals, the accusations landed: Manek's health suffered and the nun was forced to retire her habit, although she managed to maintain her religious discipline and the respect of the PRR community. Manek was reassigned to the US to recover his health. While some of the PRR's earliest and oldest members remember him, it is the Dutch Sister Anfrida who most profoundly shaped the everyday patterns of current PRR life.

[21] As I left the field, many religious were beginning to take on the language of counter-terrorism, urging each other to embrace the spirit of a 'militant Church' (*Gereja militer).* There may be parallels to contemporary Indonesian state messaging.

In her work on state and Church relief agencies in Italy, Giordano (2014) looks at a similar phenomenon, observing how the Church 'translates' state idioms of care/control into religiously-salient language and values that drive ideology (what nuns think about migrant women recently removed from prostitution) and action (how they try to 'transform' the women and themselves).

earliest PRR friends had fled with her family over the border when she was a child. PRR nuns who were stationed in Timor-Leste at the time had memories of fleeing into west Timor, rosaries held aloft or clutched tightly in pockets. Convents in Flores took in refugees and nuns remembered the ashen faces they served; people separated permanently from their families ate their offerings of food in stricken silence. In the intervening years, the PRR have received many candidates from Timor-Leste, many of whom now work in Indonesia. In telling and receiving stories of the secession of Timor-Leste, critique of the state never emerged blatantly, but seemed to hover just beneath the surface. While nationalist feeling runs strong amongst (Indonesian) PRR nuns in particular and Florenese Catholics in general, moments like these reveal the dangers and frictions of being Catholic and peripheral in Indonesia. Similarly, they hint at the impact that company can have as nationalist PRR nuns enter into sisterhood with PRR nuns from former colonies.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS AN AGENT OF DEVELOPMENT

Violence aside, in Flores, the Catholic Church has long been the primary agent of development; building schools, churches, and other public works. In part, these emerged as part of explicit missions of evangelisation (Erb 2006; Molnar 1997: 396; Webb 1994). In most cases, however, they emerged as organized Catholic responses to the challenges of their own theology. These responses are often mistrusted by Indonesia's Muslim majority. Amongst Flores's native Catholic population (and even among most of its native Muslims), however, no such misapprehension appears. The historic conceptualization of the Church in Flores as aligned with the common people set a precedent for Florenese expectations of the Church's ethical role: for Church leaders to defend Catholics from and represent them to the predominantly Muslim state.[22] In Flores, the integration is such that the same person may occupy both a position of church authority and serve as a member of the government (Erb 2006).

The Church has maintained its position as primary developer in part thanks to its affiliation with the state, alignment with local elites, and active participation in the regimes of centralisation and standardisation that were components of burgeoning modernity in Indonesia (Prior 1988). During this time, the central Indonesian government took little interest in Flores and its development. With the fall of President Suharto and his New

[22] When the Church does not live up to this challenge, Erb notes, the Florenese may be critical of the individuals involved while still maintaining faith in the institution itself (Erb 2006, 220). This is a pattern I saw repeatedly on display among the PRR and other Florenese Catholics.

Order, a new programme of decentralisation emerged. The programme put more power in the hands of local governments, but it also paid more attention to developing the infrastructure of Indonesia's erstwhile margins, including Flores. This happened in part by allocating subsidies to local government (Aoki 2003). NTT is perennially reported to be among the poorest provinces in the country, second only to Papua, and perceived as an economic drain (Aoki 2003: 151–2). In recent years, the state government has targeted NTT for tourism development.[23] On Flores, its efforts have mainly been focused in the west, in and around Komodo National Park (Erb 2015).

The laity's experience with the Church's development projects happens in part through a locally-salient 'development theology'. This has meant that people in Flores expect the Church not only to side with them in matters of conflict with the state, but also to provide for their communal needs through development projects (Erb 2006).[24] The Church, the state, and other organizations often collude in Flores in projects of *sosialisasi,* or convincing locals to accept and practise new state policies. This reaches into all realms of life, including funerary practices (Molnar 1997: 402) and land ownership (Molnar 1998). I attended many events that demonstrated the integration of state, Church, and NGOs in matters of development, including a government workshop on nutrition in early childhood development[25] led by a Muslim civil servant in the local Catholic church (snacks and help provided by the PRR convent), a gathering of farmers from around Flores' eastern cape held in the convent and directed by an agricultural NGO, government *sosialisasi* on voting and anti-corruption also hosted by convents with programming delivered by NGO workers, and a network of Lamaholot weavers organized by a local NGO and facilitated by the convent for partnership with department stores in Jakarta's shopping malls.

Although the Church may no longer be the sole or even the dominant development agent or provider of social services in Flores (many in Larantuka credit current President Joko Widodo with upgrading their roads and bringing their islands electricity), it is still an important gatekeeper and partner. Its infrastructure—churches, youth halls, monasteries, schools and convents—often serve as the meeting rooms, the grounds in which people come together (into presence with each other) to socialise (Schut 2020) and to work out

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[23] 'Indonesia's Next Big Thing', announces 2019's *Lonely Planet Guide to Bali, Lombok, and Nusa Tenggara* (Maxwell et al. 2019: 348).

[24] Although there has been debate over the efficacy of such an approach it seems to have endeared the Florenese to the religious class (Erb 2006: 210–11)

[25] Based on the idea that Florenese suffer especially from nutrition-based stunting.

the questions of development that so concerns ordinary Florenese. The Church, then might be seen as the theatre through which development happens. And the persistent appearance of its ostentatious stagehands—nuns, working in clinics or fields—reinforces the image.

THE GENDERED ROLES OF CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS IN FLORES

The global Catholic Church is organized into several thousand ecclesiastical divisions, called dioceses, which are overseen by bishops. Flores is home to four and one of those, Larantuka, is home to the PRR. Dioceses house parishes, geographically-determined and each under the direction of its own priest. Parishes are the theological heart of Catholic social life.[26] In majority-Catholic Flores, where the parish church is also one of the primary locations for socialising (Schut 2020), the priest is a person of great significance; some even address him as 'lord' (*tuan*). Only priests can say Mass—the obligatory Sunday service—and administer the seven rites, called 'sacraments,' that form the backbone of Catholic religious practise. Besides seeing to the administration of these sacraments, priests are also responsible for tending to their people's spiritual wellbeing. Some parish priests have assistant priests to help them in their duties. Others stand as the sole tenders of large rural areas and spend much of their time travelling between villages to administer the sacraments, journeys which may leave little time to attend to villagers' welfare.

[26] 'Since Paul the Apostle', says Steenbrink (2015: 75).

Practising Catholics undergo at least five sacraments during the course of their lives: Baptism, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, and the Anointing of the Sick. The remaining two, Marriage and Religious Vows, are mutually exclusive– a person may not profess both. All sacraments must be administered by a Catholic priest, often involve a small administrative fee, and are logged on a person's certificate. This document is kept in the parish archives and must be copied and produced each time a person wants to receive a new sacrament. These sacraments are pivotal moments in the Florenese Catholic life cycle, which makes Catholic priests powerful arbiters of Catholic subjectivities.

In addition to being crucial parts of the Catholic lifecycle, the sacraments are causes for social celebrations. In Flores, for example, there is a season of Holy Eucharist feasting, in which the parents of all of the children[27] receiving the sacrament throw parties in honour of their children, serving special food (ideally pork, or better, dog).[28] At these times, neighbours and nuns travel from house to house, music blasting from a dozen rented speakers, to eat, dance, and give some token money to the child.[29] These parties and ones like it are important parts of social life in Flores and people are finely attuned to their economic repercussions and symbolic meanings (Schut 2020).

In their capacity as the sole administrators of 'religion,' then, priests also act as lords of sociality. Different priests acknowledge their situation in different ways.[30] Some actively embrace it: racing motorbikes, wearing gemstone rings, and otherwise cultivating a particular kind of masculine aesthetic.[31] Others blatantly resist it and try, rather fruitlessly, to educate the laity out of their hierarchical preferences. Most take a more nuanced, ambivalent approach and accept their role as an enormous responsibility: both a privilege and a burden.

Regardless, the priesthood remains, for this and other reasons (education, travel, etc), an appealing option for young Catholic men in Flores, 'although it is extremely difficult to achieve' (Aoki 2003: 156). Part of the difficulty lies in the economic requirements for

[27] First Communicants are usually in the fifth class, or between 10-12 years old.
[28] During First Communion Season, the nuns of Lewoina keep their dogs on a short leash, as they have been known to lose beloved animals to desperate parents.
[29] Usually around 5,000IDR or about 30p, but villagers joke about how people often tear a 2,000 note in half and give it to two children, to make their money go further.
[30] In a bitter critique of the Church's history in Flores, SVD priest and anthropologist, John Prior goes so far as to call the Florenese priesthood, 'cultic' (Prior 2011b: 320). Steenbrink is more modest, referring merely to 'a slightly growing clerical influence' (Steenbrink 2015: 240)
[31] Chladek (2021) presents another case in which regional masculinity intersects with male figures of religious power.

entering the seminary, although poor families are often able to find help from, for example, the PRR. The difficulty also lies in the demands of religious life: the rules, strictures, work, and temporality are not for everyone. Finally, the difficulty lies precisely in the priesthood's attractions. Those who train young men in the seminaries are acutely aware that many run to religious life as an escape from childhood trauma (see chapter five) and not as an answer to a deep-seated calling. Speaking with a formation leader for the island's most popular seminary, I learned that, of the previous year's ninety new recruits, they retained only a dozen.

Women are barred from becoming priests in the Catholic Church and so, are barred from the preeminent role of religious and social authority in Flores. But this does not mean that they are completely powerless. Women who choose to make religious vows and become Catholic nuns, for example, gain 'socio-ritual status' which usually trumps (although never eradicates) gender stratification (Howell 1996a). Although men may choose a parallel path—there are congregations of Brothers (*bruder*)—in Indonesia, it is a rarer and arguably more difficult decision, given the paths to greater power available to men in the priesthood. Although they are not the ministers of the sacraments, nuns are the pervasive presence of the Church in Flores, more ubiquitous and more recognisable in their habits than priests, who dress no different from other Indonesian men.

Much of the anthropological literature of Flores considers gender in terms of its structural import, especially gender roles in alliance. Allerton (2004), however, draws attention to the way intimacy and time change these structural roles, deepening and complicating relations. In time and in the course of marriage, a woman ceases to be a symbol of alliance and becomes a member of a house. In her discussion of gender, Howell argues that gender in Flores is not a fixed category. Rather, she argues, there are 'gendered modes of sociality' in Flores (Howell 1996a). With Howell's suggestion in mind, it is interesting to note PRR nuns' current insistence that they are 'women first and nuns second.' On first glance, this seems to contradict Howell's argument, claiming instead an essentialized version of gender, or at least femininity in Flores. Such a reading would help us understand PRR nuns' humility in the face of brothers, uncles and priests, but it does not help us explain how they—as they so frequently do—resist men's control. If we take a look at visions of 'womanhood' locally salient in Larantuka, however, we might see their persons not as occupying a position betwixt-and-between femininity and masculinity, but rather as playing with power within a feminine mode of sociality.

In Larantuka, femininity has a powerful exemplar in Tuan Ma and Reinha Rosari, two icons of the Virgin Mary that live in town. Local legend has it that a fisherman met a woman on the shore who, when asked her name, wrote 'I am the Queen of the Rosary' in the sand. The illiterate fisherman ran to find a priest to translate the words, but by the time they returned, the woman had turned into a statue—Mary in her form as Mater Dolorosa, mother of sorrows. The statue was kept and venerated, taken out only on Good Friday to appear before her devotees. Her position in the community became so important that the raja of Larantuka handed over his Portuguese staff to the figure, devoting his city to the guidance of the Virgin Mary (Andaya 2013). Andaya has argued that this story follows the pattern of 'stranger kings' so potent in the region, as outlined by Marshall Sahlins (1985), but with an important twist: the Virgin Mary is a woman.

In Catholic Southeast Asia, the figure of the Virgin Mary has often interpellated premodern conceptions of womanhood, ideas that have to do with the woman's body as the source of all human life (Andaya 2006; Schröter 2005: 321), simultaneously powerful creator and nurturing mother. Others have pointed to the ways in which Mary occupies many seemingly-contradictory roles, mastering many potent tropes: she is virgin and mother, handmaid and queen, human but especially graced (literally, by holding God in her body). In the modern era, Marian apparitions and miracles that happened across the globe continued to emphasize Mary's maternal womanhood in conjunction with her spiritual potency. It is precisely through her humble submission that she acts as the entry point for human salvation. Mary's intervention has not only redirected the Catholic Church, but has also altered the course of politics and nation-forming, perhaps most notably in the Philippines (de la Cruz 2015). Because she is so often characterized as a loving and understanding mother, a person whose primary role is to intercede on behalf of humankind, to plead people's case to a masculinely-figured God, Catholics around the world continue to relate to her with an intimacy and intensity that surpasses other spiritual relationships they may have, whether with God, ancestors, saints, or anyone else. Mary continues to be an extremely important person in Larantuka to this day. Through their name, work, and image, the PRR harness her power and authority.

If we consider Mary not to be occupying an ambivalently-gendered social position, but to model a gendered mode of sociality, then we begin to get a clearer idea of what gender means to PRR nuns: not a subject position, but a way of engaging with others. Importantly, Mary is not the only model for this sociality. In her work in Manggarai, Allerton dwells on the position of women who do not follow a traditional path of

marriage, relocation and childbearing, preferring to remain in their home villages. Their disinterest in marriage does not mitigate their gender identity at all; on the contrary it allows them to participate more in their other feminised relations: as sisters, aunts, and daughters. By continuing to be amongst their relations and to act–in gendered ways–Manggarai women maintain their socio-ritual connections to the rest of their community. To cut or lose these relations would make someone 'alone' or 'lonely' (Allerton 2007). When they claim that they are 'women first' PRR nuns claim that they have certain power over and obligations to their communities, relations rooted in gendered modes of action: of motherly care, yes, but also of active choice, of advocacy for women's rights and place that are not inherently tied to men.

The gendered mode of Florenese sociality extends to PRR work. Catholic religious work within the Church's development programmes falls along gendered lines. Historically, nuns in Indonesia, as elsewhere, have worked running schools, hospitals, and parish administration. Although the intervening decades have seen the general transference of these institutions to state or secular hands, the associations persist, not least because nuns still work in these areas.[32] The PRR administer several middle and secondary schools as well as many childcare centres. They run two large leprosy rehabilitation hospitals and a handful of health clinics. They work as teachers in several state-run schools, and serve bishops and parish priests as secretaries, treasurers, religious instructors and general administrators.

The PRR are motivated to undertake such demanding activities because of their determination to 'just begin'. Their modest tenacity allows the PRR to enter places and do work that no other organization does, thereby distinguishing them from other Catholic orders in the country. Indonesia hosts around ninety congregations[33] of Catholic nuns (Steenbrink 2015: 24) whose internal rule, style of dress, and daily activities vary only slightly from each other. Despite the subtle diversity, Indonesian Catholics often demonstrate impressive knowledge of the differences between religious orders. They gain this knowledge partially through intellectual pursuits and conversations, but chiefly through their own experiences with members of the different congregations. Catholic religious, both foreign and local have been a part of the social scene in Flores for going

[32] Nurses are also referred to as '*Sus*', an informal shortening of the word *Suster* by which Catholic nuns in Indonesia are properly addressed.

[33] 'Congregation' is the formal English term for organisations of Catholic religious and is translated in Indonesian as *konggregasi* or *tarekat*, the latter borrowed from the Arabic-cum-Indonesian term for Islamic mystical orders (Steenbrink 2015: 107). The PRR use both.

on five centuries. Over this impressive length of time, they have—through their development projects, moralising, and mere presence—shaped ideas about the nature of personhood and company in eastern Indonesia, ideas that many of the young women who will become PRR nuns inherit. It is to these ideas that I turn next.

Personhood and Company in Flores

The home base of both the PRR and this research is the regency (*kabupaten*) of Flores Timur, which includes the islands of Adonara and Solor as well as the eastern portion of Flores Island. Formerly, the regency also included the island of Lembata. These islands describe an area populated primarily by Lamaholot people who share similar languages and customs among them. The centre of Flores Timur is Larantuka, where schools, markets, religious orders and government offices concentrate. From Larantuka, people can catch a ferry to the provincial capital of Kupang, on the island of Timor. They can also catch one of the ferries that circumnavigate Indonesia, bringing people to Jakarta and Makassar.

People from Flores Timur, even those from outlying islands, will often say they are 'from Flores', only specifying if their interlocutor is familiar with the regency. Flores is divided into eight regencies. The regency divisions correspond roughly with the island's seven(ish) ethnic groups: Manggarai, Ngada, Nage and Keo (sometimes Nagekeo (Forth 2001)), Lio (sometimes Ende-Lio or Lio-Ende), Sikka, and Lamaholot. Each ethnic group has its own language and each language has many dialects and variations. Scholars and inhabitants of the region often comment that language can change dramatically from one village to the next.

The Florenese describe their island as a dragon: its tail in the west and its head rising to the east. Across its back is a spine of active and recently inactive volcanoes. The convent of Lewoina is located on the slope of one, Ile Mandiri (Mount Independence). Earthquakes and tsunamis occasionally hit the island. The neighbourhood of Lewoina, in fact, was established by people dislocated by the destructive mudslides and floods that one such event precipitated. Although many of the island's roads are what locals call 'broken' (*rusak*), regencies are linked by the well-kept trans-Flores highway which shoots its way along the spine of volcanoes. Ferries serve every major coastal town and small, privately owned buses carry people to the villages.

In multi-island Flores Timur, many people make their living by the sea (R. H. Barnes 1996). Driving along the coast at night, the sea is alight with what looks like stars: youth with electric torches scavenge the shallows while further asea, men in their single-outrigger canoes fish for bigger catch. Most meals in PRR convents consist of fish, starch (rice, cassava, maize, or banana), and cooked greens (often papaya, cassava or moringa leaves). There are many small-to-medium-sized enterprises for export of goods off the island. In Flores Timur, these range from a large fish-packaging centre to a local Indian migrant who would pay money for raw cashews. People also grow coconut, coffee, cacao, and spices for local consumption and export to off-island markets. During their harvest season, tarps spread with drying cloves or coffee is a common sight.

There are growing rates of out-migration from Flores (Allerton 2019: 210). Young people may seek work in Indonesia's urban hubs, or they may use them as launch sites for migration to Malaysia (Allerton 2019; Graham 2008) and the Philippines (Świtek 2014,

2016). In this, they participate in an Indonesian tradition of circular migration (*merantau*). Migrants are expected to return one day. In the meantime, they try to send remittances home, to support family and to facilitate the ritual life of their home communities. Simultaneously, they continue to constitute Flores as a 'landscape of movement' (Allerton 2013: 177), participating in a long history of identification with sea travel, which features in many origin stories in East Nusa Tenggara (R.H. Barnes 1996). Movement makes people belong to new places, creates social relations, and cultivates new company (Allerton 2013: 171–175).

Flores communities are largely dependent on agriculture, both for sustenance and for trade. While some parts of Flores, particularly the west, are lush and green, much of the island is arid. While many parts of Flores are able to grow rice in dry fields, this is extremely difficult in water-poor Flores Timur; traditional crops are maize and cassava. Families practice swidden agriculture, rotating plots for planting. Despite Indonesian state efforts to encourage (small) family planning, families in Indonesia continue to be fairly large.[34] Four children is normal and more is not uncommon. Parents I met fiercely insisted that boys and girls are valued equally.

Part of the work of making Indonesia a monotheistic nation required differentiating realms of 'religion' (*agama)* from 'custom' (*adat*). While the former refers to the six religions recognised in Indonesia in their orthodox expressions, the latter refers to traditional and customary practises. Despite the formal separation, in practice the relationship between *adat* and *agama* is more ambiguous and fraught for many Indonesians. *Adat* has to do with indigenous cosmology, with sacred objects of inheritance, with enchanted places, and with communal solidarity, all fields in which *agama* overlaps and intervenes. In Flores, people deal with the relationship in two ways. One is reflexive; Catholics in Flores examine each in light of the other, attempting to reconcile them by increasing the separation in place and practise (Molnar 1997; Schröter 1998).[35] The other is the incorporation of *adat* and *agama* into each other. This occurs with help from the theology of inculturation that the SVD helped propagate throughout Flores. This theology holds that all religious belief on earth is inherently expressed within and

[34] Nuns I knew sometimes protested that the state's family planning agenda unfairly targeted the poor and the religiously marginal (i.e., Florenese Catholics) in a barely-veiled effort at neo-colonial oppression.

[35] Schröter notes that during her time in Ngada, one of the ways *adat* was separated from *agama* was through official church representatives avoiding the *adat* parts of funeral practices, of the wake (*layat*). During my time in Flores Timur, however, nuns, brothers, and priests were common figures at homes during the period of *layat*. In fact, PRR nuns felt it would be rude to miss one and often endeavoured to at least send a representative from their convent, even in the busiest of times.

through a specific culture and that all cultures contain Christian truth within them. Through this idiom, traditional practises are sometimes 'discovered' to have been Catholic all along. Such practices are then safe to be integrated into Catholic ritual[36].

Often, both can be seen working simultaneously in Flores, as *adat* practises become incorporated into Catholic values and *agama* comes to influence the articulation of tradition. Following tradition leads to health and happiness (Allerton 2004). Power, sacrifice, and hierarchy figure strongly in the language both of ethnographies and of local people. These themes may be used in a more-or-less explicit, literal sense: sacrifice means killing an animal; personhood implies a hierarchy of humans and metaphysical beings, power means when one old man channels the ancestors. Simultaneously, they have metaphoric implications, especially for nuns, now removed from the once-familiar sphere of home and village. The nuns I worked with borrowed liberally from their diverse and varied traditions to construct a kind of working melange, a cosmopolitan collection, a strategic tessellation that shifted with every relation and every conversation and every movement, even in the body of one person, between one heartbeat and the next.

The PRR aim to elicit from each of their members a unique self with its own character, style, and abilities. These abilities are characterized as spiritual gifts, special talents that God endows upon a person. In Flores, some spiritual abilities, like ritual speech, arrive 'as a flash of inspiration' (Howell 1996a; Lewis 1988). Some power—the power to channel the spirits in Lio, for example—can pass from spirits to people in ritual (Howell 1996b). In other cases, spiritual power expands beyond ritual life, such as in the ability to walk safely in unfamiliar landscapes (Allerton 2013). Talents like these carry with them rights, but also responsibilities (Lewis 1988). Some spiritual abilities can be mastered through practise, but none can be conjured from nothing. Some people experience spiritual power only occasionally while others never do. How, why, and to whom this happens often mystifies, if not exactly surprises, people (Howell 1996b). These topics will be taken up in chapter six, where I discuss PRR excavations of character.

THE GREAT HOUSE

The PRR convent is not the first place where company begins to matter. Children in Flores are physically created through relations of accompaniment with their mothers,

[36] Although Barnes (1988, 1989) documents cases in which people re-perform customary rites outside the gaze of Catholic authorities, to ensure their success.

sometimes inheriting personality traits from the food their mothers crave, looks from images upon which their mothers gazed, or vocations from promises their parents made. Specifically, they are born into clans (*suku*)[37] and houses (*rumah*), terms liberally scattered through eastern Indonesian ethnography. Scholars of the region show how clans figure as primary actors (Kohl 1996), although individuals may together constitute the whole (Lewis 1988), each accepting faults and triumphs as their own (Barnes 1989; R. H. Barnes 1996: 397–8). In this loosely patriarchal area,[38] an elder man sits at the top of each family and lives in the family's great house. Typically, this is the eldest brother of an eldest brother. The clans and the families they embrace hold sway in eastern Indonesia through folds of intimate affection and mutual obligation. Hierarchy in Flores means that some people possess more power than others to assess and judge people's character (Lewis 1996; Smedal 1996). In Flores, people generally feel that the young must be subservient to the old, women must be subservient to men, and affines subservient to kin. This is a matter of practice and debate as much as an ideal.

Nuns, too, belong to houses and have obligations to their families that persist, albeit in an attenuated state, once they enter the convent. Where someone is 'from' typically refers to their 'origin point', that is, their father's clan's ancestral home. Thus, a nun born and raised in Java could be said to be 'from' Flores, if that is where her father's ancestral village lay. While the form of descent groups in this region shows great variation (R. H. Barnes 1996: 62; Modh 2013) and perhaps 'challenges the very cogency of the categories for

[37] Also called *marg* or *fam*, although these terms tend to refer more directly to surnames.

[38] There are some instances of matriliny (Schröter 2005)

themselves' (McKinnon 1991: 28), nuns tend to imagine their kinship systems as mostly patrilineal and patrilocal. A woman who marries leaves her natal home to join her husband's family. His family presents hers with a bride price; in western Flores, this is traditionally water buffalo, while in eastern Flores, this is elephant tusks.[39] Their children will belong to his house. From birth even, a girl may be imagined as someone who will one day leave (Allerton 2004: 342), the wealth from her marriage already anticipated.

Nuns, obviously and if all goes as hoped, do not marry. The matter of bride price figures as a common issue in the background of many nuns' calling stories. Their vocations may be summons from God, but they are negotiated in the company of the extended family. In these dramas of contention, the values of obligation, hierarchy, and reciprocity do battle with the values of affection, love, humility, and sacrifice. An uncle who objects to his niece's desire to enter religious life may be thwarted by a devoted brother who secretly steals her away to the convent. A father who objects to losing his beloved daughter may be opposed by his wife, who insists that it is their duty to God and to their family to 'offer up' (*mempersembahkan*) their daughter. Stories like these demonstrate the power that this first form of company has on nuns' formation in its intertwined exercise of obligation and affection. Home and family are, fortunately and for many nuns, places in which a girl is loved and nurtured. For nuns, the house often seems like 'a kind of second womb' (Allerton 2004: 342), not only–as Allerton means–in the protection it affords after birth, but in its metaphorical sense as a place from which they emerge into a new kind of life, and around which gathers her closest kin, her 'womb' family.

Because of the integral imaginaries of clan kinship and marriage in eastern Indonesia, future nuns form close relationships with their extended kin, especially on their mother's side. Lamaholot women, especially, gain a sense of themselves in which their personal narrative feeds into deeper histories of kinship, marriage, and migration. They grow to understand their place in the hierarchy, their inheritance from their ancestors, and the bonds of affection and obligation they are expected to nurture. These bonds enable them to experience a broad swathe of people as intimate kin, to consider their houses as their own homes, to solicit them for help, and to defer to their commands and advice. This is

[39] There are no elephants in Flores. Historians believe the tusks were introduced during the colonial period from India or Singapore by Muslim traders in exchange for spices and slaves (Barnes 1996: 100–3). The tusks are now in limited supply and many are kept enshrined as *adat* heirlooms in great houses, thus presenting a problem for wedding arrangements. I never saw one during my fieldwork, but then again, living with nuns, I was never present at a bridal negotiation. Modh (2013) argues that, in some parts of the island, the introduction of ivory transformed matrilineal systems to patrilineal. By the time of this study, however, patriliny was the norm for most PRR nuns.

the kind of kinship in which future nuns grow. The time they spend in the company of their extended kin accentuates both their sense of obligation and expectation while also deepening intimacies and exacerbating agonies.

The structure and the feeling of houses and family continue to operate in nuns' lives, both at the metaphoric and the affective levels. Nuns do not marry, but they do leave their homes, places where values of hierarchy and equality tug at each other, to enter a place where a similar tug plays out. PRR nuns—who all refer to each other as 'Sister'—try to cultivate a spirit of unity and sameness within a structure of hierarchy. In joining the PRR, a woman 'marries into' a new kind of 'clan', with a 'great house', and constituent 'homes' (*rumah)*. She enters a new family and is embraced by a new matrix of intimacy and obligation in a new feminine mode of sociality. She inherits new ancestors as well: the nuns who died before. In turn, the PRR acknowledges and honours the families who 'offer up' their daughters in speeches, visits, favours, and general regard. PRR nuns often treat the family of their fellow Sisters as their own.[40] The metaphor of 'family' is a self-conscious fiction underlined by friendship, as I discuss in chapter nine.

The parallels between their original company—families, clans, and houses—is not lost on PRR nuns. They consciously reflect on how the convent is like a house, the *komunitas* like a family, the congregation like a clan, the 'mother house' (*rumah induk*) like a 'great house', and becoming a nun like getting married. They also reflect on how it is different: how in

[40] Every so often, breakfast at Lewoina would be interrupted by a panicked revelation that Sister So-and-So's Mother's brother had been sitting on the convent steps and no one had received him, or dinner would be punctuated by nuns cooing over another Sister's younger sibling.

the convent you cannot behave like you are 'still in the village' (*masih di kampung)*, but rather must act within the moralised aesthetics and temporalities of the convent. They also reflect on the differences that inhere in the nature and quality of company, in the relationships nuns form as nuns versus those they formed as young women. Some of these differences are captured in the overlap of kinship and friendship. All of this demonstrates that the women who become nuns are already being formed in company—and in company of a particular kind, one consciously rooted in the particular idioms and emotions of kinship in eastern Indonesia.

EMBODYING FLORES

Because the congregation was founded in Flores Timur, and because the majority of its members are Lamaholot, nuns who join the PRR are expected to adapt to Lamaholot culture and inhabit its assumptions about personhood. Everyday Indonesian is peppered with Lamaholot interjections and, among the young, whole conversations, conversations which may leave their non-Lamaholot Sisters in the dark. The order encourages specific bodily practices and sometimes censures those who mis-perform, even though not all practises are explained to new candidates.

I talked about this phenomenon with Torajan-born[41] Sister Teodora one evening, as we stood on the Lewoina convent steps enjoying the warm air, the sound of the geckos, and the fact that nothing—at the moment—was happening. She mentioned her work as a

[41] Toraja is a place and an ethnic group on the island of Sulawesi.

teacher in the busy Javanese city of Surabaya. When I asked whether she enjoyed it, she sighed and said, 'like it or not, we've been assigned there, so…'[42]

'Yes', I replied, banking on the logic of sacrifice—the greater the suffering, the greater the service—to get my answer, 'but we should know our hearts anyway'.

'True', she admitted. 'Well, there are good things and bad things. Every *suku* in Indonesia has its own culture, its own character. When we go to a new place, we learn its ways. It's good if we are sent to work in many different places, because then we gain knowledge of many cultures'.

'In the beginning', I asked her., 'when you first became a nun, did you find it difficult to accustom yourself to Lamaholot coming from Toraja?'

'Yes,' she answered, 'there were lots of conflicts—cultural things that they do here that we don't do there. Here's one, very small: greeting people. Here they have the kiss-the-hand custom. We don't have that in Toraja! Once we were with the Bishop. All my friends kissed his hand, but not me. Everyone was shocked. They were like, 'what are you doing?!' I wasn't used to it, but I learned. My friends taught me. And in the formation convent, you learn all about etiquette (*etika*),[43] from the smallest things, to the most important. Like, they taught me, here, if you go walking with a man *(she gestures to me, like we're walking together. She's the man in this scenario*), the man must be on the right side. The idea is that, in NTT, the man is the… the man protects the … the older person protects the younger. It's a sign of that. But yeah, in the formation convent, you learn all kinds of etiquette. And then, when you go to another place, you must learn the etiquette they have there, which expands your knowledge'.

The conversation between myself and Sister Teodora, as it unfolded one warm, expectant evening in Larantuka suggests how the PRR's orientation towards proper nun behaviour has its roots in Florenese concepts of the person and her relative position to others. As Sister Teodora implies, other ways of being, other understandings of personhood, dwell in the bodies of new nuns and continue to motivate them throughout their lives, even as they learn how and when to suppress them. The details of different ways of being enter

[42] This phrase (*mau tidak mau*), common amongst PRR nuns, is also used by 'left-behind' children further west, in Lombok (Beazley et al. 2018).
[43] *Etika* technically means ethics. That the nuns use it for things that an English speaker might more generally categorise as 'etiquette' says a lot about the connection nuns make between the bodily habitus and morality. It also implies a form of ethics that is mutable, entirely contingent on cultural practice.

into nuns' habitus as a performative repertoire, forming and reforming her character, as will be discussed in chapter six.

Flores has not been immune to the national trend of characterizing difference as regional diversity in which some virtues feature at the heart of different regions and the ethnic groups that inhabit them (Kipp 1993). The nationalist categorisation of regions and ethnic groups 'have become forces in every villager's life, primarily through the agency of the school system and through a plethora of national holidays that require the participation of the populace in various ceremonial events' (McKinnon 1991: 10). Because of the relationship between state and Church authority in Flores, sketched above, nuns perpetuate these stereotypes as much as they are marginalized because of them. Visiting one of their schools, I enjoyed the bustle and pageantry as boy-girl pairs of students recreated from newspaper the regional costumes displayed on a Sukarno-era poster hung in the classroom, then announced some 'facts' about the culture and characteristics of people who wear such dress. They were also happy recipients: on Indonesian Independence Day, they cheered and clapped each other on the back when the representative from East Nusa Tenggara won the national prize for 'best traditional costume'.

Although their ideas about different ethnicities, their styles, and their characters are certainly influenced by national stereotypes, they are also built through personal experience with nuns from other places and their own movement around the country, and indeed the world. During my fieldwork, I often heard that people from Solor were

'rock-headed', from Manggarai 'pretty', from Sumatra 'gentle', from Papua 'temperamental' or 'uncivilized', from Timor 'strong' or 'talented sorcerers', and from Timor-Leste 'faithful'. Mostly, I heard these eastern Indonesian women passionately insist that, although they may be coarse, loud and aggressive, they were also honest, direct, and—crucially—quick to forgive. 'We may speak up, we may yell and fight, but when it's out, it's over' they would explain, contrasting themselves with the 'refined' Javanese who, they said, 'might be all sweet on the outside, but store (*simpan*) bad feeling in their hearts' and who may 'talk behind your back', even 'wound you' without the possibility for recourse.[44] This oft-repeated sentiment stemmed from personal experiences with a broader form of categorisation, that between the progressed people of modern urban centres, and the 'backwardness' of those believed to be at modernity's fringes (Dove 2011: 219; Tyson 2011: 656), often mapped onto the spectrum from refined (*halus/alus*) to coarse (*kasar*). PRR nuns internalised some of these categories, yet continued not only to protest against them, but to remain open to adapting their understandings of ethnic and regional difference.

The convent where I lived was under constant renovations, most of which were performed by three construction workers from Java. Sister Diana preferred hiring them to hiring 'our people' (i.e., Lamaholot) because of her feeling that Javanese workers 'knew how to work' whereas our neighbours would spend most of their work time smoking and drinking coffee. This was a point of contention not only for Sister Diana, but for other nuns, priests and monks trying to move along building projects. But the constant bashing of Lamaholot workers seemed to reflect poorly not only on the individuals passed over for hire, but also on Sister Diana and others who were also Lamaholot, internalising the kind of ethnic racism that kept them near the bottom of a chain of 'efficient workers' and 'good people'.[45]

Flexibility across national stereotypes suggests that there may be some Indonesians whose subjectivities owe more to the nation than to the region, island, or village in which they

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[44] Or, more positively, 'You know Sister Lucy from Java? She's so refined that when she was sent to Canada, she didn't know what to do, everyone slamming their doors in her face!' Diverse Indonesians employ the '*halus-kasar*' spectrum with effectively the same understanding of its application to personality, but with different views as to its value. Like Lamaholot nuns, the Dou Donggo of Sumbawa, are proud of their coarseness. Quick to anger, quick to forgive, they feel themselves more open than the reserved Javanese (Just 1991).

[45] Nick Long (2013) describes a similar phenomenon in Riau.

abide (Anderson 2006 [1983]; Boellstorff 2003). Indonesian subjectivities are not only influenced by national imaginaries, nor simply saturated in local concerns, but emerge through movement. Persons are constituted in conversation with their landscapes; their movement through place tie them to histories of kinship and spirituality. Sometimes this movement is intimately local (Allerton 2013; Bamford 2004; Retsikas 2007). Other times, this movement spans the archipelago through networks of trade and migration (Lindquist 2009; Rutherford 2003).

Categories for recognition, physical movement through landscapes, and embodied experiences with real people invite others into the self. Anthropologists have documented how Indonesians may be born with a 'spirit sibling', often embodied in the placenta, to whom one's life and fate are tied (Allerton 2013, 2019; Beatty 1999; Errington 1983) and who are sometimes referred to as a 'second self' (Just 1986: 231–2). This way of thinking about personhood as multiple represents the person as a product of relational action (Strathern 1988). Such an approach sits in productive tension with the 'opacity of other minds' theory salient in the Indo-Pacific wherein, far from being mutually understandable parts of a unified whole, other people are difficult-to-impossible to know (Robbins & Rumsey 2008).

This productive tension opens an aporia, an uncertain space of human vulnerability (Bubandt 2015). People may (or may not) be influenced internally by powers beyond themselves. In Catholic Flores, these influences are ambivalent. God and his agents may direct the course of a life, blessing circumstances and easing action. Equally, the unprotected may fall prey to sorcerers (*suanggi)* or free-roaming demons *(setan*),[46] precipitating an ongoing state of poor health. Opposed to casual sickness (*sakit)*, which has a fairly clear biomedical cause and a certain end date, being sickly (*sakit-sakit)* not only implies a sense of having chronic pain or illness, but typically connotes spiritual distress.

Nuns fear that young women are particularly vulnerable to attack because their mental defences are weak or fragile. Older nuns watch vigilantly for signs of 'emptiness', wandering thoughts, or engulfing emotions in their younger Sisters and wards. Young women, nuns suggest, are also vulnerable because they have not yet learned one of the convent's golden rules: thou shalt not get too attached. Intense attachment to another Sister—or indeed any other person—may lead to *sakit-sakit* when separation inevitably

[46] As part of their programme of inculturation, the SVD incorporated many kinds of Florenese spirits—of which there are many (Forth 1998)—into this single category (Molnar 1997: 397).

occurs. It is partially to prevent this from happening to its members that the PRR moves its nuns around so frequently, as I will discuss in chapter nine.

Others have suggested that young southeast Asian women's mental distress might be a form of expressing dissatisfaction in a context where there are few fora where their voices can be heard. In this frame, *sakit-sakit* becomes a mode of letting the body speak, and nuns' guard against it becomes a way of listening. Guarding against intense participation in fleeting sociality has parallels with the Javanese elevation of mindfulness (*éling)* as a state of being, a state which can be lost to the dramatic power of performance (Keeler 1987: 219–222). The fear that young women might be particularly vulnerable speaks at once to the disproportionate ability of company to move and form them and to their particular subject position in Indonesia's national moral-sexual context.

Indonesian personhood is construed and performed through entwined practises of sexuality, ritual, and gender. The performance of femininity in Indonesia is a matter of national concern, where 'purity, piety and prettiness are thus emblematic of the morality of the nation writ large' (Davies 2018). Islamic values and Muslim women form the focus of much of this concern (reasonably, given that close to 90% of the population is Muslim), setting the stage for national gender performance, even for non-Muslims. In Catholic Flores Timur, too, a 'woman's sexuality, reputation and her marriage prospects are the business of her kin' (Williams 2007: 58). Conventional categories of femininity open to them include performing as 'mothers of the nation' and performing as strongholds of tradition, learning to weave and wearing their craft. There is room for Indonesian women to manoeuvre; movement opens liminal spaces in which they can play with their identity. Separated from home and kin, women may push the bounds of conventional propriety and may envision alternate futures for themselves. These same liberating possibilities, however, contain within them the seeds of danger, for the physical, mental, or spiritual intrusion of others. Florenese women traveling alone, Williams notes, may scan the crowd for a nun—an anchor of safety… just in case (2007:87).

The danger falls not only in the area of sexual propriety, but also in the domain of company. As a body moves, it changes its spatial relation to others. A woman's physical distance from her 'household and kin' disrupt her, change her, and offer her new possibilities and dangers (Williams 2007). While shifts in space allow women to experiment with the moralities of different subject positions, shifts in company form her, changing the scope and effect of the possibilities she can imagine.

Inside and Outside

The danger occasioned by feminine vulnerability are premised on the notion of an interior self. This assumption is supported in Indonesia by a set of terms for the self that assert a sense of interiority manifesting in external expression, socially experienced. Islamic ideas have influenced Indonesian conceptions of personhood, across the archipelago. In his comparison of Islam in Indonesia and Morocco, Clifford Geertz (1995) notes the centrality of the terms *batin* and *zahir*, (or *lair* in Java, *lahir* in Indonesian actually means 'birth') that is the relationship between the inner domain and its outward expression. The relationship, for Javanese Islamic mystics as for Florenese Catholic nuns, is one of mutual formation 'of increasing spiritual strength in order to operate more effectively in the mundane sphere, a refinement of the inner life in order to purify the outer' (Geertz 1960: 275).

In some contexts, such as in the Riau islands, the terms *batin, roh,* and *jiwa* were sometimes used interchangeably to mean 'spirit', felt to be on the inside. At other times, however, the difference between the terms became the matter of concern and debate. 'Both composite and permeable', people may experience their internal selves as whole and unified, or else to be made of constituent parts that are not always in accord with each other and that do not always remain contained within the body (Long 2017: 716). A person's experience of herself may shift between these poles with circumstance occasioned by company.

Among the PRR, *jiwa* was commonly used for the human soul, although *roh* sometimes held a similar meaning in more intellectual contexts, typically capitalized (*Roh)* to mean the Holy Spirit. In common speech, however, the word *roh* stood for spirits that were markedly non-human and probably best avoided. In many places, the ideas of *jiwa* and *roh* are tied to religion, spirituality, or metaphysics. In a community whose relationship to religion is ambivalent, the terms come to stand in for subjectivity, subject position, identity (Boellstorff 2003). Such sets indicate the extent to which concepts of selfhood are shared across the archipelago and how they unite not only ideas about interiority/exteriority but also soul and *setan*, self and other.

This concept of inner and outer links otherwise diverse religious traditions: the linguistic moral universe of Islam, the meditative ascetic traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, and the evangelical service of Christianity. For PRR nuns, taking time to meditate or pray, to go on retreat were indeed ways to reconnect with their inner worlds so to purify their

outer, to strengthen their spirit so as to engage more fully with the world. This idea of inner and outer worlds, pulled from Islam, engaged in Catholicism, works for people as they put themselves in relation to God and to each other, but it also works towards their conception of what a person is, that is a person is something with an internal and an external being that are mutually constitutive, yet easily distinguished.

The everyday Indonesian word for self, *diri*, is most often heard in the form *sendiri*, meaning 'oneself,' but also, 'alone'. *Diri*, for the nuns was sometimes a container for emotions: 'I feel joy inside myself', sometimes a thing to be managed 'She ought to force herself a little!', sometimes a thing to be nurtured 'We must cultivate the self well so that when we encounter problems, we're able to overcome them'. 'Self', in Indonesian, is simultaneously an everyday term used loosely and a term used in the most serious parts of nuns' lives—their self-development as an effort to come closer to God and to develop a nun subjectivity. This latter part involves explicit introspection, ideas of individuality, and an ever-manifesting self that in some ways 'always was' and in others, 'will never be'.

While *diri* might be the most straightforward term to engage in an exploration of Indonesian personhood, it has not proved to be the most salient in anthropological analyses. A more common term—and the one around which this thesis is built—is *hati*. Although *hati* literally means 'liver', it operates metaphorically as the English word 'heart'. People will often press their chest when speaking of it, as Sister Teodora did when demonstrating where the Javanese hold their problems. Unni Wikan (1990) used the concept to show how the Balinese she knew were caught in a world in which the betrayal of inner thoughts and feelings could be fatal. Personhood for the Balinese, she showed, is melded with the management of hearts, of curbing cares that assault one at every turn so as not to be vulnerable to black magic that is ever-threatening.

For the nuns I knew, *hati* was sometimes a secret vessel to be spilled ('You, [Meghan Rose], can't come on retreat because the Sisters will be spilling (*curah*) their *hati*') and sometimes the essential measure of an individual ('She was harsh, but her *hati* was good'). The heart was the stage upon which the most intense emotional dramas were imprinted, the seat of closeness with others, the ground for all virtues, and the place in which God and the self could meet. 'Digging up the heart' (*menggali hati*) was the act by which self and other might be known and transformed. While the Islamic notion of *batin*, signifies a realm other than the present political (Smith 2014), locating the spring of personhood in the heart emphasizes the place of emotions and intuition in self-formation.

But *batin* isn't the only term to indicate one's inner world, even in an Islamic cosmology. In his kaleidoscopic account of Javanese religious expression, Andrew Beatty dwells on the term *rasa*,

> a complex word, somewhat analogous to the English word 'sense'. It means taste or bodily feeling, but also emotional feeling and awareness, inner meaning, and (in different mystical systems) various refractions of God in a human faculty or centre of consciousness … The different meanings of rasa are connected, physical sensation being but a crude, material form of the subtle inner life, a sign that there *is* inner life. (Beatty 1999: 165).

The concept has obvious importance for Beatty's informants across the island, who view *rasa* as the measure of truth, both moral and phenomenological, as well as the point of departure from which a person may understand others, the world around him, and God. The term also has profound implications for the nature of personhood: the opposition between inner and outer establishes a certain level of boundedness and individuality. At the same time *rasa* allows—demands—a certain interdependence. In its most basic connotation, 'taste' *rasa* serves as a perceptive bridge between persons, but also as an assertion of truth and reality. The interdependence inherent in *rasa* has a moral corollary: that of endeavouring for social harmony through conscious attempts at empathy. Thus, it has implications not only for what a person is, but also for what a person ought to be.

In my own fieldwork, any explicit sense of the mystical denominations of *rasa* were missing, yet people did use it for everything from the taste of a banana's sweetness, to the bitterness of disappointment, from an expression of someone else's feelings, to the confusion of one's own. I heard it most frequently in the phrase '*rasa bagaimana?!'* (lit: feel how?!) to imply a sense of anxiety or futility. For example, I was once in the village of one of the employees of Lewoina convent, Wendy who we will meet properly in chapter five. On my second or third evening sleeping in the village, her mother happily reported on the neighbours' curiosity:

'"She's easy", I told them, "She eats anything and she's not quiet! She likes to tell stories"'. Mortified, I began to apologise for talking so much, but the whole family jumped in, eager to cut me off.

'No, no!', they shouted, shaking their hands. Wendy's mother continued,

'No! It's better this way! If you're quiet, there's a *rasa* like,' she scraped at her breast, '*bagaimana*?'

Or, sitting around the table in the convent one day, we talked about nuns who quit and why. Sister Clara-Francesca told the story of her friend who joined a convent where 'there were so few nuns, that she *rasa bagaimana?* and left.'

It is possible that the confusion expressed in *rasa bagaimana* is a matter of interpreting one's inner world, but it also betrays how much that inner world relies on the acts of others and the atmospheres people engender between each other (Stewart 2010, 2011). The social *rasa* that Florenese women hope for is liveliness, an open, noisy, vibrant sociability (Allerton 2012; Schut 2020). Together, a company of nuns may cultivate liveliness as a 'domestic mood' (Gammeltoft 2018) that may pull members centripetally into its currents, providing a lens for interpreting experience, and a moral environment in which to become.

INFLUENCES

One of the challenges facing transnational religious subjects who come to hold positions of authority in other places is how to balance the respective influence of region, nation, and world religion. In this chapter, I have argued that these three strands of PRR selves weave together and rub against each other, offering flexible horizons for adaptation to other places and new directions for self-formation. This argument resonates with Anna Tsing's representation of 'the global' as the product of friction between different actors. In showing how Dayaks, national environmentalists, and international companies for resource extraction rubbed against each other in a particular time (and many places) to specific results, Tsing not only argues that the global does not merely inhere in the local, but also shows how the local is deeply involved in the creation of what we call 'the global'

(Tsing 2005). In her attention to 'connection across difference' in place, however, Tsing diverts attention from processes of transformation on the level of persons. My research, however, suggests that local, regional, and national influences produce productive frictions *within* Indonesian persons and that they do this through the committed co-presence of company. It is through the spirited bodies of other people that we meet the friction between different scales of identity-making. An answer to the question of how to balance different influences, then, must also contend with the immediate moral concerns brought about by being together.

In their communal lives together, PRR draw on their personal experiences of different Indonesian people and places to understand each other and to live together in harmony. Their experiences are bolstered by an ongoing integration of national themes and categories which they translate through the particular conjunctures of kinship, religion, and nation prevalent in Flores. While all nuns must adapt to some degree to the shared understandings of morality and personhood as they blossom in the convent, those who come from outside East Nusa Tenggara, and to a lesser extent, outside Flores Timur must make greater accommodations to cultural values and ways-of-being familiar in Flores. Once they leave the home base of Flores Timur, however, all nuns—from Flores Timur and elsewhere—must accommodate to other Indonesians in diverse communities.

They are helped in this by their connection to the nation's history and to global Catholicism. As described in this chapter, the Catholic Church has had a presence in Flores since the early sixteenth century, becoming a stronghold of Indonesian Catholic culture. Prominent Catholics played their part in Indonesia's independence movement, working hard to incorporate Catholicism into state recognition. In the ensuing decades, the Catholic Church in Indonesia consistently aligned with the state, rapidly developing a robust indigenous church. General political alignment with the state has positioned Church authorities well enough to occasionally intervene in defence of lay Catholics who remain a minority in Indonesia.

The Catholic Church throughout Indonesia, but especially in Flores, has been an agent of development. The characters so often populating its projects—schools, clinics, and hospitals—are Catholic nuns. Their continuing work in development throughout the country, as well as their direct relationships with Church officials, helps nuns stay abreast of national politics and introduces national themes into their awareness. A Catholic theology of inculturation helps them to accommodate to new places and people and

enables them to see and admire God's work in diverse cultural forms. While these features of their lives help them adapt, PRR nuns, most of whom are from East Nusa Tenggara tend to maintain their affective relationships to kin, as well as their notions of gender, house, and power taken on in their youth. These elements, mostly shared with each other, give their communal lives a distinctively Florenese quality, wherever they may be assigned.

The definition of personhood, the exact relationship between inside and outside, on the other hand, is more flexible. Even as they rely on known histories, shared values, and cultural logics to understand each other and grow together, nuns leave space for something more. Living in company, they discover (as perhaps we all do), reveals the limits of cultural logics for mutual understanding. The affective play of company pulls us into a mutual world, where people may act unexpectedly. Others elude us, yes, but we elude ourselves too and others may uncover us. Understanding and embracing this situation requires, amongst the PRR, a comfortable familiarity with infinitely unknowable mystery. It is to this mystery that I turn next.

CHAPTER 4: MYSTERY

…But a human being, *she implored*, is a mystery. If we look only at one side, we can't … we can't… *and her voice trailed off into the vastness of what we cannot know.*

…

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the role of mystery in the lives of PRR nuns as they strive—together—to be good nuns. In it, I suggest that nuns' communal lives, their embodied relationships with each other, are grounded in a theology of the world that assumes profound unknowability. With its roots in the divine, mystery nonetheless has direct implications for the mundane fibre of their relationships, subjectivities, and experience as nuns search for tangible manifestations of God in unexpected objects, events, and people.

Experiencing a world that is mysterious and unknowable encourages nuns to keep multiple possibilities in view when it comes to their knowledge of the divine, of others, of the self and of the relations in between. It likewise encourages nuns to engage each other with an expansive openness that is rooted in and indexes the divine. This open engagement—manifest from the moment you enter their world—is imaginative and playful, yet performative and persistent. In their conscious efforts to grow as a community, nuns sometimes tease, play-act and impersonate each other. At other times they join each other in acts of apparent piety—prayer, song, and ritual. They are never bothered when their impersonations fail to accurately represent the other nor do they

seem to notice when their prayers remain unanswered. This seeming indifference to answers, I suggest, is grounded in a way of being-in-the world that is aimed at inhabiting a mystery while respecting its nature as such.

Their search works recursively, leading them to an understanding of the person that is fundamentally unknowable. In this, they operate on an 'opacity of minds' theory, common in the Indo-Pacific. This theory of mind posits that others are fundamentally unknowable (Robbins & Rumsey 2008) as is one's own self (Bubandt 2015). Mutual understanding, then, demands creative, embodied approaches (Throop 2012). Work amongst the PRR, I suggest, brings to this conversation a way of approaching the unknown through a theology of mystery that is practised in company.

In his frontier-pushing reassessment of the Christian monastic tradition, Giorgio Agamben suggests that monasticism pursues 'a third thing' between and beyond rule and doctrine. For St. Francis, founder of the Franciscans and pioneer of Catholic religious orders active today this 'third thing' was following the form of Christ's life, to adhere to the ways as well as the spirit of Jesus as he lived on earth. But more than that, they were to adhere to his very being, to be—in a very literal way—his body on earth, a body whose purpose was towards 'use' by others (Agamben 2013).

The ontological mystery haunting this form-of-life is something that neither Francis nor Agamben manage to define (and I will not even attempt). It is enough for our purposes to see in these monastic beginnings the foundations of the PRR person as something ontologically alter, even to other Christian ways of being: 'a third thing' inhering in a deep mystery that has a body. The ontological underpinnings of a PRR nun constitute a mystery both in the sense that it is unknown to humans and that (contradictorily) that unknown thing is mystery itself.

In Catholicism, mystery is the means by which the Church articulates the narrative of Christian salvation: that God became man, suffered and died to redeem humankind. The Church calls this 'the mystery of faith' and positions it at the core of Christian identity. During every Mass, Catholics proclaim the mystery of faith, making this mystery part of their everyday (or every Sunday) lives. This overarching mystery also dwells in its pieces, in the events of Jesus's ministry, which are represented in the prayer of the rosary, a common prayer set throughout the Catholic world and a daily requirement for PRR nuns.

The theology of mystery, then, is structurally incorporated into everyday Catholic practice.[47]

Beyond formal doctrine and theological practice, however, the Catholic Church conceives of the human person as a mystery, known only, albeit fully, to God, 'the great knower' (*yang maha tahu)*. God's knowledge of a person is figured as an intimacy that surrounds a person, that puts a hand upon her, that knows the meaning of every unspoken word. 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me', writes the Psalmist, 'far too lofty for me to reach' (Ps 139). The person, in this theology, is a mystery, one known only to God, who is omnipresent and intimate. Approaching God, then, involves an approach to the self, and self-knowledge requires an approach to God-like intimacy. Within Catholic theology, God's otherness places him in a position of incomprehensibility to humans, just as his intimate knowledge of every person places him at the centre of their beings. When young women pledge themselves to religious life as part of the PRR, they commit to embodying and enacting this recursive, incomprehensible, intimate mystery, unknowable but already seated in their hearts. It is mystery in this sense that I will consider in this chapter.

In their efforts to become good and moral, PRR nuns consciously orient themselves towards communion with the mysteries mentioned above: the mystery that is God, the mystery of faith, and the mystery of self and other. Further to this, I argue that nuns move to commune with mystery itself, to hold it as a part of their being. Both aspects, I suggest, happen within and because of company. Nuns accommodate mystery in their efforts to be present with each other, to share 'togetherness'. Nuns approach mystery by learning to recognise God in each other and experience him in themselves. The mystery that God is an unknowable intimate extends to the persons of others—like God, fellow nuns are unknowable intimates, as is one's own self. The mystery of God's presence in the bodies of their fellows extends to their environment, indeed, the whole world, such that nuns can seek divinity in the most 'mundane' of places.

Mystery, as a fundamental ontological engagement that, for the PRR, elides the sacred and the mundane, appears most clearly when we compare two kinds of performances in their lives. Through prayer and play-acting, I argue, PRR nuns unify and differentiate themselves, crafting and characterizing their conjoined subjectivities as the embrace of a big mystery (God) through communion with little mysteries (each other). The nuns'

[47] In the Catholic Philippines, 'mysteries' also denote the days of mourning for the dead (Cannell 1999: 156–162).

performances—both silly and serious—originate in the body as it exists in company with others, as it moves before an audience. More than bond a community in laughter or enact a set of pre-determined religious rules, however, these performances betray a deep assumption about the nature of persons, relationships, and the world. It is one in which the world is more than enchanted; it is powered by mystery. For religious actors, whose intention is to approach this mystery as closely as possible, these underlying ontological assumptions about unknowability gain a prescient, even urgent meaning.

Nuns perform piety in order to become pious. They persist even when their efforts to connect do not create the communion they so desperately desire. They play-act with and as each other, making no comments about representational accuracy. As they have their own bodies, so too do they have their own personalities. Each nun's serious, playful, expansive engagement with the world inevitably meets with resistance: from places and things, from events and circumstance, from other people. Such resistance reinforces a belief in mystery and unknowability that is the very groundwork for personal engagement in the first place, as well as the open door for intersubjectivity. In this chapter, I convey how the deepest levels of life remain an open mystery. PRR nuns, most of whom feel irrevocably, undeniably called to commune with that mystery must grapple with the concept of pursuing communion with an unknowable thing. In this effort, they may tell you, they find their greatest earthly strength in each other. But more than that, it is through each other that they can—in some humble way—meet with the mystery they may never know.

Mystical musings aside, life as a PRR nun, however, does actually require quite a bit of knowledge about the nature of God. For these educated Catholic women, divinity is triune, all-knowing, intimate, and out of time. Such are the threads of their more philosophical reflections. They often masquerade as self-evident facts while being—rather transparently—perplexing mysteries. In the course of everyday life, however—while nuns are texting their friends, visiting the elderly, hosing down the pigs, or tallying the finances—the divine appears not in an episteme, as a set of facts to be believed, but rather as a being with which to be present. At some deep, very important level, becoming a good nun is less about knowledge of the divine than it is about an impossible communion with a mystery, about feeling something intangible, and expressing something unknowable. The core of PRR subjectivity and community, we might say, is sharing presence with a mystery.

Three vignettes:

*

Every day at three in the afternoon, the nuns pray the rosary. Today, heavy with the dream of rain that just won't come, Sister Mattelina leads the last decade. 'The fifth sorrowful mystery (*peristiwa*):[48] Jesus is laid in the tomb.' We raise our arms in the air, where they will stay, plastic rosaries dangling from twitching fingers, until the decade runs out—as Sister Mattelina intones in her mushy newcomer's accent, '…your kingdom come, your will be done…'

*

Night. From the bare, pulsing bulb above the dining table falls a mint-green moth. Against the chirping of night-peepers, it drops silently into the open glass of Sister Clara-Francesca, who, mid-story, stops to coo and—fishing it out—exclaim, 'He knew! He knew to come to me! He had a *feeling*'. She turns the tiny moth on her finger and says, 'It is always like that. They always know, the little animals, they always know to come to me. Because of my name'. The other nuns smile, entranced or indulgent. The moth flies away.

*

The bishop speaks to a room full of nuns and monks. It is sweltering. The men mop their brows, the women wave makeshift fans before their faces: prayer books, folded pieces of paper, the edge of the curtain. He says: 'We in Larantuka knew God before the Westerners arrived. We had Tuan Ma before they came. She was here with us and, through her, the Lord'. Afterward, Sister Yubilatia stands and asks why monastics must live in a state of uncertainty, unable to own their own land, reliant on the diocese, when everything could be taken out from under them at any moment. The bishop reminds her of the work she must do—Sister Yubilatia is teacher, headmistress, and treasurer of arguably the most popular middle school in Catholic Indonesia—whether she stands on solid ground… or not.

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[48] *Peristiwa* literally means event, happening, or phenomenon. The events reflected in the rosary are directed at a meditation on the mystery *(misteri)* of salvation.

IN THE WORLD

Anthropological attention to ethical self-formation (especially of women) has tended to focus on conscious reflective practice, technical body work and formal discipline (Gade 2004; Mahmood 2012). While it couldn't be clearer that nuns' ethical development relies on a system of formal routines of action and reflection (Lester 2005), it is also the case that the quality of PRR moral life is far more intersubjective and ineffable that such a description would suggest. For Catholic nuns, God is a complex and ultimately unknowable mystery, one that nuns feel intimately, despite its formal grandeur (Corwin 2014) (Corwin 2012a). Nuns, I suggest, experience that mystery both in the interior depths of their hearts and in their external relationships to each other. While this experience is possible because of and predicated on traditional religious ideals, it becomes possible through the immediacy of everyday encounters.

It also becomes possible through a particular attention to the world; perceiving the everyday as enchanted fills it with wonderful possibility and meaning (Scott 2016). When Sister Clara-Francesca notices a moth in her water glass, she interprets it through an open-ended belief that the divine moves intimately in the world. Her name, borrowed from the patron saint of animals, lends her an interpretive frame specific to this moment, but a more fundamental ontological presumption that the world is mysterious and unknowable makes her explanation plausible. During my time in Indonesian convents, I witnessed many such moments in which nuns turned a personalised attention to the divine in the world. One nun, on the brink of abandoning her vocation, interpreted a flip-flop washed up on the beach as an emblem of herself: seemingly alone, yet carried along by the great ocean of God's design. Others saw the divine in a rapid recovery from illness, in the hands of an excellent masseuse, or in a strange dream. They constantly looked for the divine in the little things and allowed for contradictory explanations to exist side-by-side. Importantly, they often consciously remarked on the ultimate unknowability of everything they could give an explanation for. Even the course of their own movements—the standard way for narrating their lives—was ultimately a mystery whose reasons could not be uncovered by human minds.

'Honestly', one senior told me, a short woman with a generous heart and a fierce expression, 'I don't know why I joined the PRR. Sometimes God has plans and we don't know them. We can't *possibly* understand why we ended up where we are, but he has already arranged it that way'. She puffed her chest and spoke as if to newly-created humans*:* 'You go here. This is for you'. Just as the divine must remain a mystery, so too

must a nun's internal self. Nuns' frequent efforts to 'dig up' and 'know' their hearts are themselves signs of this intimate mystery. Likewise, a nun's knowledge of another's heart, however she might interpret, must always be out of reach. These ungraspable mysteries become embodied and almost tangible in the expression of everyday emotions and objects: in a nun's receipt of the Eucharist or in an outburst of laughter. The ordinariness of these mysteries is part of what makes them mysteries. The body's materiality is the medium of mystery; it is the way that nuns can experience and commune with the divine.

Agamben's 'third thing', his 'form-of-life' is not the only scholarly acknowledgement of an ontological difference in monastic lives. Monastic ethnographies are littered with references to transformations of the self, for different forms of being: care as 'being-in-the-world' (Corwin 2014), 'two states of being' (Boylston 2012), and an authentic third option of femininity (Claussen 2001; Lester 2005). All of these suggest a difference between living as a layperson in the world and living as a religious. But does the difference have to do with ontological mystery? Or the totality of the institution and the nature of communal living? I suggest it might lie somewhere in the meeting point. In the last section of this chapter, I tell one more story, one that demonstrates the emergence of this engagement with the divine-as-mystery in the relationship between two people, through an uncanny sympathy.

INCULTURATION

Inculturation, as introduced in the previous chapter, is a piece of Catholic theology important in Flores because it served as the methodological principle of SVD, the mission order that most effectively converted the island. Cousin of the anthropological term

'enculturation', it maintains that religion is not culture-less but rather inherently cultured (Angrosino 1994; Barnes 1992; Crollius, S.I. 1978). It is based on a central theological mystery of Catholicism that God entered the world and became human. Because the world is constrained by matter and time and because all humans exist in culture, the incarnation of God also happened through culture, as did all of the religious developments that followed the Bible, the Church, the traditions. When divinity exists in the world, it inheres in culture, without which it could neither be expressed nor felt. It could not be present with people. How, when, why, and what that means is unknown. Which is why it is called a mystery.

This theological mystery has two important implications. First, every 'culture' manifests some part of God's being or expresses some portion of God's truth. When the bishop claims that Christianity came to Flores before the Christians, the theology of inculturation supports him. Second, rather than enforcing a particular style of Catholicism, Christian missionaries should first find and acknowledge the divinity within each 'culture'. You must, that is, learn the culture and assimilate yourself. In Flores, as elsewhere, the theology of inculturation was often used as a tool of conversion, one that cut, named, delineated indigenous practices in its reinterpretations (Allerton 2009). Anthropological accounts of world Catholicism have often dwelt on the practical ramifications of the theology of inculturation, of how Catholic forms have been indigenized, finessed or reappropriated to suit local cultural contexts (Cannell 1999; Chua 2012; Mayblin et al. 2017; Orta 2004).

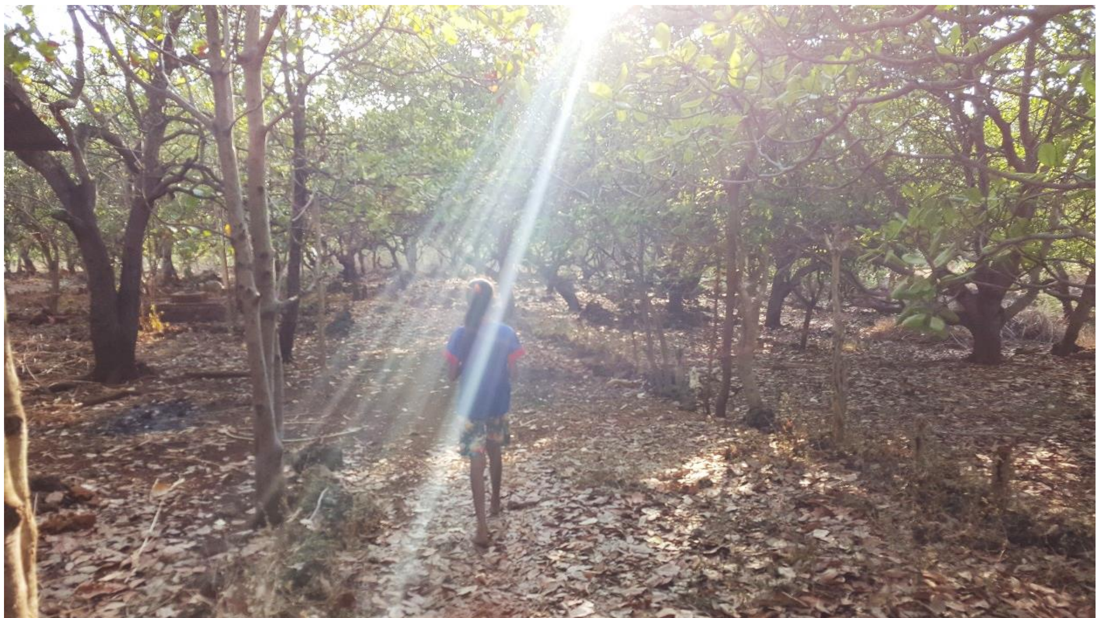
PRR nuns (ostensibly) are not trying to convert people, nor do they have the remit to do so. Although they may express admiration for displays of faith and devotion, they do not cast aspersions on the quality of people's faith. Instead, their use of inculturation theology leans closer to its anthropological cognate. Enculturation, the process by which a culture comes to dwell in a body, is a big part of what PRR nuns *do.* They go to a place and they attempt to adapt themselves to local ways of being.[49] The understanding they gain through this, they believe, is essential to form loving connections on common ground such that the divine can work through them and enter the community.

Through their embodiment of others' ways of being, I argue, PRR are trying to enculturate themselves to a mystery. As they move through their life-together—praying, eating, cleaning, fighting, talking, working, acting, dancing, laughing—they try to take

[49] Similar dispositions towards assimilation are widely spoken of in Indonesia as 'migrant culture' (*budaya merantau*) and are considered to be appropriate behaviour for citizens regardless of their religious affiliation.

notice of the divine that moves beyond their own wilful consciousness, making itself present in their very real, very human beings. In the sections that follow, I discuss three ways PRR nuns attempt to meet the divine: through prayer, through performance, and through the everyday world. As the last item in this list suggests, nuns' quest for a mysterious divine inevitably unfolds in the embrace of the mundane. In the subsections that follow, I present stories that may seem a bit oddly placed. I have chosen vignettes that may depart from conventional understandings of religious practice as a way to unpack how PRR nuns experience the divine through their bodies in company with others, how that experience is often both abstract and tangible, and how—despite near constant effort at communion—the divine remains a mystery. Perhaps the surprising thing is merely how nuns are content for it to remain so.

In Prayer



It was cashew season and tensions were high—the result of theft or the threat of theft or the fear of theft and the potential consequences for human life and capital throughout the scrappy regency of East Flores. We sat at lunch, the nuns and I, and talked of who stole how much from the Diaz's garden and whether they should expect vigilante justice. This conversation reminded the eldest nun, seventy-something Sister Nicola, of an event from her days as a novice and, in one of her rare but impressive feats of storytelling, told this one:

> Ai! Talk about cashew season! It once happened in Belakanggunung that someone was stealing the nuts of Lewotala. It got to the point of WAR! Yes, war! Horrible war! The two sides gathered in the land between them, in that football pitch, you know?

The other nuns nodded. They knew.

> They were ready (with spears? with bows and arrows?) but the priest ran in between them and held up his hands. He threw rocks to this side.

She mimed throwing rocks.

> To that side.

She mimed throwing rocks the other way.

> Ohhh, but they were too angry! And they were going to fight! So, the priest called a child and said, 'Quick! Run and get the Sisters!'[50] Why he thought to do that I have no idea. What he thought we could do, we who didn't have anything—couldn't *do* anything…? But we went! Not all of us went, some were scared and some cried and they stayed in. But us? We went out! We went right into the middle. Oh, they were fighting horribly! So much so, that Sister Carolinda was speared right in the thigh,

The others registered their shock and concern in an outburst of questions. Sister Nicola assured them:

> It was made of bamboo, so it didn't wound her. The priest was still throwing rocks at them, but they weren't stopping. And then one of us took up the prayer:

Here Sister Nicola swelled in her chair, and made the sign of the cross with all the brashness of Joan of Arc and spoke in a booming prayer voice:

> 'IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!!!!!' We prayed. And they stopped! We prayed the rosary and by the time we were done with one decade, there wasn't a man in sight. They had all gone. And that was the end of it.

The dual points of this story: prayer's ultimate power over danger and evil, and the gendering of prayer's power such that teenage girls can wield it over grown men in the throes of battle—even more than the Church's designated representative—were common motifs in nuns' stories. I often heard how PRR nuns fleeing Timor-Leste during the independence war faced Indonesian soldiers with prayers and rosaries aloft, saving busloads of people from certain massacre. I was often on boats caught in high waves or cross-currents straining against the sound of nuns' panicked Salve Reginas. PRR sisters

[50] 'The Sisters' in the place and at the time of Sister Nicola's story would have almost all been teenage girls.

and their lay neighbours believe that nuns have a 'special grace'. That their subject position allows them greater intimacy with the divine, one that encourages answers. Read through the anthropology of Christianity's media turn (Engelke 2010; Klassen 2007; Meyer 2010; Meyer & Moors 2006; Norget 2021), we might consider PRR nuns as mediums of the divine for the laity, bringing God into their everyday lives, as Tom Boylston and Alice Forbess have shown is the case for Orthodox religious (Boylston 2018; Forbess 2005). But as I argue here and in chapter eight, viewing PRR nuns as special media of divinity hides their own uncertainties and their own efforts to find the divine in others. It elides the workings of company.

Still, Catholics in Flores Timur—lay and religious alike—believe nuns to share a special closeness with God because of their prayer practice. In performing their prayer for the laity, nuns attempt to draw others into this intimacy. This performance fosters understanding of God and other that presents as an experience of intimacy, rather than a set of knowledge. But PRR nuns' pursuit of the divine through prayer is typically a lot less spectacular than their best stories represent. It looks much more like the techniques of self-discipline documented for women of other world religions like Islam (Gade 2004; Mahmood 2005) and Buddhism (Carbonnel 2009; Cook 2009; Muecke 2004).

Convent time is structured around prayer: it is one of the first major hurdles women must overcome when joining the congregation and, once learned, it remains in the body throughout a nun's life. Communal prayer happens daily at 4:30am, 12pm, 3pm, and 6pm (more or less; even nuns are on the flexible schedule known in eastern Indonesia as 'elastic time' (*jam karet*)). Nuns pray before and after every meal and every journey. They pray spontaneously at a bit of bad news and sometimes aloud while they work. They attend Mass daily and are regularly seen at other prayer rituals: wakes and funerals, baptisms and first communions, weddings and ordinations. Prayer—especially prayer in company—nuns would tell you, is their strength (*kekuatan*). A Sister who skips prayer (*malas doa)*, they feel, causes moral, spiritual, and subjective problems for both herself and her fellows. A nun who does not join in communal prayer is seen to be neglecting her relationship with God and therefore neglecting her calling. The problem that often seems more urgent, however, is that a nun who does not join in communal prayer threatens 'togetherness'.

PRR nuns maintain that prayer is the source of their energy and endurance, the means by which they can channel the divine to other people. It is also their strength in the sense that it is their particular domain, the hallmark of their identity. Nuns' prayer life follows

the structure of the Catholic Church's liturgy of the hours, which, in its full form, consists of seven prayers at set times throughout the day. PRR nuns typically do two to three. The prayer is chant-sung in set tunes and is standard amongst Catholic monastics. With nuns in Indonesia, I occasionally visited monasteries or seminaries and joined in the prayers of the men—identical to the prayers I joined every morning and evening in Lewoina. Identical, perhaps, save for the speed. Sometimes the nuns and I tripped over our tongues as we raced to keep up with the rapid pace of teenaged boys or jumped in too early over the languid pace of contemplative monks. These moments of friction emphasize the embodied and communal aspect of prayer, the way that it develops a particular pace, feel, and resonance in particular constellations of company. While we sang in Indonesian, the prayers follow the same tunes in all languages, uniting different Catholic religious communities in a chorus—an aural company—that spans the globe. It is one of this religion's techniques for cultivating a sense of unity and for approaching the mystery of God together.

Spiritual unity is to be found on a more experiential level as well, among and between the bodies of women gathered together in a chapel hushed against the chaos of the workday to join their voices in song and prayer. On a typical evening in our convent, the nuns and I would filter in, one by one, genuflect to the tabernacle, an adorned box that holds the already-consecrated Communion wafers, and sit in our regular places, one person per pew. The youngest would light the candles; usually this was Sister Mattelina, sometimes Sister Clara-Francesca and, on occasion, myself. Eventually—when the day's assigned leader was ready—prayer would start: stand. the sign of the cross, a hymn, a refrain, sit, a psalm, stand, refrain, etc. The psalms alternated across the central aisle: Sister Nicola would lead Sister Mattelina and I. Sister Diana and Sister Clara-Francesca would answer.

Although this form of prayer is generic, simple, and universal, it is complicated by dozens of tunes and special arrangements for feasts and holy days. To sing it requires the use of four different books and four times as many bookmarks. Because it is important to nuns to get it right and sing the proper tune, evening and morning prayers are often cut up by pauses, fluttering pages, false starts, whispered chastisements, and impatient seizures of power. It is also often marked by unstable voices, atonal harmonies, knowing glances, and shoulders shaking in silent laughter. It is, I mean, as much a matter of this world and these people as it is a matter of a universal pattern or a generic divinity. But the very specificity of these regular evenings of prayer could also figure an approach to divine mystery. A handful of nuns singing out-of-sync engenders a sense of intimacy. Nuns, in

these settings, come to see, hear, and participate in the ways each of them worships, the vocal path each takes to approach the mystery at their core. The mood as we left the chapel, blew out the candles, switched off the fans, and shut the doors, was typically one of quietude. It was a mood that lent itself—somewhere in the corridor between chapel and dining room—to the lively gladness typical of suppertime in a Florenese convent.

The spiritual communion that (sometimes, and only mysteriously) happens during evening prayer is magnified tenfold on special occasions when large numbers of nuns gather in a single place. For the nuns, these large numbers correlate with feelings of spiritual transcendence—a notion reinforced by the power of many bodies, many voices joined together. The chorus of nuns stuffed together in pews too small to hold them engenders a physical sound that carries with it a moral mood and a spiritual effervescence.

Lest I risk waxing lyrical, let me put this in more practical terms. On those regular convent nights, quiet and lovely and good in their own way, the small number of nuns that live in each PRR convent means that individual voices are almost always distinguishable. In a convent of four, only two will sit to each side during evening prayer, making it easy to hear differences in age, ability, volume, accent, timbre and tone. On those irregular occasions when many nuns gather in one place, distinguishing even one's own voice becomes nearly impossible. Instead, it fades into the rippling, thrumming sound of the whole, giving life to the common PRR refrain 'in the order, we become one' and giving lift to nuns' act of devotion. It soars above and beyond the scope of each individual and amplifies the existence of company. This particular nexus of self-in-company, prayer, and body manifests an affect inaccessible to individual nuns. The import of this affect is not, as it is for others (eg Hirschkind 2001), in learning proper ways to interpret, but rather in cultivating the opportunity to experience mystery.

For PRR nuns, prayer is an essential means of becoming who they are; Catholic nuns are, amongst other things, women who pray. Prayer is also a theologically-grounded way of approaching God, of cultivating a relationship with divinity, and with coming to understand the self. In performing their prayer for the laity, PRR nuns reinforce their local identities while also pulling others into intimacy with God. When nuns gather together in prayer, to recite the rosary or to chant the liturgy of the hours, they unite their personal relationships with God, making each other part of their approaches to mystery. When many PRR nuns gather in one place, their voices unite into one sound, powerfully felt. Even as prayer draws them closer to God and to each other, it remains premised on

mystery; its sounds and moods emphasize it, drawing attention to mystery itself, holding it as a central feature of their lives, refusing to resolve it.

In Play

Every Sunday morning, I travelled down the road from the convent where I lived to the *lansia*—the convent that served as the congregation's care home for elderly and ill sisters. I attended Mass with them in the corridor that served as their chapel and then later, after it was ritually consecrated, I joined them in their new building. Whether because local people loved the old nuns or because the obligatory Sunday Mass was an hour shorter at the *lansia* than anywhere else, the chapel was always full of locals, most of whom would accost each nun after Mass to take their wrinkled hands and press them to their noses in the customary Indonesian gesture of respect. Sometimes the nuns acted grumpy, others smiled fondly, but all enjoyed the attention.

That kind of behaviour is part of local Catholic etiquette, but it is also part of a broader Indonesian tradition of honouring one's elders and one's spiritual superiors. In many parts of Indonesia, people who are older are considered closer to 'the other side'—the mysterious world that comes after death such that growing close to the old can actually bring you closer to the invisible realm—that which is inevitable and unknown (Hollan & Wellenkamp 1996; Schiller 1997). PRR juniors view their elders with a modicum of slightly awkward respect that acknowledges the growing rift between them as seniors pass from this world to the next.

And, like many people the world round, PRR nuns view their elderly Sisters as people who need their care and their company. Which is why one August Sunday morning, I entered the sunny chapel to find the first four rows packed with the order's newest—and youngest—members. These were the postulants. Having not yet earned their veils and full-length habits, they sat prim and straight-backed: black silk bows tucked into their neatly-netted buns. A pair in front plucked at their guitars. A trio in back whispered in confusion. During the celebration, these young women, on the brink of devoting themselves to a mystery, filled the chapel with their voices: strong, and clear. Those gathered (myself included) exchanged surprised whispers, grateful to have one morning doused in the magical voices of the young, and not the creaky, off-kilter voices of the old.

Young nuns singing in church, what's so mysterious about that? Nothing really, I had seen this kind of thing a dozen times before. Nuns move frequently between convents and villages and music is a vital part of Catholic worship throughout Indonesia. And although their singing lifted the feel of the service, bringing it closer to PRR ideas of a moral mood in which the divine might be sensed, it was what happened afterward that pointed more directly to mystery in its ontological form between people. As usual, we—the nuns, priest, and I—made the slow procession from the chapel to the *lansia*'s dining room, the young sliding their elders into wheelchairs, or keeping a grip on their elbows as they limped up the concrete ramp. After eating (the postulants brought their own rice balls, so as not to cause anyone extra work), the excitement began. The postulants' formation leader announced that there was to be an *acara* performed by some of the postulants who had been practicing for several days. She sat down. One postulant demurely lifted a boombox into her lap and pressed play.

Down the corridor came four of her fellows, now completely divested of all nunly apparel. They wore pyjamas, mismatched socks and sarongs like capes. Their hair was pulled up in erratic pigtails. One wore sunglasses; another had smeared her face in chalk. They danced with wild abandon around the room, to the extreme delight of the elderly nuns, one of whom was immediately consumed by tears of laughter. The postulant with the boombox switched—primly—the music off and the actors stopped in place, whereupon they began to play-act. In the ensuing skit, two of the performing postulants hunched over and shuffled forward, barely moving, coughing, limping and complaining in slow, caustic tones about their various ailments: from toenail fungus to a lingering stroke. Their actual elders chuckled.

The other two performers approached the two 'elderly nuns' and, pretending to be schoolgirls, greeted them in cheery, high-pitched voices. The 'elders' pretended not to hear. The schoolgirls repeated their words, louder this time. The 'elders' still 'couldn't hear' and so the act repeated, volume rising each time until, inexplicably, and to uproarious laughter, both 'elders' collapsed onto the ground. The 'schoolgirls' struggled in comic pantomime to drag the 'elders' to their feet.

It took a minute or so, during which time, the members of the audience scrambled for another tissue to wipe tears of laughter or pointed and turned to each other, sharing the glee between them. The music restarted and the performers danced out, swirling their capes, twisting their wrists and jiggling their rears. The audience, laughing, applauded.

There are a lot of things going on in this vignette, but I wish to emphasize only a few. First, in case you were wondering whether this doesn't qualify as mocking the old to their faces, rest assured that it absolutely does. The young postulants bluntly mocked the fragility of both the elderly body (thus the falling) and the elderly character (thus the complaining). PRR nuns, as members of a 'working order' (as opposed to a contemplative order) are defined in part by their able bodies and positive outlooks. To suggest that elderly nuns are neither is, in a way, to strip them of an identity that they have worked so hard to achieve. This, in fact, is what the sick and elderly often feel and express in their melancholier moments: that having been robbed of their bodily and mental functionality,

they are no longer fully themselves. So why, in this moment, would the critique make them laugh?

The explanation lies in the way the live presence[51] of the young postulants—their future replacements—pointed to and made them feel a mystery lying between them, in their company. When the postulants perform their comedy of age, they are acknowledging the suffering that their older sisters endure. When they play the role of the young lifting the old off the ground, they likewise acknowledge and affirm their obligation to care for and support the elderly nuns. In a tacit and silly, yet powerful way, the young and the old participate in a dance of recognizing each other as members of a single kind.

As they age towards their elders, they will be forced to shed some pieces of themselves, bits of their dreams, desires, and customs. At the same time, they will continuously reshape the congregation's character, such that the organization itself transforms like a living being. In their play, the prospective nuns draw a mantle of kinship about them, echoing in their own youthful ways something that their elders often enunciate: that they are the future of the order. That, in a manner both mystical (because it involves the assimilation of spirts/selves to each other) and mechanical (because it involves the occupation of an explicit subject position), they will replace the ones who have gone before. It isn't ritual, exactly, but these performances effect for the PRR that spontaneous emergence of communal attachment and feeling that Victor Turner called communitas (Turner 1969). The kind of live, everyday plays that nuns perform for each other open up ways to enact the communion for which they strive *and* to embrace its impossibilities as embodied by other people.

The thing that makes this event powerful and the reason it is in this chapter, is that none of this is explicitly stated, nor can I even truly say it with confidence. It exists as a leap across a gap. As the juniors impersonate their seniors and the seniors take it with laughter, they move towards each other. In moving towards each other, they become themselves in a sense; in this case, the self and the other become subjects who are interchangeable, but only from a perspective out of time, which play lets nuns approximate. What is more, they build the kind of moral community that they desire, one in which communion with each other is possible through the mysterious movements of the divine.

[51] The grip of live presence has been written about and meditated on from the perspective of ethnographic presence (Behar 1998; Davis & Konner 2011), performance ethnography (Madison 2010; Smith 2001; Turner 1979), and empathy (Hollan & Throop 2011). Here, I bear them all in mind.

I say all of this not to undercut the frivolity of the moment. On the contrary, I want to emphasize that moral experience, the development of moral communities, and the expression of ethical action can occur in a mood of happiness (Walker & Kavedžija 2015). It is also to suggest that the particular magic of this moral movement dwells in its inexplicability. In the liveness of real presence. And because this kind of playacting happens all the time in PRR convents, I am tempted to attribute strategy to their ineffable playacting as they strive to develop moral communities. Likewise, I am compelled to understand mimicry—sometimes—as a bridge the gap between self and other—a gap that must remain ever present.

In Others

For PRR nuns, their ontological origin in a mysterious divinity often led them to shrug their shoulders at each other's behaviour. 'That's just the way she is. Let it be', they would say, but only as the anticlimactic conclusion to long debates, often stretched over days. Rather than expressing certainty about another's character, 'that's just the way she is' was an acknowledgement of incommensurability that should be 'let be'. When it came to living with each other, to knowing the contents of their interior selves, PRR sisters were comfortable living in fundamental uncertainty. At times, as their debates whirled and changed, stretched on, never ceasing to intrigue, it seemed they really enjoyed indeterminacy for its own sake.[52] And I grew to enjoy it too, this constant unresolvable theorizing about people's character, nature, psychology, and motivation. Yet the answer, always the subject of the conversations, was never the point, the excavation was; as if the more of their hearts they uncovered, the closer they drew to the core, infinite though it may be.

But there was another sense in which mystery figured into people's understandings of each other, their ability to live and serve together. The nuns I knew sometimes recognized—tentatively, a bit fearfully—that mysterious connections could arise between people, a closeness with unknown cause, of unknown meaning, and with unknown consequences. At its most mundane level, this mysterious connection between two people inspired nuns' admonitions that they ought not to get too close to any individual. Theologically, this hesitancy to form lasting bonds has its root that monastic lives are for 'common use' (Agamben 2013) and not for any one individual. Emotionally, nuns

[52] See Nils Bubandt (2015) for a different, less pleasant consequence of unresolvable debates.

protected each other. They knew—especially the older ones—that parting can be painful and that their lives are full of such events. But, as outlined in the previous chapter, there were mysterious underpinnings to this idea as well. Nuns who grew too close and were suddenly separated might sicken or waste away from sorrow. They may be drawn away from their work by thoughts of elsewhere. They might even lose their minds. And so older nuns prudently urged their younger sisters—as kindly as they could—not to rely on any one person, either spiritually or emotionally.

And nuns *could* guard against this kind of closeness. By splitting their time and stories between different people, they forestalled the ugliness of separating something welded together. There was another kind of closeness, however, for which nuns often could not account, except by a loose interpretation of the English word, *feeling*. Nuns used *feeling* often and easily, typically to describe something they knew but could not explain. Something they felt in their gut, eyes, or the surface or their skin. Something like a premonition or a sixth sense. And while individuals may be more or less prone to *feeling,* while the term might be used in more or less serious circumstances, *feeling* was stretched to its descriptive limits to describe the uncanny kind of bond that could spring up between two people independent of intention.

This quality of understanding between two people is rooted in mystery, and expresses that mystery more consistently and more powerfully than other forms. The importance of *feeling* came to my attention early on in fieldwork when Sister Clara-Francesca announced gleefully, but a little nervously, that such a bond existed between her self and mine. I was sceptical. Grateful, of course—I thought it was this enthusiastic nun's way of accepting me into their community, of *beginning* a relationship with me. The others had no reaction. Looking back, I think they were perhaps very mildly in agreement, but at the time I thought they were walking a line between humouring and censoring her.

My opinion changed and I started to feel a bit more removed from solid interpretive ground as the weeks went by. Sister Clara-Francesca would often find me to chat just when I was feeling lonely or turn up with mangoes just as I was going in search of a snack. She seemed to know before I did when I was tired or sick, suggesting I sleep or go to the clinic. Sometimes she started her sentences with, 'let me guess what you are thinking' and then spoke something uncannily like what had just been running through my mind. Other times we couldn't seem to understand each other at all. But still.

One night, I was writing late and thought I could do with some more tea, so I made my regular journey along the convent's corridors up to the wing where the nuns slept. It was perhaps ten or eleven, about the time nuns go off to sleep, so I thought the only person I would encounter would be elderly Sister Nicola as she watched her evening soap opera. Even then she probably would not notice me; safe to keep my mind on my thoughts, on the mountain of experiences to unravel into my laptop.

A voice, parodically deep— 'Step right up. Come right in'[53]—startled me out of myself. At the top of the short flight of stairs stood Sister Clara-Francesca, as though waiting, her arms spread in mock ritual. Creative and full of life, Sister Clara-Francesca often filled the convent with her talk, wonder and good humour. Seeing her, I began to smile, but felt my brow cinch as a memory came to the surface. 'Last night…' I started, but Sister Clara-Francesca beat me to it.

'Oh, last night you dreamt of me?' Her tone had changed completely from playful to vulnerable, guileless, and a bit serious. We sat down as one on a low wall and I told her how I had dreamt I communed with her ancestors—a fact I had only just remembered. I tell this story not to dwell on my own experiences of enculturating to a convent, but to touch on how its interpretation developed, so to demonstrate the depths of the unknown as they manifest intersubjectively.

In my dream Sister Clara-Francesca and I stood in a field talking to her ancestors over a microphone. They received me into their family. Sister Clara-Francesca was moved to a

[53] *Pana pae gawe gere* is a ritual phrase in Lamaholot that Sister Clara-Francesca knew from her youth.

new convent, which made her happy but not overly so, because it meant she would no longer be able to commune with her ancestors. She passed the mic to me and left. The world darkened. I became confused and scared the ancestors were angry with me. They revealed to me their family was originally not from their supposed hometown, but from another. I had awakened (I suddenly remembered) from this dream confused, thinking it was real. It was only when Sister Clara-Francesca appeared suddenly before me and spoke in jest those ritual words that I realized it was a dream.

Sister Nicola got a laugh out of that, but she took the ancestor part seriously. 'The ancestors can appear to us in dreams, and we ought to listen', she enigmatically advised me before turning back nonchalantly to the news. Sister Clara-Francesca and I talked about it for the rest of the evening.

'Some dreams are true' had been Sister Nicola's opening words. Sister Clara-Francesca even betrayed a glimmer of concern that she wasn't truly from her hometown.[54] After the events of the dream sunk in, however, she focused on the event of her moving. Thinking out loud, she started a sentence about how it is possible she could be moved in the coming months, but she cut that thought off by saying 'impossible' as she rubbed the side of her face thoughtfully. That thought was cut off in turn by a renewal of the thought that it was, in fact, possible, indeed, out of her hands. Her existential uncertainty burned bright for these few moments, before Sister Clara-Francesca gathered herself and explained in her unique way of pronouncing fact as if she were its author:

> 'Some dreams are true but some are reversed. For example, you dreamt I moved, and it could very well be that in these coming months I'll be moved to another convent in another place, but it could also be that I'll just be here extra-long. Reversed.'

She had me download a dream dictionary app on my phone and instructed me to look up 'microphone'. The entry revealed that if you dream of speaking into a microphone, you will be given the opportunity to relieve the feelings in your heart. Sister Clara-Francesca interpreted this as meaning that her ancestors do not want me to be sad, especially if she moves, but rather want my heart to be light. Perhaps, she mused, I ought to heed the warning, given the connection and ensuing closeness between us.

The next day, Sister Clara-Francesca told the story to several other nuns, amusing all. While we were all out running errands, she held me back in front of a shop so we could

[54] Remembering that nuns consider themselves 'from' the place their ancestors belonged.

talk about it more. She gathered that the fact that she left the world of the dream meant that—if she were to be moved—it must be somewhere far away. She wondered if the fact of the world turning dark after she left was a sign of her being moved to 'somewhere dark', like Africa, an interpretation that revealed the extent to which neo-colonial racist associations had been incorporated into her understanding of place and others.

Later at the dinner table, we mused over the dream again, finally reaching towards its imbrication in the everyday: Why would it be that *she* would enter *my* dreams? The conversation wandered as nuns offered ideas, settled on none, and eventually lost interest. We spoke of other things. As supper drew to a close and the stories turned to more practical matters, I caught Sister Clara-Francesca staring at me.

'You're trying to guess what I'm thinking', I told her. She laughed and confessed she was.

'I know what you're thinking sometimes. I know when you're sleepy and when you're confused. I can tell from your face.'

Then, as I began my private musings about how communal life attunes you to the idiosyncrasies of other people's bodies, expressions, and emotions, Sister Diana intervened:

'It's not because of her face', she explained. 'It's because there's a sameness inside you. You share something. You fit. Something is the same'.

Of course—and this is really my point in telling this story—that something was never discovered, nor was it really pursued. Rather, it existed as a mystery: something unknowable to experience and of which to be wary.

'Fitting' (*cocok*) and 'sameness' (*sama*) are everyday words in Indonesia that, amongst the nuns of Flores Timur gain an elevation in meaning in being applied to the essence of individuals. Nuns might 'not fit' with each other because they struggle to 'meet,' communicate, or keep the same schedule. Nuns might 'not fit' certain work because they lack the virtues required to carry it out. This mis-fit is apprehended as differences in personality and style (discussed in chapter six), essentialising action into personhood. Nuns might identify a 'fit' because of serendipity: two people share a birthday ten years apart or two lovers were sent to each other by God. Together, the words carry connotations both of complementarity and identity, as such they unite divisions of outside and inside. Summoned into being through the notice of others, they elude a

politics of recognition because they do not require the participants to agree or to know the cause. Rooted in the body, they rather evoke a *feeling* that holds its mystery while having practical applications.

CONCLUSION

In 'the Madness of Mothers,' Maya Mayblin examines how Catholics in northeast Brazil debate the nature of the divine in the world. These debates, which are ostensibly about good and bad mothering and its effects on children, are actually explorations of love as a theological concept, one that has profound ontological implications. The fact that these explorations emerge as debates implies that, for Mayblin's interlocutors, solving the mystery is not only urgent, but possible. That is, for Catholic Brazilians, mystery performs as a sign of truth (Mayblin 2012). For PRR nuns, however, whose conversations often spiral outwards, who rarely settle on a single explanation, mystery is an ontological premise.

The unknowability of mystery leads me to a final observation, one that I will revisit in this thesis' conclusion. The place of mystery in PRR lives, I suggest, links Indo-Pacific epistemologies of the opacity of other minds with concerns in anthropological methods that dwell on the limits of interpersonal understanding (Throop 2012). Following PRR theories and experiences of mystery as well as the moral obligations they place upon a person, I add my voice to those suggesting that keeping faith with other people sometimes means respecting their otherness. Respectful distance paradoxically implies a limit to the

possibility of intersubjectivity even as it suggests that change is out of one person's control. Rather than proposing a form of methodological ethics, however, I have presented material to show how an existential embrace of mystery provides the groundwork for morality as our own unknowability to ourselves opens us to humility and forgiveness towards the other (Butler 2001).

In this chapter, I have addressed the mystery that, I argue. underpins PRR lives, lifting up the ordinary and driving them to seek closeness with unknowable others. I have shown how nuns engage with a Catholic theology of inculturation to notice and feel the divine in their everyday lives. As they foster a close relationship with God through prayer, they also endeavour to see divinity in the everyday and—crucially—in each other. Being in company, then, is one important way by which nuns come to experience the divine. In fostering relationships with each other, they foster relationships with God who, it is hoped, lives among them, filling their 'togetherness' with his presence. Because 'togetherness' and a relationship with God are important parts of nuns' moral subjectivities, trying to approach the mystery of the other is, in part, a moral act. By seeking evidence of the divine in each other, nuns actively extend the transcendent experiences that emerge in contemplative moments of prayer and ritual into their everyday, helping them navigate values of company that might otherwise remain mysteries (Robbins 2016).

I have argued here that mystery, while not solvable, is approachable, suggesting that nuns approach the mystery of God through their prayer life and approach the mystery of each other through playful performance. I have also shown how, sometimes, mystery emerges not as knowledge to be solved, but as relationships to be experienced. People in Flores Timur, including nuns, sometimes manifest a mysterious 'sameness' or 'fitting' between themselves and certain others. Although it has no explanation, no basis in cultural logics, it is also not, I argue, without roots. The feeling of sameness arises only in the midst of company, of shared presence and moral commitments. If, as Thomas Csordas contends, 'the problem of subjectivity is that we are never completely ourselves, and the problem of intersubjectivity is that we are never completely in accord with others' (2004: 163), then company, I argue, provides the bridge.

Company allows for, causes, and even demands an embodied approach to alterity, an 'asymptote of the ineffable' (Csordas 2004). The metaphor works in both directions: nuns approach the divine through each other, encountering its ultimate otherness. Likewise,

they approach each other (and themselves) through the divine—as they feel it, experientially and theologically, to move in them. Again, they encounter in each other (and in themselves) an ultimate otherness characterized as mystery. The presence of company, however, (usually) prevents this paradox from becoming overwhelming: by sharing their otherness through narrative, performance and prayer, nuns position the approach, and not the ontological state, at the centre of their lives. Mystery, therefore, acts not only as the 'phenomenological kernel' of their existence, but also as the enlivening method by which they form themselves in company with each other.

This chapter has dealt primarily with an affective quality of mystery as 'enlivening' or 'lifting up', but mystery may generate wariness as much as wonder. The questions of evil and witchcraft, of demons and madness, and the doubt they inspire always threaten PRR company. The mystery of sameness might be made possible by mysteries that make some people more vulnerable than others. Sister Clara-Francesca, for example, was known to become attached to people and be easily influenced. The next chapter discusses one form of 'bad' mystery and shows exactly how PRR nuns apprehend it, turning it to a mode of self-formation and other-understanding through the workings of company.

CHAPTER 5: TRAUMA

One afternoon, I was wrested from my thoughts by the sound of a young woman screaming. The sound came—and kept coming—from the chapel where the postulants were meditating. Alarmed, I asked the nuns in the corridor what was happening, and was quickly assured that everything was fine. Someone had just 'dug up' (*menggali*) something in her heart, something she may not have known about, but which clearly had the power to cause her immense anguish.

Nuns often told me that, in their training, they are taught to dive deep into themselves and to uncover every issue in their lives, even from before they were born, when they were still in their mothers' wombs. Wounds (*luka*) they did not know existed and trauma (*trauma)* they did not know they had will present themselves in moments of meditation like this one. It is not uncommon for the discovery to prompt the young to scream, cry, faint, thrash, or talk themselves senseless. If this happens, nuns say, they must be left alone, until everything is out.

…

This chapter is about the ways nuns talk about *trauma* as something that all humans sustain, its effects on the self as it forms towards its Christian ideal, and how its causes are rooted in company. In their reflections on *trauma*, PRR nuns combine contemporary psychological connotations of the word's use in English with its original meaning in

Greek: 'wound'. The ethnographic literature on trauma has straddled the line between seeing trauma as an objective category and seeing it as always bound by culture, sometimes capturing both perspectives within the same argument (Grayman et al. 2009). One thing that has emerged from this ambivalence is that, although there may be something universal about the psychology of human suffering, it is always expressed through culture. People in different places take up the language of transnational psychology in different ways, as has been neatly argued by Catherine Smith, from whom I take a lead. In her work on the localisation of trauma in Aceh, Indonesia, Smith suggests that we 'examine how these globalised medical-moral discourses become localised in particular settings and come to influence the ways that our interlocutors themselves understand and seek to recover from suffering' (2018: 18). Smith's interlocutors domesticate the foreign word 'trauma', fleshing it out and putting it to work healing their communities in the wake of the 2004 tsunami and years of warfare with the Indonesian state.

Smith positions her work as an intervention in the anthropology of violence, arguing compellingly for anthropologists to attend to the moral and political work people do to recover from violence in post-conflict settings. This positioning reflects the situation in her own fieldsite, a place wracked by violence for generations, but it also indicates the extent to which trauma is often connected in the literature to an objective understanding of conflict and violence. Here, I want to offer a permutation: by temporarily suspending objective assumptions about trauma's origins in 'events that push people to the very edges of their own existence' (Lester 2013: 753) we might discover ways in which trauma instead sits in the heart of human existence. Trauma in post-conflict and clinical settings is often seen to manifest in 'signs of abnormality that psychosocial and social recovery programs [seek] to remedy in order to ensure the return to the normal state of mental health and peace' (Bubandt 2012: 15–16).

What might it mean for trauma to, instead, become characterized as a normal part of human experience and subjectivity? While Smith's interlocutors employ the concept of *trauma* to understand suffering and thereby recover themselves, PRR nuns use *trauma* as a way of understanding the self, thereby reinterpreting it as a thing that suffers. Following the localisation of trauma, then, may lead us not only to a better grasp of suffering, but also to the nature of personhood and the meaning of human experience.

Amongst the PRR, *trauma* is not the disturbing result of violent conflict, but rather a hidden aspect of human existence. Because it is hidden, it is difficult to see its workings on the self. What is needed is excavation, is digging up the repressed and denied issues and events that stow away in the heart. Digging up *trauma* from the heart is a profoundly social event, curated by other nuns, experienced in the midst of others, and directed towards the flourishing of the convent. The people surrounding a nun have a profound effect on her religious development and self-discovery. Convents are small households, intimate communities that are experienced as families. A nun cannot choose her company, but must instead learn to live with them. Knowing the basic outlines of other people's *trauma* can help her to understand and sympathise with them in the best of times—deal with and manage them in others.

The link between the mental state of nuns and the flourishing of the convent intersects with Indonesian concerns about human development. Excavating the heart to uncover *trauma* is one way in which the double weave of these Indonesian religious selves emerges, suggesting how a person becomes herself in the company of others and how she in turn directs the 'feel' of that company, its moods and its moral texture. From one direction run the threads of religious development as an effort of the individual self. Religious life is hard enough, the idea goes, and a woman who does not know herself will not be able to endure it. Meditation, reflection and prayer are critical practices to obtain self-knowledge, gained both through direct, embodied 'conversation' with God and through a more psychologised kind of introspection.

In line with Catholic teaching, nuns believe that every person has a vocation to which they are called by God: religious, married, or single life. Tellingly, all have to do with the kinds of binding relations into which a person enters and through which she lives her life. Although many may attempt it, not everyone is called to religious life. Psychological *trauma* can disguise itself as a vocation and established Catholic religious fear that many enter religious life to 'escape' something in their past. Escape is not a good ground for religious life, they say, so candidates need to reckon with their reason for joining and discern whether it hides a religious calling—or merely masquerades as one.

The excavation of *trauma* is a fundamental training method of most Catholic religious orders in Indonesia, inspired by transnational psychological research and national discourses that move throughout Indonesia. The kind of *trauma* that young women discover is, likewise, specific to the region of eastern Indonesia, where girls are occasionally equated with bride price, where parents sometimes spend long stretches working abroad, and where children's labour is often critical to family survival. *Trauma*, in eastern Indonesia, is gendered in specific ways, ways that relate to the structured aspects of inequality and gender relations in the region discussed in chapter three. The sheer ubiquity of *trauma* amongst PRR nuns, the way it resonates with their interior experiences may itself have to do with the position young women are traditionally placed in in their homes, positions of quiet service, obeying orders, keeping house, and voicing no complaint—obligations from which young men are almost entirely free (Schut 2020: 475).

The PRR's adoption and use of the English word 'trauma' is part of a global picture. Psychological terms are circulating and being adopted in ways that leave slightly different traces in different places while simultaneously, through their very transnationality, suggesting that humans everywhere experience distress in ways that may be roughly, if not entirely, comparable. The globalisation of a medical definition of trauma, while helpful for many, has also shaped the way personhood is defined (Hacking 1995). It has 'informed how violence is acknowledged and disavowed on a societal or even a global level… acknowledging some forms of suffering while silencing others' (Smith 2018: 12). In an analysis of the way *trauma* is used in post-conflict Maluku, Bubandt writes that trauma 'is one of the master tropes of a psychological notion of the self' (Bubandt 2012: 14). The attributes of trauma listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association—which have been subject to change and debate since their inception—continue to stand as a measure of assessment in international aid projects in post-conflict settings. Their introduction prompts new ways of experiencing,

interpreting and defining the self (Smith 2018: 8–15). On global stages, people who have lived through conflict are made to produce 'trauma narratives' to gain citizenship or access aid, which often leads to further marginalisation (Smith 2018: 14). In claiming this narrative, a person must cede part of their agency, lose their sense of control, and locate the origin of their suffering in events recognised by authorities (Giordano 2014). Medical diagnoses of incurable, chronic mental illness have implications for subjectivity, altering the way a person is interpreted, and whether they are seen to have the capacity to act at all (Martin 2007).

'Trauma' takes a psychological view of the effects of violent conflict on the self. In so doing, it shifts responsibility off an individual and locates it instead in social action. It purports a view of self-formation in which a person is vulnerable to things 'outside' herself and a view of the self that incorporates experience into future action through its uncontrollable effects on the (embodied) mind. The term points to a condition of suffering whose cause is not immediately discernible, that transcends time, place and person, and demands a method of care that addresses the present, while holding the past. Most importantly, 'trauma' emphasizes the sociality of life and suffering, revealing the extent to which we are formed by others. The experience of trauma—or perhaps the experience of interpreting experience as trauma—is one of sensing 'I am wounded, and I find that the wound itself testifies to the fact that I am impressionable, given over to the Other in ways that I cannot fully predict or control' (Butler 2001: 37).

In places, like Indonesia, where trauma is generally thought to be curable (Siegel 1998; Smith 2018; Tol et al. 2010) the term has other implications for subjectivity. Rather than placing an individual in a subject position from which there is no escape, trauma in these settings becomes part of the processual fabric of the self, something that matters, but may pass, something that is formative, if not permanent.

Curable or not, it is so in fundamentally social ways. Trauma remains the purview of others: others inflict it and others may relieve it. It also implicates the social in its creation, becoming a way to talk about and to critique mass violence and structural inequalities (Bubandt 2012; Smith 2018). A person suffering from trauma can invoke its name, summoning the aid and understanding of others in their company through its power to gain recognition for mental distress. Equally, however, others may do it for her, naming her trauma before she suspects its existence. Invoking trauma summons the intervention of others, enjoining moral censure and compelling ethical action of empathy,

understanding and care. This action that takes form in company—through intersubjective encounters and through emotional atmospheres. Because it comes from others and can be named by others, trauma is open to authoritative interpretation and redirection. This is what happens when PRR candidates are taught that, contrary to what they may have believed to be true, they bring *trauma* along with them in their hearts. But the logics of trauma, also allow for a less directed, more communal form of intervention. By effusing certain kinds of moods together, companies of nuns may hold each other in safety or may exacerbate each other's suffering.

In this chapter, I will cover three aspects of *trauma* in the self-formation of PRR Sisters. First, I recount the journey that the term has taken to land among an order of Catholic nuns in eastern Indonesia. Second, I discuss the family as the source of personal *trauma*, demonstrating how this links to broader eastern Indonesian values as well as political-economic flows. Finally, I turn to the treatment of *trauma* within the convent, reflecting on the role of company in an individual's self-making.

TRAUMA AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION

As Smith (2018) observes, trauma usually figures in the anthropological literature as an event,[55] the kind of outside thing that happens to a few, in war, in abuse, in natural

[55] This is not necessarily the case in other social sciences. For example, there is work in psychology and education suggesting that PTSD may be endemic amongst LGBTQ+ populations because of social stigma, bullying, and other environmental factors (Misawa 2010).

disaster. PRR nuns, however, believe that *trauma* is an internal wound sustained by almost everybody, causing unnoticed, yet intense psychological pain as well as health and behavioural issues. For the three years they spend in the formation convent (literally 'being formed'),[56] novices are trained in the language of psychology to interpret their pasts as troubled and wounding. Self-knowledge of this kind is meant to help them recognize when the behaviour of others is more a response to past abuses than to recent conflict. This practical theory resonates with themes in the anthropology of Christianity regarding the rupture of Christian conversion and a reconceptualization of the past (Robbins 2004, 2007). In his influential work on the Urapmin conversion to Christianity in Papua New Guinea, Robbins shows how Christianity caused a dramatic shift as traditions and values were replaced almost wholesale by the new religion. The cultural change brought the question of morality to the fore, leading people—as a community—both to regret their past and to hope 'in the promise of a more perfect future' (Robbins 2004: 333). That PRR conceptions of 'conversion' and 'the past' are more personal than social is testament to the import of psychology discourses in Indonesia, outweighing (or perhaps replacing) the effects of foreign missions in the region.

In contemporary Catholic orders, formal religious self-formation combines interior reflection with behavioural habituation. Catholic religious learn to intensify a practice of intense reflection they may have learned as young people. The 'examination of conscience' is a Christian mode of interior reflection in which a person uses biblical guidelines—the ten commandments or the beatitudes—to examine the state of her soul before receiving the sacraments. While practicing lay Catholics use this method of interior reflection to varying degrees, Catholic religious must learn to incorporate it into their regular routines, making it a part of their bodily habitus. This interior examination has the effect of individualising experience, connecting the minutiae of past actions to a future of divine aspiration by momentarily objectifying the self, emphasizing its coherence and turning internal contradictions into 'wounds'. While the examination of conscience makes a person feel her singularity, convent life also requires religious to subsume their individualities to a common purpose, which is typically scaffolded by a dominant set of rules.

[56] 'At the heart of the process of religious formation,' writes Lester, 'is a reorientation of embodied experience' (2005: 70)

Others have shown how interior reflection and bodily practice go hand-in-hand in the making of Catholic religious selves. In her work on a Mexican formation convent, Lester provides 'a detailed ethnographic account of the self-conscious, systematic use of bodily practices to reshape the (gendered) self within an elaborate system of meaning, coupled with a detailed model for understanding the psychological processes at work in this transformation' (Lester 2005: 47) The young women with whom she works undergo seven stages of formation that engage both bodily practice and reflective attention to interior life to 'reconfigure the relationship among body, self, and soul' (2005: 5). After mastering the outward regimen, Mexican postulants are ready to be introduced to the examination of conscience. The results are devastating, as they realize how weak they are, how far from perfect. Devastating as it may be in the moment, this disposition awakens in them an unquenchable thirst for God, Lester argues, a desire to be addressed through surrender (Lester 2005). Lester's analysis unpacks the psychological and embodied understandings of self at play in Catholic religious formation and reveals the kind of directed social practice that can lead to young women, for example, screaming in the chapel.

As *trauma* is dug up from their hearts, PRR nuns integrate ideas of violence into their experiences and understandings of self. This violence draws together Catholicism, psychology and the lived experience of ritual sacrifice in the villages of NTT in a practical aesthetics of the self. Catholic literature, theology and popular discourse are full of meditations on the themes of sacrifice and wounds. The logic of Christian salvation itself operates on the premise that one man (human and divine) could suffer on behalf of all, sacrificing his life for everyone else's (Rom. 5:18). In his suffering, Jesus sustained serious

wounds[57] that persisted, the gospel of John maintains, even after his death and resurrection (John 20:27). In one depiction of Jesus's mother, Mary, her heart is pierced by seven swords, each representing a separate sorrow. Catholic meditations on these wounds facilitate connection between body, psyche and spirit as well as connections between different people's experiences. Moral reflection and embodied empathy coincide within the discipline of the convent and the aesthetics of Catholicism, as the suffering of one becomes the suffering of the other, 'mere suffering' transformed into 'suffering for' (Throop 2010).

This potent imagery of violent sacrifice and its sustained, timeless effects have been connected to psychology in many places. The discovery that oneself is wounded, moreover, seems to be a particularly potent idea for Catholic women in such diverse places as Mexico (Lester 2005, 2008), Croatia (Miguel Alcalde, personal communication 2020) and Indonesia. In Flores, it meets with women who come from areas and homes where sacrificial death is a very real part of their everyday lives. Nuns frequently refer to themselves as 'offerings' (*persembahan*) and 'victims' (*korban*), words which, in Catholic Flores, elicit associations of both sacrificial death in their home villages and spiritual offerings presented regularly at Catholic services. When nuns refer to themselves as sacrificial victims, they therefore reference three discourses in one word: the theology of spiritual substitution, the efficacious death of ritual sacrifice and the psychology of suffering.

[57] Tradition holds that there were five: one each in his hands and feet and one in his side.

I heard a lot about *trauma* during my fieldwork, but it was not until an interview near the end that I began to realise how central psychology is to PRR notions and constructions of the self. Sister Nicola accompanied me into town one autumn day to meet with Bapak Yosephus, a scholar and poet who spent his younger years teaching psychology to young PRR candidates. 'Since 1994', he began, 'here in Indonesia, religious formation has taken a psycho-spiritual approach, which excavates the environment surrounding a candidate', He explained how important it was that nuns acting as formation instructors understand the environment out of which each candidate arrived into the congregation, to apprehend her vocation accordingly and to direct her to interpret her experience in its light.

Bapak Yosephus handed me a two-volume book, *The Psychology of Spiritual Life* (Prasetya, SJ 1992, 1993), a theoretical and practical guide to religious formation in Catholic orders. The author is a Javanese Jesuit priest who received his PhD in psychology from the Gregorian University in Rome. His educational background shows clearly in his prospectus for religious formation as he charts a path between traditional Catholic religious formation and academic behavioural psychology. Identifying holes in each, he observes that traditional religious formation approaches ignore the psychological differences between candidates while traditional behavioural psychology maintains that people need only a proper stimulus in order to change. Neither, he argues, allows for the holistic formation of a person within a religious community. The structure of religious life and space are not enough to transform a person, nor bring her to self-realization, nor is religious instruction enough to overcome spiritual issues that may arise because of a person's psychology. Issues for Prasetya include doubt in faith and morality;

developmental issues having to do with things like puberty, sexuality, and midlife crisis; subconscious motivational issues originating in an inconsistent life; as well as personality disorders and other persistent psychological problems. For Prasetya, drawing on psychology can improve religious education in several ways, by (1) helping young candidates become 'more adult', (2) detecting underlying problems, (3) healing those problems, (4) integrating a person's various parts, so they come into balance and (5) assisting in religious selection, determining who is ready for religious life and who is best suited elsewhere (Prasetya, SJ 1992). In a passage underlined by Bapak Yosephus, Prasetya writes, 'the offering of psychology in the development of a life of faith is to give body to dispositions or to fertile ground that is well-suited to planting virtue in the heart' (my translation).

Prasetya's approach to religious formation gained traction in Indonesia among his fellow Jesuits, who, in their capacity as religious instructors often invited by other orders (including the PRR) to run workshops on religious life introduced it to others. The book certainly was key to Bapak Yosephus, who had trained earlier generations of PRR nuns, the same nuns who—when I lived in Larantuka—were in charge of the formation of new candidates. The PRR enlivened older methods of Catholic religious formation that focus on mimicry, time regulation, menial labour and memorisation of prayers, with this psychological approach. The approach aims to form the whole person to the benefit of both individual potential and to group mission. In PRR practice, Prasetya's insights cohere in the digging up of *trauma* through Catholic examination of conscience, resulting in the reinterpretation of PRR childhoods as painful, the result of violent ruptures in social relations. This reinterpretation forms new ways of experiencing the self as well as new ways of interpreting others. While the concept consciously cultivates affects of distress in individual nuns, it also turns the soil of hearts, offering new ground for empathy and understanding.

TRAUMA AND THE NATION

The presence of Prasetya's book in the core curriculum of Catholic religious formation in Indonesia may be the most direct route by which the concept of trauma arrived at the PRR doorstep, but it is not the only way it entered Indonesia. There seem to be at least two other entry points, each of which bear their own associations. The intersection of these associations, as well as the contradictions that arise when they are brought together, express the rich texture of meaning in local uses of the term in Indonesia.

'Meraba Diri' by Ivan Sagita, 1988, hanging in the National Art Gallery in Jakarta.

Smith notes that *trauma* has been part of the Indonesian lexicon since at least the late 1980s when it first appeared in the Indonesian dictionary (Smith 2018: 7). This is also the period when Ivan Sagita created the painting pictured above in which he directly engages with the psychology of identity. In *Meraba Diri* (Self Touch/Grope/Feel/Guess), a woman, presented in three figures, tries to identify herself, only to discover that she is, in fact, empty. From its earliest entrance, then, psychological concepts like *trauma* have been connected in Indonesia to self and self-knowledge.

In the succeeding decade, the word *trauma* circulated throughout Indonesian via news coverage of the mass violence that tore through the country in the wake of President Suharto's fall from power (Dwyer & Santikarma 2007). A domain of the middle class embodied by politicians, reporters, and psychiatrists, the term entered the vocabulary of the underclasses through violence experienced and witnessed (Siegel 1998: 90–120). The term gained even more spread—and new meanings—with the arrival of aid organizations offering relief under a new programme of development, one in which violence causes trauma incites violence, in a vicious circle (Bubandt 2012; Grayman et al. 2009; Tol et al. 2010). These aid organizations entered some of the more remote places of Indonesia, places like Maluku and Poso where religious violence had torn communities apart (Duncan 2013). In the course of this three-pronged diffusion, *trauma* became a household word in Indonesia. Derived from conflict settings, it is flexible enough for people to apply it to all kinds of things—jilted lovers, broken machetes, and more (Bubandt 2012).

The circulation of—certain kinds of—psychological discourse is taking place in Indonesia within a turn of the twenty-first century political milieu in which 'human development' is a key concern for the Indonesian state and for Indonesian society. The psychotherapeutic arena that includes *trauma* is one such discourse, as is the interest in self-cultivation and character, which is the subject of the next chapter. These discourses build on insights from Western pop psychology with roots in the American New Age movement (Hoesterey 2012: 53) and figure in efforts to build productive companies (Rudnyckyj 2011) and to encourage an Islamic moral cosmopolitanism in Indonesia (Hoesterey 2012, 2015). Directed towards a different spiritual telos, Indonesian companies' usage of things like the Meyers-Briggs test, Kinds of Intelligence (IQ, EQ, SQ) and Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) reveals an epistemology of the self that resonates with its usage in 'the West'. In this formulation, individuals are characterized as singularly responsible for their own development and that development is cast in terms of productivity. Managing the self, here, means managing one's psychological state, one's energy, moods, and emotions, to maximise production (Martin 2007).

In Indonesia, these ideas are cast not only towards the production of good employees for corporate culture (Rudnyckyj 2011, 2014) but also towards the production of good citizens for the state in which 'self-knowledge and ethical discipline are the keys to cosmopolitan civic virtue' (Hoesterey 2012: 50). These psychological discourses become embodied in a regime of self that relies on religious bodily practice to culminate in the achievement of personal ambition that remakes the person as a more productive member of civil society. In Indonesia, efforts to form the self that call upon Western pop

psychology, like the PRR's, also resonate with and participate in these national movements for moral renewal and material aspiration for the benefit of both self and company.

It is within this national context of the psychologization of the self that we must view the ways in which *trauma* continues to be a meaningful term for Indonesian experience (e.g. Dirgantoro 2020). Although *trauma* is distinct from other more easily appropriable pop psychology terms because of the ways it summons experiences of pain whose national referent is the ongoing suffering stemming from the mass killings of the late twentieth century, it also bears the capacity to be taken up and reworked for other ends. Siegel writes:

> 'Trauma' indicates a physical condition, a mark on the body, whose cause is unlocatable but is nevertheless, by the foreignness of the word, associated with things foreign. Those so marked are susceptible to being retrieved into the nation via the work of authorities who claim to understand this word. … Indonesian 'trauma' is appropriable, curable even, and thus not trauma in the strict psychoanalytic usage… But 'trauma' is claimed to be curable in Indonesia, and is thus available for political control (Siegel 1998: 134–5).

When PRR nuns take up *trauma*, applying it to themselves and teaching each other to experience themselves anew in its light, they are enacting just such an authoritative appropriation. It is an appropriation that, no doubt, serves the interests of the congregation in a similar way that the emotional resubjectification of workers serves a Javanese steel company by preventing corruption and building a more attractive company (Rudnyckyj 2011). At the same time, the PRR's interest in *trauma* also awakens women to their reliance on each other, reorienting them, in a surprising way, from an intentional focus on the self, to an empathic awareness of human vulnerability. This awareness serves them in their communal lives together and in their mission efforts throughout the nation.

If *trauma* connects women in remote, relatively peaceful parts of eastern Indonesia to a national history of violent conflict and a national modernity of moral renewal through self-improvement, it does so by first gaining intimate meaning in the bodies of PRR nuns as they meditate in company. *Trauma* might be taught via discursive means, but it is known through bodily experience—screams in the chapel are just the starting place. These experiences for PRR nuns reveal both the source of their spiritual vocation and the nature of who they are. The *trauma* aspects of the self, then, must both be worked on and developed in unison with others to form a good nun. This self-formation happens in the

company of other people, who act as vehicles and obstacles for virtuous self-development.

The main thrust of Prasetya's psycho-spiritual method for Catholic religious formation is that, through a process of introspection and observation, a person may understand herself as she currently exists, aspire to conform to the image God has of her, and thereby come to know God intimately (Prasetya, SJ 1992, 1993). An underlying assumption of this Catholic model is that each person has an ideal self that exists within God's intention. When this meets with Indonesian psychological approaches to self-formation in company, it becomes the individual's job not only to 'improve' herself, but also to discover who it is that God means her to be. It is her company's job to support her while she digs. As God is thought to move and speak within each person's heart, 'digging up the heart' is a means of uncovering both one's cultural *trauma* and God's intention. This act, then, incorporates God into one's company by coming to discover divinity in the self as an Other, an intimate one, that is taking a part in one's self-formation (Csordas 2004). At the same time, uncovering *trauma* reveals the extent to which a person is unknowable even to herself; it is always possible to discover that one is, in fact, other than she thought herself to be (Bubandt 2015) or less than she hopes (Mosko 2015).

Bapak Yosephus taught Prasetya's theory to the several generations of PRR nuns who continued to instruct new recruits in its ways, even if the books were no longer present in PRR classrooms—if indeed they ever were. By the time of my fieldwork, Prasetya's method and ideas had become incorporated into PRR bodily experiences and expectations for self-formation and for communal life. Nuns were expected to preserve time for introspection, for a reflective, past-looking act that sought to uncover subconscious emotions and the *trauma* that motivated them. But while other utilisations of pop psychology place responsibility for the self almost entirely on the individual, among the PRR, the analytic of *trauma* also required something of a nun's company. This, too, was taken from Prasetya, who proposed that a formation leader had an obligation to observe her students' current behaviour and assess it against the socio-economic background in which they were raised. While Prasetya was focused specifically on the time of formation, the PRR extended this obligation into the convents, where a Mother is particularly responsible for knowing the experiential background of each of the nuns in her care, understanding the unique nature of the 'things they carried' from their childhoods and empathising with the pain of their specific *trauma*.

For the nuns, *trauma* is a thing that happened to you that affects your ability to perform related tasks in the present. Thus, Sister Clara-Francesca was able to object to another nun's desire to start riding motorbikes shortly after she was involved in a brutal crash with, 'I'd be *trauma*'. Or Sister Vivina, insisting she remain clothed during a massage could explain she 'had *trauma'* from the last time the masseuse fondled her breasts. In a more serious sense, *trauma* for the PRR has broad, general sources and effects. The feeling of childhood abandonment, for example, which many children in Flores Timur may feel when one or another parent dies, migrates, or 'finds a new spouse' (as the euphemism goes), is one such source. It is one that nuns commonly claim or discover in each other. Such abandonment leaves one with psychological wounds that will not heal on their own, although they may be invisible to others. These wounds may cause a nun to act out against direct authority, to have recurrent extreme emotions, or to lose focus, become anxious, and struggle to understand plain speech. *Trauma* may leave a nun 'brainless' (*otak tidak ada)* and so, susceptible to spirit attacks, witchcraft and possession.

Such beliefs unite PRR nuns to the experiences of other Indonesians, for whom psychological disruptions are likewise linked to spirits, ghosts, sorcery, and magic. Unni Wikan's informants, for example fear discussing heartache and death because to do so would open vulnerable people to even greater forms of suffering caused by black magic (Wikan 1990). Smith's informants used *trauma* as a descriptive and prescriptive term: the one to allow for mercy, understanding, and healing; the other to impress upon sufferers the danger of falling from *trauma* into more permanent modes of psychological distress: insanity or psychosis (Smith 2018). *Trauma,* then, in these different Indonesian contexts—Bali, Aceh, and Flores—is doubly dangerous, not only indexing ongoing distress, but also opening up the possibility for even worse things to happen. Worse things like witchcraft can, however, be prevented by the positive intervention of company. Company, I argue, shores up a nun's traumatised self in two ways: by making concerted efforts at intersubjective empathy through mutual understanding and by generating a moral atmosphere of togetherness, lively (*ramai*) enough to keep bad spirits at bay.

The local socio-cultural explanations for deep-seated *trauma* allows for company to regroup and address it together. Acehnese use of *trauma* locates its origins in the historical tensions between the region and the Indonesian state. Acehnese women, Smith relates, felt their suffering indexed the suffering of the entire region. They embodied an ethnic-regional sorrow, transforming their suffering to give it meaning beyond their individual selves, thereby making themselves something more than individual. Such an orientation,

moreover, allowed them to empathise with others who shared similar experiences. Together, they learned to latch onto dispositions of bravery, tranquillity and solidarity—dispositions that they earned through surviving violence, but continued to cultivate as a way to heal (Smith 2018).

We can see a similar process happening in other places. The process of becoming a nun in Mexico is deeply steeped in girls' experience and expectation for themselves as modern female citizens. Lester charts how young women become attracted to religious life out of dissatisfaction with the models of femininity offered to them, choosing instead to chart a third path. As they deepen in their spiritual formation, novices also come to think of themselves as embodying Mexican modernity, feminizing Mexico through prayer and service. (Lester 2005). Within this process, one of Lester's young informants experiences out-of-body episodes which she carefully processes through three interpretive lenses available to her: health (do I have epilepsy?), religion (am I in ecstasy?), and psychology (am I traumatized?). Lester argues that the novice's story reveals how local practices of reflexivity (prayer) articulate with societal ideas about what makes us human and what makes human experience meaningful (Lester 2008).

There is another interesting concord here: three different ways of localizing a global discourse of psychological trauma. For the Acehnese as described by Smith, *trauma* is an event that forms the basis of 'a new politics of care,' that unites people to each other and to their local history, and from which people can recover and heal. For Mexican novices in Lester's account, *trauma* is one of three mutually distinct frames in with which to interpret human experience. For PRR nuns, *trauma* is an unavoidable state-of-being that begins in some act, usually in childhood, but lasts all one's life, orienting all one's emotions and desires. *Trauma* will not cease to exist, but it can be healed, managed and dug up.

TRAUMA IN THE CONVENT

Trauma for the PRR has its most direct application during the formation period, when candidates are first introduced to the term as something dwelling deep inside each of their hearts, potentially inhibiting their relationships with God and each other. During this time, there may be intense feelings (the screaming in the chapel), but there is also a feeling of safety. A senior nun directs the meditations and is trained to deal with their effects, cultivating a confessional Mother-daughter relationship with each of her wards (see also Lester 2005). Indeed, as I stood watching that day, my own heart settling down after the

shock, I watched the girl's formator stride calmly into the chapel and to her side. The other candidates did not move. Apart from the girl who had dug something up, I was the only one visibly disturbed.

Once the formation period is over and nuns have made their first temporary vows, once they are living in working convents with a small company of their older Sisters and none of their familiar friends, however, the position of *trauma* becomes more ambiguous. While a nun's new Mother will likely be briefed on serious situations, she may not know a woman's full journey, so *trauma* may once again lie still in the heart. Then there is the question of how nuns should relate to their *trauma* as part of themselves. Some, like Sister Diana, make it a central part of their identities, recounting childhood suffering as a way to emphasize current triumphs. Others are less willing to divulge; stories of *trauma* may only emerge in moments of intimate sharing, when nuns spill their hearts to each other.

I heard about Sister Clara-Francesca's *trauma* one night while we were washing dishes. We dunked glass mugs and porcelain bowls in one basin, then another, the water wetting the ends of our sleeves, while she shared that she had spent a large part of her childhood living with a childless uncle and aunt. Having 'begged' her from her father, her uncle and aunt used her for household chores, even going so far as to make her sleep outside, 'to guard the house'. When I mentioned her story, aghast, to Sister Diana a short time after, she sighed and explained that the experience had left Sister Clara-Francesca with the kind of *trauma* that left her without a stable sense of identity—so she was easily swayed by others—and with a fear of abandonment—so she tended to cling to others.

'We needed to understand this', Sister Diana mused, 'when we want to be angry with her'. As she said this, she switched to the third-person exclusive pronoun *kami* that Florenese often use to mean 'I' but could also be taken literally as 'we, not you', that is, 'we the nuns'. Accommodating other people's *trauma* is part of the duties pertaining to the Mother of a convent. It is a difficult one to master because of the ways it hovers at the nexus of individual and company. A Mother must not only understand and empathise with other nuns' *trauma*, she must also intuit how it might affect the dynamics of company in the convent. She must mediate the story for others, helping them to interpret each other—with charity, ideally—while also striking a fine balance between revealing too much and too little. Some people, like Sister Clara-Francesca I gather, prefer not to identify themselves with their *trauma* and would rather emphasize the features of their work and character (see the next chapter) that testify to their unique talents, their belonging amongst the PRR. I never heard anyone say more about Sister Clara-Francesca's *trauma*.

While PRR nuns hold that everyone has *trauma*, of different kinds and to varying degrees, they do not hold that *trauma* is the ideal state of affairs. The fact that 'digging up the heart' to uncover *trauma* involves the same kind of intense introspection as an examination of conscience before confession should alert us to the theological connection nuns make between *trauma* and sin. Both imply a disconnect from God, a break in the relationship, but whereas the examination of conscience locates responsibility for this severance in the individual herself, the term *trauma* locates the fraying in others. Nuns 'receive' (*dapat*) or bring *(bawa*) their *trauma* with them to the convent, introducing it from one company into a new. The effects of *trauma,* nuns feel, are evident in everyday interaction, work, mood

and desire. Sometimes, knowledge of *trauma* can explain some of the mystery underlying life in company; more often it gives it its rich texture, its fascinating flavour.

On her birthday, Sister Osanna was in high spirits, cooking pizza with cheddar cheese and whisking up some mysteriously pink pudding. Her mood was infectious and soon she had Sister Clara-Francesca and I joking with her, improvising a skit about opening a street-food stall in front of the convent. Our laughter and good humour carried into the halls, into our various work, and lasted us the whole day. We shared our meals together, as usual; Sister Osanna's place was set with a frilly home-knit table cloth and modest gifts (scented soap! a pencil!) wrapped in newspaper, plastic bags, and pages ripped from calendars. Sister Osanna was delighted and when, after dinner, she rose to give a birthday speech, she thanked the group sincerely for their kindness and attention (*perhatian*).[58] In her former convent, she told us, she would have to lay her own birthday place. Pitying, shocked murmurs ran around the table as the nuns all clicked their tongues in disapproval.

The attention meant so much to her not only because of the difference of company between the two convents, but because of her childhood *trauma*. She took the occasion of her birthday to let us all know: about her mother dying when she was little, about being raised by her father's mother, about the death of her two brothers and the consequent remarriage of her father to a woman who had one boy from a previous marriage and whose husband had left them (lit. 'run', *lari*) to Timor-Leste—a fact that made East Timorese Sister Mattelina sigh in shame—about how her stepmother and father had three

[58] The root of the Indonesian word for attention is *hati,* heart. 'Attention' in Indonesian sometimes carries connotations of heartfelt care, as is the case here.

more children. Despite the trouble, Sister Osanna and her family managed to escape the common trope of cruel stepmothers. Instead, she learned to think of her stepmother as her birth mother and their children as her 'womb siblings' (*ade kandung*).

Praising the love and friendship that characterizes this community, Sister Osanna finished by apologising for her temper, for being so 'quick to speak' (*cepat omong*), that is, speaking without thinking of hurting someone's feelings. In the wake of her confession, this seemed like the summary of the connections she had made between her childhood *trauma*. 'I store nothing in my heart', she said, 'it's just that things come out of my mouth'. While speaking, she patted her body and motioned from her mouth, as if she kept all feeling on the surface, right beneath her skin. She apologised for this part of her character (*watak*) and for the things she 'brought,' that is, the burdens of her childhood.

Trauma relates directly to concepts of personhood discussed in chapter three, especially the notion of distinct, but related, outer and inner aspects to the self. The inner body 'cannot be perceived with the senses… *Trauma* is informed by the logic that social events act on the self—by creating internal pressure *(tekanan dalam)* and a disturbance in the spirit (*jiwa*)' (Smith 2018: 82, 60). In this conception, the body is highly volatile, strengthened and weakened by the stress of life. The outward-inward-outward movement of social events exerts pressure on an unsensed internal body which then acts on the outer physical body which then falls ill (has tremors, goes 'crazy').

Because it is grounded in locally-salient ideas of the person, *trauma* applied as much to the people working and living in the convent as it did to the nuns—in fact it applied to

everyone, as far as PRR nuns were concerned. Wendy was one of the young lay women working at the Lewoina convent when I arrived for fieldwork. A few months later, she moved to Jakarta to take up work. Her mother and youngest brother live a-few-hours minibus ride from Larantuka. During my fieldwork, I occasionally took the trip, with or without Wendy, to visit this village and get a feel for the kind of lives girls lead before they enter a convent. I was always struck by two extreme differences between convent life and village life. On the one hand, villagers were always struggling—for food, for money, for education—whereas nuns wanted for nothing materially. On the other hand, village life was relaxed and flexible, whereas the convent with its timetables, responsibilities, and moral codes exerted so much pressure that nuns (and I) were often unwell, physically or mentally. This was my feeling, anyway, and one the nuns often raised, sometimes in jest, sometimes more seriously.

Wendy's mother was not much my senior, nor was Wendy much my junior and I enjoyed close friendship with each of them. Wendy wanted to be a nun, but she was the oldest child, which counts for much in Flores Timur. More importantly, though, she was her mother's bosom companion, tied together by love, care, kinship and one tragic event.

Wendy's parents had a happy beginning. Both from Flores Timur, they met in Malaysia where they were both working. Wendy and two other children were born before the family decided to move back to Flores. One day, Wendy was with her father on his motorbike when they were hit by a truck. Wendy's bones shattered. Her father lost his life. Her mother was pregnant. This was an uncanny repeat of history, as Wendy's mother's mother had also lost her own husband to a motorbike accident when she was pregnant with their youngest child.

Back at the convent after a few days in the village, I told the nuns Wendy's story.

'Was Wendy the only one to witness, to experience the accident?' Novice Pieta, who was on her one-month work placement at Lewoina, asked.

'Yes,' answered Sister Diana. She was there when Wendy's mother came to beg the convent to hire her girls. She had heard the story before. Pieta went on:

'Oh, she must have carried that from her childhood, so now she's nervous to meet it again'. Pieta did not mean that Wendy was afraid of getting into a crash. She meant that Wendy suffered *trauma* which impacted her character. 'Because Wendy is quick to tears.'

'Yes,' affirmed Sister Diana, 'her aura is…' In lieu of words, Sister Diana wobbled her hand and shook her head. 'If you say anything, she's quick to cry. She can't handle it. And often she becomes confused because of her *trauma*. So, we have to remember that and teach her. I told her if she can't endure it in Jakarta, come back here'.

I remembered how Wendy's mother described her oldest daughter: how she often cries, how she is weak and defenceless, how she always loses fights to her younger sister. Her mother, too had tracked this troubling behaviour back to Wendy's accident, wondering if something hadn't shaken her mind. Both mother and nuns linked Wendy's behaviour to the tragic accident and implied that she had *trauma*. Internally, I piled something else on Wendy's plate of *trauma*. She had asked me recently why I didn't go to Sunday Mass at the parish anymore. When I told her the priest had kissed me and I just couldn't be around him, she revealed that he had tried to do the same to her the very night he accosted me. Unlike me, she had the wherewithal to physically push him away, but she lacked the power I had to raise the issue and to refuse to be in his presence. 'When I see him come in to say Mass', she said, 'I get so angry, I shake. I cannot concentrate on the Mass anymore. I leave and it is like I didn't even go. I don't have peace'.

As these threads knotted in my thoughts, I became increasingly aware of the employee then present in the room: another young lay woman, off to the side, rearranging plates of food, but definitely listening. Sweet, slender, forgetful Karli had an appointment coming up with a priest known for his special spiritual abilities. The nuns had arranged the appointment to help Karli defend against the demon-possessions that occasionally hit. The nuns were also aware of Karli's presence; as they reflected on Wendy's story, they emphasized the elements that might shed light on Karli's.

'It must be something to do with the *adat*', said Sister Diana. 'Their ancestors must have done something.'

Pieta agreed, rubbing her face with both hands.

'The crimes of our ancestors strike at us.'

Discussions like these, where nuns tack between the effects of *trauma*, the inheritance of problems from one's ancestors, and personal habits that have come to define a person's character, show how the international psychological discourse has not merely been imported into Flores, but rather intersects and gives new resonance to other themes in

Flores—articulating the effects of a tragedy enabled by transnational economic mobility and reinforcing customary (if troubling) relationships between the living and the dead. This conversation also demonstrates the kind of debate discussed in the last chapter, the kind of surmising about a person's character that circles around and tries to apprehend what is ultimately a mystery. Finally, this conversation shows how the nuns' ideas about themselves extend to other people. What came to them as a practical guide to religious discernment and formation becomes a critical inroad into the hearts of the laity.

TRAUMA FROM THE FAMILY

While washing dishes (again) one night, I asked the juniors what their mini retreat (*rekoleksi*)—to which I had not been invited—had been about: 'character formation, right?'

'Yeah', they answered 'character formation. When children misbehave, we need to find the root of the problem: go to the homes, see what the family situation is, because there might be a problem there. If we treat the child with love and affection they'll change. Not immediately, it still needs a process', Sister Clara-Francesca clarified.

The PRR use the Indonesian term for child, *anak,* to refer generally to the lay employees of the convent. Nuns will only use *anak* to address an individual directly when they are old enough to be their grandmother—a junior nun would never dare to call a mature woman working in the convent *anak*. Slightly condescending, the term also draws the laity

into the convent 'family', emphasizing that nuns have a responsibility to care for the laity living with them, and to understand and accommodate their *trauma* in the same way that they uncover and accommodate each other's. At the time of this conversation, Sister Diana was a new Mother and trouble with the lay employees was more pronounced than usual. The nuns' internal retreat, I gathered, was meant to address this by encouraging them to challenge their anger with mercy and understanding. Locating the *trauma* of each *anak* facilitated this process, helping all to develop their morality and helping the convent company cultivate togetherness.

The PRR's understanding of *trauma* as something pretty much everyone sustains adds a layer to their rallying cry of 'just begin'. As they seek places where their service might be of use, as they seek the 'root' of problems, their search becomes formulated as the uncovering of *trauma*, which exists everywhere. Individualised at the level of the psyche, *trauma* also follows certain regional patterns. PRR nuns often find it in childhood disruption: Sister Clara-Francesca removed from her parents, Sister Osanna and Wendy losing theirs. In eastern Indonesia, migration is one prominent way in which children may be separated from her parents or from their kin. Rich in tradition, but poor in economic opportunities, many eastern Indonesian parents make the fraught decision to leave their children with kin while they take up work elsewhere, most commonly in East Malaysia. In making this decision, they wrestle with the desire to provide both long-term care through the provision of livelihood and education and short-term care through everyday intimacy. Malaysia's immigration laws implications for family care, 'predicated on a geo-graphical separation of (adult) workers from their dependants', make it impossible for Indonesian migrants to provide both (Allerton 2019: 212). Concern over care haunts parents abroad while feelings of being left-behind stalk children back home.

In a mountain village on the small island of Adonara, Manggarai-born Sister Raulina was alarmed by her discovery of the local manifestation of this regional pattern of parental immigration. A whole generation of children, it seemed to her, were being raised by their grandparents with infrequent-to-no visits from their parents working in Malaysia. Meanwhile, she observed grandparents, already exhausted from old age and raising their own children, struggled to meet children's material needs while also providing them with a lively environment in which to grow. To meet this problem, she decided to design a programme for the youth—an interactive presentation in which she led them to recognise the *trauma* and heartache they sustained living without parents. During the presentation,

she showed them a short Chinese documentary[59] about a young girl in a rural village who took care of her mentally-troubled (*gila)* mother. She used this film to suggest that there are children elsewhere whose suffering outscores even theirs and that children have caring obligations towards their parents just as parents have towards their children. Finally, as the gathering of teenaged girls wept in collective catharsis, she pleaded with them to realize that their parents only travelled to Malaysia to provide them a better life; that it was their way of caring for their children whom they loved so much. She finished the workshop with raucous sing-alongs and games, sending the girls home in good spirits to prepare for the coming Christmas holiday.

In their study of children's perspectives on parents' migration in Lombok, Beazley, Butt and Ball show how children deal with the prospect of absent parents by learning to control their emotions and to adapt their desires to support their parents. They show how 'Indonesian government and family values converge, creating strong pressure for mothers and fathers to work overseas to improve the lives of their families' (Beazley et al. 2018: 593). Social pressure from both state and families 'back home', exacerbates the problem for migrant parents, who paradoxically end up 'immobilized' both by state policy and by feelings of shame (Allerton 2019). Children, too, learn to embody an ethic of *malu* (shame) in a 'collective emotional response to suppress intense emotions, restrain individualism, and support social harmony' (Beazley et al. 2018: 599).

[59] PRR pedagogy values performance over lecture, following the line that, if something is entertaining, it is more easily remembered.

It is within and against this framework that Sister Raulina's workshop must be understood. Rather than sustain a feeling of *malu*, her talk encouraged 'left-behind' children to take pride in both themselves and their parents, giving them reasons for doing so. Parents' actions and children's fortitude, Sister Raulina suggests, indicate that the love between parents and children is strong. Rather than encourage them to suppress their emotions, however, Sister Raulina's workshop was aimed precisely at eliciting their emotion. She asked them to 'dig up their hearts' then acknowledged the girls' pain before turning it to happier ends. She led the girls to reinterpret themselves as having *trauma* according to a psychological view of the self while simultaneously exonerating both children and parents of blame.

Sister Raulina's assessment of the welfare of girls in the village in which she worked was based on the training she received as a young novice. She employed her understanding of childhood *trauma* to help girls grapple with sorrows that weighed on their hearts. Like others in Indonesia, she called upon an ethic care for kin to encourage girls to grow through their *trauma* to become caring members of their families and their community, but she paired this also with a Lamaholot ethic of endurance *(tahan*) that acknowledged *trauma* without succumbing to it.

Sister Raulina's work with girls in Lamaholot villages reveals two functions of company when it comes to trauma. First, in leading girls to reinterpret their experience as one traumatised by adult out-migration, she unites them in company through common suffering. Just as parental migration is a prominent part of their shared world, so too is *trauma* constituted as a part of their identity. By sharing *trauma*, Sister Raulina suggests, the girls are also better positioned to empathise, to understand other positions, including those of their parents and grandparents. Thus, *trauma* in this formulation becomes one way for engaging actively and practically with the intersubjective possibilities of company.

Secondly, Sister Raulina capitalises on company's circulation of affect to manipulate the emotions around *trauma*. First, she leads the girls in digging up their hearts, uncovering bad feeling, and discovering *trauma*. Reinterpretation of personal narrative happens in the flux of affect in company, as negative emotions surface and girls start to cry. It is impossible to say with certainty whether her efforts did in fact uncover pre-existing pain or whether she created them anew. What I can say is that the mood of the evening underwent a distinct shift, from shy anticipation, to tearful distress, to ebullient giddiness. For, second, Sister Raulina followed the painful digging up with a dance along. She

projected videos on the screen and had the girls up and moving. Moving and laughing—at her as she overperformed, at the actors in the videos, at each other and increasingly at the general chaos. Their laughter rose as their limbs moved and the hall was soon filled with their teasing shrieks. Sister Raulina mobilized company to generate the affects of joy that pulled them out of affects of despair. Together they suffered, her work seemed to say, and together they would endure. The liveliness, the laughter that company can engender transforms *trauma*, lifting it out of its darkness, even if the wounds remain.

Together, these examples show how the PRR take up *trauma* through religious curriculum discourse, where it provides a means of reinterpreting the self, of articulating emotions and narrating experience. Once incorporated into their philosophy and experience, PRR nuns draw easy connections between *trauma* and other important aspects of life in eastern Indonesia, aspects including ritual sacrifice, ancestral custom and economic migration. Nuns use *trauma* as a way to explain themselves to each other and to live in 'togetherness'. They also locate *trauma* as a place where they can serve others. By understanding convent employees through the language of *trauma*, nuns find it easier to treat confusing behaviour with patience and care, facilitating in turn their own moral formation. By teaching girls living in the villages to translate their experiences through the idiom of *trauma*, nuns perpetuate the importance of psychological discourses to Indonesian selves. And by teaching it to each other, nuns appropriate *trauma*, giving the company authority over it. The PRR portion off some of the incommensurable mystery at the heart of each Sister and 'domesticate it within familiar categories' (Giordano 2014: 10).

Sister Raulina's workshop shocked me a little that night; I was troubled by the way she told these seemingly perfectly content girls that they were, in truth, traumatised. I was alone in these thoughts—the people I met, and especially PRR nuns young and old—sat comfortably with their *trauma* and with the idea that *trauma* affected everyone more or less. In *trauma*, they found an object of moral striving, an articulation of pre-existing emotion and a reason to commit to each other in company. T*rauma* is about intersubjectivity, about the vulnerability of people to others. Nuns turn it into a story of company: *trauma* is sustained in the company of the family; *trauma* is healed in the company of friends.

CONCLUSION

I sat down one day with the order's secretary to interview her. She had sad, sparkling eyes, a mouth that hung open, and quiet way of being. We talked about her life, her family and her calling before we came to the question of working together *(kerja sama)*.

> Every sister has her own character, a different background, a different family. We must learn. When we were in the formation convent, we were being formed, right? Everything was already dug up then. All of that was made ready. It's always going to show up throughout our lives, no? As far as we're able, we need to know how to love, respect, and emplace each other. Once we're living in a working convent, everyone is busy with their own affairs. Emotions arise from those preoccupations! If we don't understand… that's usually where a lot of the differences arise.

If digging up *trauma* from their hearts allowed for a new interpretation of self, and a new way to articulate experience, it also made moral demands on company. These moral demands included sustaining moral moods as acting charitably towards each other. Held together now not only by co-presence, but also by a shared existential state of having *trauma*, companies of nuns had to work on 'loving, respecting, and emplacing' each other. Understanding each other's t*rauma* is one such mode of emplacement. Once the heart has been dug up to uncover *trauma*, erstwhile mysterious aspects of nuns' characters start to make sense. Although the characterization of what an individual nun is can seem a bit negative, based on internalised characterizations of ethnicity, childhood trauma, and moral judgement, it is augmented by a more positive idea—that God has given each person special talents. In their convents, nuns are encouraged to put these talents to work, contributing to community service and developing a unique moral character. It is to this dimension of self-formation, character, that I turn next.

CHAPTER 6: CHARACTER

We have drafted the outline of a short play to honour the nuns who are celebrating their golden anniversary. It is a semi-fictional comedy about the life journeys of three nuns as they emerge from the same training course, split along three different paths, before meeting once again in the mother house in their old age. It is also a symbolic story of the different careers a nun might follow in her life, connecting the old and the young in an ongoing story of self-becoming. One nun, Sister Ignatius, represents leadership. The founder recognised her talent and potential and she went on to serve as the order's Superior General for twenty years. Now she serves on the board in an advisory position, commanding the love and respect of everyone in the congregation. The second, Sister Laurentina represents the teaching path. For many years, she taught new entrants in PRR formation convents. She was moved to Italy to teach seminarians for a short time, then to inner Kalimantan to teach in a school. At that point, the stress of religious life seized her and she suffered a crippling stroke. Now, she is limited to the use of only half of her body. Although her speech is slurred and slow, she persists in cheer, suffusing all she meets with affection and praise. The third is Sister Campania, who followed the pastoral path. We do not know much about her personally, except that she lived in the care home

and was 'very sick'. I saw her regularly on my weekly visits to the care home, but she was often too tired to talk or even to join us for breakfast after Mass.

These are our three principal characters, but who will play them? The small group of performing nuns start the discussion sombrely. There's a little awkwardness in the air. I sense that Sister Maravilosa wants to play one of the characters, or at least has strong ideas regarding casting, but seems to shy away from putting herself and her ideas before others in the group.

A little prodding and the group-mind is going strong. They quickly settle on casting Sister Arcangela as Sister Laurentina, a choice that pleases the effervescent Papuan nun immensely. I ask the group to explain their reasoning. 'Arca is good at picking up people's gestures', they say, moving their bodies in emphasis: cocking their heads, swishing their arms. 'She probably understands Mama Sister Laurentina best of all because she spends time caring for her', someone suggests. A pause. Then, a few add that Sister Arcangela and Sister Laurentina have a bit of a fitting, a sameness. All of this makes Sister Arcangela visibly happy and when I ask her if she's ready (*Siap?*), she smiles even wider and says, 'Yes'.

I ask who will play Sister Ignatius. Another pause. Sister Maravilosa studies her desk and refuses to make eye contact with anyone. Her mouth twitches into a slight smile when Sister Kateri recommends her for the role.

'Why Sister Maravilosa?' I ask.

'Sister Maravilosa, I've seen from the exercises, can portray a leader. Not that she is the same as Sister Director Ignatius, but she can play … What do I want to say? Assertive (*tegas*), strict (*keras)* … or maybe I don't mean *tegas*…' The others laugh at their friend's difficulty with Indonesian words—Sister Kateri is from Kenya and still new to the language the others have been learning since grade school, a situation that cannot hide the quiet force of her intelligence. They are also laughing at her forthright characterization of Sister Ignatius, one that they—more facile with the language, more aware of each word's connotations, more steeped in Flores Timur's hierarchies—dare not to express.

'No, no! Assertive is right!' they giggle, agreeing that Sister Maravilosa has the presence to play a leader. I ask her if she's ready. She hedges, seriously appraising her ability, saying,

'I might not know as much about Sister Ignatius, but I will just try.'

This phrase 'just try' (*coba saja)* is a commonly-used echo of their founder's desire that they 'just begin' (*mulai saja*). Sometimes used as a rallying cry, sometimes—as with Sister Maravilosa here—it is used as a sign of humility. It suggests something about personhood for the PRR: that trying something is of merit and within the ability of every nun. 'Just do it' (*buat saja*) they often say to each other, encouraging or admonishing.

These sayings come in handy in overcoming the problem of who will play Sister Campania. It is a problem because they feel entirely ignorant of her character. They know her conventional narrative, know her work and the convents to which she had been assigned, but none of them feel like they have been in her presence enough to represent her onstage. When I broach the subject, there is a long pause. Sister Maravilosa recommends Sister Carina because 'their names are alike'. Sister Carina objects immediately,

'The name means nothing', she snaps.

Another pause.

'There is a sameness though', suggests Sister Kateri, 'in the face'. Sister Carina tries to laugh good-naturedly, but her embarrassment and discomfort only grow. She does *not* want to be compared to this elderly nun.

'I don't know her because she's in the care home', Sister Carina objects anew.

'True, but none of us know her and she *must* be played', the others counter. Eventually, Sister Carina relents and agrees that she too will 'just try'.

'Who will play the other characters?' Sister Fortunata wonders, now that the heavy lifting has been accomplished.

'The rest of you', Sister Maravilosa explains, a mischievous smile growing on her face, her arm extending to point at the extras. 'You must play *eeeeeveryone* else!' With that, the excitement starts to roll again, the energy to build. They begin teasing each other over who will play bride-wealth-surrendering uncles, resident crazy men, visiting priests, wailing mothers, limbless leprosy patients, and can't-do-without-it furniture. 'Fortu can play the bamboo-duster' someone yells to screams of appreciative laughter, while rail-thin Sister Fortunata plays hurt and slaps the offender. Even Sister Carina is having fun again.

'Kateri should play Sister Mother' (*suster ibu,* the order's Dutch co-founder) Sister Carina explains, 'because Sister Mother was a Westerner like—well a foreigner—like

Sister Kateri, so surely her language was stiff too'. Sister Kateri joins in the hearty laughter, agreeing that, if we're going for accuracy, there is no better person to play Sister Mother than herself.

I share this vignette because of the ways the nuns note the 'characters' of others, assess likeness between people and select the best actors to play the roles of real people with whom they are all well-acquainted. Their efforts reveal a few different comparative frames. First is an adaptability based on personal skill or talent: Sister Arcangela can *inhabit* other people's bodies with ease. Second is *knowledge* of another based on the experience of co-presence: Sister Arcangela can play Sister Luarentina because she spends time caring for her. For the same reason, Sister Carina protests that she is unable to play Sister Campania. Finally, is the matter of *performance* associated with different forms of work and expressed through the bodies of different nuns: Sister Maravilosa has the *presence* of a leader, Sister Kateri has the *style* of a foreigner. All of these frames pertain to *how* a person is—their character and personal style.

How a Person Is: Character and Style

PRR nuns are deeply and perpetually concerned with character (*karakter, watak*); it is essential to their development as moral subjects. Nuns' application of 'character' makes full use of the term's capabilities, pointing to character as a moral orientation of the self, as a holistic person in the constructed sense of fiction, and as a theatrical style of self-presentation. They want to see good character emerge in their young adherents as well as in laypeople, to whom they position themselves as servants, mothers and guides. The PRR's notion of character as a moral sense learnt and developed over time, rather than an essential core present from birth corresponds with a broader intellectual trend in Indonesia. Periodicals such as the *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* (Journal for Character Education) publish articles advising on the development of moral citizens, typically within a religious ideology (Jalil 2016; Ngamanken 2014; Sudrajat 2011). A productive friction arises when we compare the Indonesian-language literature on character-development with the English-language literature on Indonesian identities. While the former deals with social strategies for developing the selves of others, the latter investigates the ways Indonesians integrate outside influences into holistic, deeply personal selves.

Describing how Indonesians undertake such personalised efforts at self-making within the outside-inside movement of varied modes of sociality is not an easy task. Anthropologists have described it as managing (Wikan 1990), dubbing (Boellstorff 2003), raiding (Rutherford 2003), combining (Ford & Parker 2008), recombining (Long 2013), dispossessing (Li 2014), doubting (Bubandt 2015), and improving (Kloos 2018). Through these nuanced and wildly different strategies, different kinds of Indonesians have cast themselves as different kinds of persons, in relation to the others in their worlds. PRR nuns aim to 'keep only the good', to learn selectively from other cultures. To follow their cosmopolitan aspects of self-formation, we are left to trace some of the existential complexities that structure and guide their interactions with others and their being in company. PRR nuns embody a widespread human predicament of experiencing oneself as both agentive, a wellspring of action, and as influenced by others. One variation across different settings is how acutely the connections between different aspects of the self are felt. These connections are enabled by different ways of attuning to the self; the experience of *trauma* discussed in the last chapter is one of them. PRR nuns believe that, with help and in company, a person can train her inner world to develop a coherent

virtuous self—a tall order given their conviction that almost everyone is fundamentally wounded.

In the previous chapter, we saw how a person's childhood *trauma* can become the means by which other nuns assess her character and action. We have also introduced the salience of ethnic stereotypes in Indonesia for ascribing character traits to people from different places and how primary axes of this ascription are the overlapping gradations from refined to coarse, from the inner self to the outer, and from the spiritual world to the material (Beatty 1999). This spectrum often serves as a moral compass for personal action (Keeler 1987). Another tradition of identifying character derives from the realm of the performing arts. In many of Southeast Asia's traditional performance genres, a character's moral standing may be immediately identified by decorative features: 'refined' characters are slender and delicate, while 'coarse' characters may have bulging eyes or fangs. Each kind of character has his place in the story, in this microcosm of life (Van Ness & Prawirohardjo 1981). Considered in this light, nuns' habits not only distinguish them as belonging to an organization, but also identify them as a particular kind of moral actor and suggest that they have a particular part to play in the Indonesian story.

Some characters are so well-known that audiences may compare their friends' characters to characters in the play, saying, for example, 'He's like Bima' (Van Ness & Prawirohardjo 1981: 5). Such characterization may seem timeless (as timeless as the great Hindu epics) and may seem to fix mutable people in place, based on the play of words between a character in a performance and the moral character of an interior self. However, they are also based on familiarity with other people and their actions. While they do not bother too much with Bima, PRR nuns have their own cast of touchstone characters that features Catholic characters (Mary, Jesus, and some saints), characters from television (politicians from the news, femme fatales from soap operas), and familiar tropes specific to religious life (the magisterial convent mother, the over-polite guest). Nuns may incorporate these figures into their characters, engaging with them as 'a creative field for the detachment from and creative re-imagination of other ways of being' (Tinius 2018: 356).

Playing together within a repertoire of moral characters allows nuns to draw on multiple modes of characterization. While they take pride in their (supposed) cultural coarseness and do not often shy from asserting themselves nor from venting their displeasure, *kasar* is not a trait they endeavour to cultivate in everyday life, not least because it could easily upset the dynamics of living together. Many of the little arguments that arise in the

convent revolve around someone speaking too harshly, forgetting to use her heart, or disregarding someone else's emotions. Although some nuns earn the label of 'refined', the designation often brings with it negative connotations of bashfulness, cowardice, or unnecessary resignation, character traits that can also interfere with convent solidarity. On the other hand, much is begged and forgiven on the same principles of characterization, either that a person is inherently coarse (*dia orang kasar)* or that her style (*gaya*) is. Even more frequently, character remained a fill-in-the-blank ellipsis, as if it were something better articulated through performance than through words.

All these traits are something a person can *be*, but they manifest in actions and reactions to others. The nuns I worked with were likely to praise someone for good traits: creativity, intelligence, courage, adaptability, and kindness among others, or else to say that someone was just plain 'good' (*baik*). Much like the Mexican novices with whom Lester worked, good deeds for the PRR became both a sign that one was good, as well as a method for cultivating a moral character (Lester 2005). Because of personal style, however, 'goodness' and 'good deeds' take many forms; nuns have many ideas about what constitutes good action. The conflicting perspectives and modes of action sometimes prove to be a challenge for the Mother of the convent, who is ultimately responsible for the coherence and cohesion of her company.

Sitting with Sister Diana, one day, she confessed that she had needed to lecture Sister Clara-Francesca for being 'too harsh' on the young employees. Sister Clara-Francesca was not only frustrated with what she perceived as perennial laziness, stupidity and disrespect, but felt that it was her job as the nun assigned to dorm duty to teach the young people

virtuous behaviour. Privately, Sister Diana sighed, 'Managing everyone's styles is a huge burden. Our vowed age… well, ones like Sister Clara-Francesca, they can be ruled a little more, although she does follow the current. But the others, Sister Nicola with her style… everyone with their style! They're not juniors anymore.' She shrugged. 'I say one little thing and they go all…' she burst out in a parody of a chastising outburst, pointing and shouting 'meh-meh-meh-meh-meh', before regaining herself again. 'I'm so tired', she finished, 'it's such a burden'.

What a Person Has: Graces and Talents

Following a global Catholic teaching, the PRR believe that everyone possesses a unique collection of talents (*talen*/*bakat*). Given by God, these talents must be diligently developed under the guidance of wise superiors. While these gifts might be God-given, and thus, always present in some form, nuns remind each other that talents are purposeless if they are hidden and not used. It is in spiritual acts, performed for others in this life, that these gifts contribute to the formation of moral character.

In Indonesia, the connection between personhood and good action is sometimes expressed through the accumulation of *prestasi,* an expansive term that may signal good deeds, accomplishments, or merits (Boellstorff 2007; Dove 2011; Long 2007; Parker & Nilan 2013). The fact that Florenese nuns do not join their compatriots in using the word *prestasi* betrays a slightly different understanding of personhood or at least a different approach to its development. As Catholic nuns living a 'third thing', PRR sisters 'own nothing', not even their lives. All achievements—all degree and language programmes, opportunities to lecture or teach, or appointments to high positions—are ordered and

facilitated by the congregation. Because nuns are nuns and not 'regular kids', the congregation expects them to outperform their lay peers in study programmes. Any degree or qualification a nun earns rarely reflects primarily on her, but rather represents the natural culmination of the superiors' decision. The best a nun can hope for is that she will be known as 'smart' and therefore, 'shouldn't be a problem'. This implies that the nuns' selves are not just cultural but also institutional affordances.

'Nothing comes from me', nuns were likely to say, undercutting a formal moment of achievement with pious humility: 'Everything comes from the Lord'. Instead of *prestasi* and achievement, nuns couch their abilities in theological language, calling them charisms[60] (*krisma)*, graces (*rahmat*) or blessings (*berkat*), all words that emphasize the divine origin not only of one's talents but one's very self. These were the words they chose when explicitly discussing their characters in spiritual terms. They often laced these discussions with the more casual terms they used in everyday life: words like 'ability' (*kemampuan*) and excess/advantage (*kelebihan*). The art of training and shepherding young nuns involves digging up the unique abilities of each through various methods of observation, introspection, performance, experimentation and prayer. These abilities, initially identified in the formation convent and thereafter monitored by their superiors, determine the course that a nun's working life will take: her career (*karya*). A novice deemed good with machines and technology may get her first assignment making communion wafers. Her Mother will monitor her progress and work with her to determine whether she is in the right career and whether or not that career warrants further development through advanced education.

That career is conceptualised as a path assigned based on the development of inherent abilities should not blind us to the dreams, desires and aspirations that influence a nun's career in a less pre-determined way. Shifting focus from the discursive effects of work on women to the way women experience work, we might see how women make use of their cultural circumstances and make meaning from them (Ford & Parker 2008). Despite dreams of freedom, women across Indonesia (as elsewhere) encounter constraint and difficulties, particularly in job competition, financial insecurity, sexual politics and family expectations (Bennett 2008). Laura Ahearn's definition of agency as people's 'socio-culturally mediated capacity to act' (2001: 112) helps us see how and why women aspire

[60] 'Charism' is a Christian word referring to special graces and abilities granted to a person by the Holy Spirit for the good of the church.

and act within the constraints of the very institutions that they hope will free them. Through women's generosity within constraint, their creative manipulation of the minutest flexibility in their circumstances, we can see the mediation at work in agency (Bennett 2008). Girls from Flores Timur enter the convent with dreams of a better future and are often frustrated by the constraint, humility and lack of autonomy that accompany religious life. But religious actors are not alone in this discovery. Many Indonesian women migrate for work; their particular matrix of obligations and desires may set them up for a state of frustration that is compounded by relational cares and demands (Bennett 2008; Williams 2007).

PRR nuns try to turn such frustrations to pious ends and to realise that freedom is ensconced in restraint. Finding freedom through discipline has a long tradition amongst religious and ascetics and resonates with the self-esteem other Indonesian youth manifest in aspiring to religious piety (Parker & Nilan 2013). Self-restraint as a mode of freeing or finding the self can be seen in the conscious self-making projects of religious people around the world, projects that deal as much with gender, modernity, and authority as with the nature of personhood (Gade 2004; Mahmood 2001; Muecke 2004). Learning to see the role of failure in the crafting of ethical selves is another mode of excavating the virtuous self from frustration (Kloos 2018).

A nun's realization of her talents happens within the constraints of religious life and through the social bonds of company. While nuns talents may manifest in the formation convent, they are further moulded by the demands of company and place in the working convent, demands which a Mother must manage. In the discussion to follow, we will see how that plays out within the frame of one medior nun's theory of the alignment between character, talents and values.

What a Person Can Be

One morning, I visited the convents in a village 'behind the mountain' from Larantuka. In Belakanggunung, there are three convents in a single divided compound: the formation convent for postulants, the formation convent for novices and a working convent that includes a weaving room and a primary school.

Smiling, Sister Savina, the convent's Mother, reflected, 'If our character, our talents, and our values are all in line, then our work feels light and we are at peace. There is no conflict. It is true', she went on, 'that different characters can sometimes', she smashed her fists

together, 'make for conflict; but if you are all going in the same direction, it will work out, you can overcome any obstacle'.

As I listened to Sister Savina's words, I watched the two juniors sitting across from us. The way they attended to the conversation, relaxed and smiling, gently teasing their Mother, made me think that she acted on her theory of peaceful living-together despite personal differences. The space between the nuns was filled with a warmth completely unrelated to the midday Florenese heat, a warmth I had not always felt in this room when the convent was managed by other Mothers. Sister Savina was the third I had met in less than two years.

Sister Savina's theory of living together is one I heard many times from different nuns, usually older and educated, but not always. Sometimes they used metaphors like 'covering each other up' (*saling menutupi*), meaning that each nun has her own strengths which overlap with the weaknesses of others to form a whole, unassailable cloth. Sometimes they described the process as 'becoming one' (*menjadi satu*) as a result of training and perpetual living in the spirit of the congregation. Sometimes they spoke of 'just understanding' (*mengerti saja*) which begs mercy for a third party's actions based on indirectly related circumstances—their lack of education, their childhood *trauma* or their ethnic background.

These theories of company share three threads: developing virtue, ascertaining difference, and 'going in the same direction'. In the discussion below, I ask us to bear in mind that communal life is both the hallmark of PRR sociality and its primary challenge. Beyond that, I ask us to entertain the idea that life together might be, in one form or another, a necessary challenge for us all. In what follows, I argue that Sister Savina's theory of virtue as spontaneous, affective, and communal can enhance our understandings of moral experience by emphasizing how it emerges in company.

I will begin with virtuous self-development, presenting an overview of the PRR's foundational training programme and considering how this training continues to guide nuns' self-formation in PRR working convents. I will attend especially to the roles of laughter and failure the cultivation of character as both tools and symbols of virtue. From there, I will discuss virtue as directional movement involving moral codes and exemplars, a pragmatic engagement with circumstances, and the affective power of virtue to women devotedly attuning to each other. Finally, I will investigate the mechanisms of developing virtue communally, what it might mean for virtue to exist between and among people as

well as within, and what such emplacement of virtue might imply for human hopes of living together.

VIRTUOUS SELF-DEVELOPMENT

'If our character, our talents, and our values are all in line, then our work feels light and we are at peace.'

The first point of Sister Savina's theory is individual in nature. It is based on an orientation of the self that results in a desirable state of being: lightness and peace. She suggests that the self is comprised of three facets: character (*karakter*), talents (*talen*), and values (*nilai*). The key to internal peace, Sister Savina suggests, is aligning these three in work. What such alignment implies, however, is that each aspect of the self is to some extent both naturally fixed in a person and mutable. In this model, the formation of a virtuous self is a matter of truthfully confronting one's present state as well as nurturing a willingness to change it towards the good. Virtue can be cultivated, character can be shaped, values and talents can be developed, adjusted, changed and abandoned.

Sister Savina's theory implies, however, that no element suddenly springs into being. Rather, an individual's challenge is to adapt a previously existing self, a formerly existing misalignment, to align with God's intention, a process that PRR life together is meant to facilitate. Life together, Sister Savina suggests, is equally a personal and social endeavour; it relies on each member of the convent developing an interior, virtuous self in an ongoing, processual, collaborative uncovering of what each member *could* and *should be.*

In the process, companies of PRR nuns work out between them what a good nun is and, therefore, what the nature of a person is (Tinius 2018). The lengthy, formal training process that nuns undergo requires maintenance, upkeep, and continuous development throughout a nun's life. None of this is left to individual effort; instead, nuns actively participate in each other's formation.

During a PRR retreat, Sister Clara-Francesca confessed to her small group that she was hurt by some rumours when she was first assigned to oversee the making of communion wafers (*pemimpin hostia).* She heard indirectly that some of her fellow sisters did not approve. They thought that she, as a junior, was too young to be made the head of anything. That made her feel rejected, like maybe she 'wasn't capable' (*tidak mampu*). So, she admitted, she assuages her pain by working outside the *hostia*, in the cemetery or in the garden, planting and doing work that makes her happy.

'When I'm in the *hostia*, all I can think about is how no one believes in me. I feel incapable', she said. Already arranging my face to support the encouragement that was bound to come from her Sisters, I was shocked when they respond that that's right; she is not capable.

'Maybe it's because you're a junior, but more likely it's because you have character traits that prevent you from doing a good job. Maybe you're oversensitive? Maybe you don't have the persistence, the fight needed to prove them wrong?' They talked around Sister Clara-Francesca, not to her, indicating that this was a communal problem, not an individual one. For her part, Sister Clara-Francesca seemed reassured and enlivened by

this conversation. She agreed with some of the things they said, nodding and repeating words. Sister Pia jumped in, saying she 'knows exactly' *(tahu persis)* what Sister Clara-Francesca is like, as well as what she can and cannot do. In the space of Sister Clara-Francesca's despair, her community stepped in with blinding honesty, to help form her in ways that would match her capabilities.

PRR nuns seek to cultivate virtuous persons to encourage dispositions towards works of public service and interpersonal goodwill, which we might call ethical action. They want to reform themselves and each other—especially their new recruits—to behave well for the right reasons and to align their internal worlds and external actions to each other's. It is clear from the rich literature on the habitus, ethics and morality that virtuous selves are honed through repetitive ethical practice and that external action can evoke internal dispositions, just as internal dispositions can motivate external action. But PRR sisters strive for empathy: to feel the emotions of others, endure their hardships, and partake in their experiences. The object of PRR habituation, therefore, is not merely a matter of ethical action, but one of ethical feeling.

In her landmark explication of 'personal virtue ethics', Mattingly (2014) shows how people 'experiment' with their morality not only through the contingent (and sometimes tragic) events of everyday life, but also through each other. Relationships framed by particular social and economic circumstances encourage people to cultivate some virtues while abandoning others. Yet, attending to the personal in virtue ethics, she argues, helps us see how people are not just subjects to history and power structures, but may even change them, as a result of their own moral reasoning, experimentation, and action. Her ethnography illustrates how that change applies not only to history and power, but to the very people one experiments with. The self develops through a durational process of moral narrative that happens in a community of others who act by 'pointing not to a simple error in moral judgment but a whole way of understanding' (Mattingly 2014: 91).

In the process of showing us the 'personal' experience and transformation of morality, in arguing that social life is more experimental and creative than we might suspect, Mattingly inevitably shows how the specifics of place and people matter. Although it requires persistent moral action in our relationships with other people, company is meanwhile the cast within which the personal acts. 'Being-with' is a feature of life, even its ontological premise, implying that all action, all becoming happens in and because of the company of other people (Al-Mohammad 2010).

Following Heidegger's idea of human being as always a being-with and of moods as the fundamental state of existence, Gammeltoft explores the moods existing in domestic arenas to understand its influence on Vietnamese pregnant women's mental health, especially their experiences of depression. She finds that sustained problems between kin generate domestic moods that are closed-in, heavy, and dark and lead women to feel stressed, burdened, and worried. Mood attunes them to emotional sensations, exacerbates new issues as they arise, and provides the lens for interpreting experience. Thus, a mood is not just something that affects a person from the outside, but something that she participates in, that is part of her (Gammeltoft 2018).

The PRR are immensely—and justifiably—proud of their willingness to experience the hardships and sufferings of the people with whom they work. Their virtue, I argue, lies as much with *feeling* as it does with doing, as much with affective as with practical action.

A modern understanding of the self is based on a partial application of ancient Christian techniques of the self. Foucault suggests that, by reworking confession and submission as self-discovery rather than self-renunciation, modern people repurposed monastic forms-of-life (Foucault 1997). If we are to read the PRR into Foucault's theory, we might wonder how to interpret people who seem to encapsulate both forms of the self, possessing clear links to the Christian monastic past that Foucault references as well as the modern self-awareness of the present. They seem to claim both the renunciation of the self *and* to desire its fulfilment through the same means.

The PRR, reflexively remake themselves according to various ethical invitations: they willingly subject themselves to the rule of a religious congregation and actively seek self-betterment. James Faubion builds on Foucault's premise that ethical actors are those who freely and knowingly accept society's invitations to 'to make themselves into subjects of esteemed qualities or kinds' (Faubion 2011: 3). We might even go a step further and say that the PRR are the ideal type of Faubion/Foucault's ethical fundamentals: their form of self-betterment is aimed at occupying a single subject position (Faubion 2011: 4).

While Foucault only provided for the ability of each person to occupy a single subject position, Faubion observes that a person may in fact strive towards many positions, each with its own ethical demands (2011: 14). 'We may be nuns', PRR Sisters sometimes announce, 'but we are women first'. Whereas religious life clearly carries its own sorts of ethical demands, those of womanhood are primary to the PRR—specifically, they feel an ethical obligation to cultivate habits of feminine kinship. They also participate in other

ethical systems, including those of kinship and culture. The rules of these several systems frequently conflict, leading the PRR to rely on something more nebulous: the swift interpretation of affect and emotion. To cultivate such virtuous dispositions of empathy requires an intense, never-ending realignment of the self.

One aspect of convent life that is different from the formation house is the relegation of nuns to different kinds of work. Work can no longer be cycled through all the members of a convent, rather each must have her own assignment. In convents of three or four nuns, tasks must be assigned in consideration of each other's gifts and of the ways in which they 'cover each other up'. For example, it was decided in Lewoina that the latest *komunitas* cook—a stocky and sweet young lady from Adonara—needed a new mentor. Sister Clara-Francesca, whose task it had been, was overwhelmed with her work making Communion wafers and was also losing patience with the girl. The Lewoina nuns discussed it together and decided to replace Sister Clara-Francesca with Sister Mattelina. Training the employee required patience, all agreed, and the other option, Sister Osanna's patience was … well… Sister Mattelina should do it. She accepted and excelled at the role, befriending the new cook as much as teaching her. The others had successfully identified that she had been graced with an abundance of patience and an easy way of relating to the young women who worked in the convent.

Girls in Flores Timur do not choose to become nuns because they want to be better, more virtuous people. They do not even choose to enter the convent because they subscribe to a certain moral code. As discussed in the introduction, they have much more, as they would say, modest (*sederhana*) goals in mind: wanting to ride a motorbike, wanting to wear stockings, wanting to be free, wanting to do what their friends were doing, wanting to wear a veil. Some enter the convent conscious of the littleness of their desires; others feel a grand sense of purpose. During their period of formation, however, they learn to uncover their true motivations—whether they be rooted in past *trauma* or romantic notions of religious piety. They also learn the virtues that the PRR especially prize: humility, creativity, perseverance, endurance and compassion. Furthermore, they learn how to interpret little events—a flip-flop washed up on a beach, a butterfly that lands on a shoulder, a chance meeting in an airport—as symbols of God's presence and hints of his will in their lives.[61] They learn to interpret the outside world in terms of their

[61] Deirdre de la Cruz (2015) also discusses the cultivation and meaning of coincidence in her work in the Catholic Philippines.

journey towards virtuous perfection. This is the model they take with them from the formation convent and develop in working convents over the course of their lives. It allows them to include each other in their personal journeys, to evaluate the internal dispositions of each other and to develop virtue between each other, as a community.

I mean to elicit two things about the PRR's brand of ongoing self-formation. The first is that it is intensely, and mainly, practical: you become a virtuous person by *doing* things. The things you do are typically humble: gardening, cooking, caring for animals, cleaning, setting the table. A common narrative among PRR nuns follows these lines: 'I didn't know anything about the convent, I just wanted more dance lessons! Turns out you have to do a lot of work here, and in the end, there's no time for that!' Or, 'I thought if I became a nun, I would learn all this religious knowledge. When I arrived at the convent, they handed me a broom and said, "go clean out that pigsty!"' While we are all laughing, the teller inevitably concludes: 'That's the PRR!'

Second, PRR self-formation is set up to cause women to fail. Not only does convent life defy expectations, but it operates on a reflexivity of wrongness. Nuns must learn to see their familiar ways as out-of-place in the convent and adapt to new rules. This applies as much to established nuns moving convents as it does to new candidates and instils in all a sense of humility and modesty, two of the PRR's most prized virtues. Sometimes, exasperated nuns will chastise sloppy, late, or loud fellows saying, 'Do you think you are still in the village?!' (*Kau pikir masih di kampung kah?!)*

The whole process—work, reflection, expectation, failure, even the humiliation nuns endure—is saturated with levity. Teachers often chastise new recruits by jesting. Novices often laugh rowdily at their friends' mistakes and women eventually learn to soften their pride and laugh at themselves.

The importance of nuns' formative years persists even after they leave the confines of the formation house. Nuns tell stories about their escapades in the formation convents for years afterward, indeed for the rest of their lives. The stories I heard often revolved around the humiliation of the teller, but they were told humorously. Sister Vivina once regaled us with this one:

> When I was in the formation convent, it was across the street from the SVD brothers' formation house. On certain days, we would attend Mass at their place. Whenever we arrived, all the young friars would have their nice clothes on. They would all stare at us during Communion. While we processed to the front, they would be picking the ones they liked! They'd point at us and joke with each other: 'There's your rib-bone!'[62] Then the formator would get angry with us! She'd say, 'You're seeking attention!' Ai, even me! I used to go to Mass and wear my hair like this (*she mimed high pigtails*). I was called in for a conference! The formator said I was seeking attention. *(She frowned, then rolled her eyes).* Ai, can you believe it? If we didn't go to Mass, we got in trouble. If we did go to Mass, we still got in trouble…. Oh, but it was dangerous (*bahaya e)*!

Sister Vivina dramatized her story with voices and gestures. We laughed: at the ridiculousness of young religious candidates flirting with each other *in church*, at the frantic anxiety of their superiors, at the comedy of misplaced blame and the futility of inferiors' protests. It was funny, or else her performance made it so.

The presence of humour and laughter does not mean that there were no feelings of embarrassment and shame. On the contrary, this story reveals how the two are interlinked: girlish delight transformed to reason for shame and censorship in the formator's hands. The feelings of shame retrospectively transformed into moments of ribaldry and self-effacement but also to contemplative critiques of adult wisdom and justice. The formator used a moment of light-hearted flirting to instil virtues of chastity and modesty in her young ward. By returning to this story decades later—by flipping the emotions of shame to the purpose of humorous storytelling—Sister Vivina continues the cycle of learning. She demonstrates that she has incorporated the desired virtues into herself, such that now she can see her childhood interests as petty and silly. In laughing she makes the transformation.

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[62] This is a Biblical joke referring to the creation of the first woman from a rib of the first man.

Couching failure and humiliation in affects of delight is one way that PRR communities encourage the interior formation of virtuous selves. Embarrassment and shame are key emotions for nuns, especially the young, both in the formation convents and in working convents. They are key in two senses: in the experiential sense (nuns often felt them), but also in the sense that they are necessary for the development of virtuous selves. Failure, embarrassment and shame also cultivated in candidates a sense of themselves as suffering subjects, sacrificing their egos 'for the sake of our futures' (Howell 1996c). Suffering and self-renunciation, as might be distilled from ancient monastic ways, are important themes for PRR nuns. Indeed, on a separate occasion, Sister Vivina spoke seriously of her early experiences, saying: 'It was suffering (*derita*). Lots of suffering. Heavy suffering. It's lucky I became a nun at all.'

In this section, I have discussed virtuous self-development mostly as an individual project. In the next section, I will discuss the second part of Sister Savina's theory regarding the nature of individuals. Recognition of other people as unique and different from oneself is a fundamental part of the PRR's model of virtue in community.

People are Different

'Different characters can sometimes make for conflict.'

The second tenet of Sister Savina's proposal is that people are different and that this difference can cause problems. Character difference, the nuns confess, is partially a matter of natural inclinations and partially a matter of variance in the personal development of interior virtue. They are aware that the struggle for virtue is difficult and that each of them will fail, inevitably and constantly, which is part of why they laugh. They are also aware

that people develop different talents, that they orient themselves in different virtuous directions. In theory this difference is desirable and equitable; nuns should appreciate each other's strengths and know their own weaknesses. They should notice how they 'cover each other up'. In practice, however, nuns sometimes find it difficult to discern the talents of others. It can be frustrating when a member of their company does not perform to their standards of goodness. Equally, it can be distressing when one's own virtue goes unappreciated. What is more important: the virtue of hard work or the virtue of community? When dinner time comes, should nuns work just one more hour to get the accounts in order, the plants watered? Or should they abandon their duties and gather together to eat? What is more important: kindness or truth? Generosity or prudence? Humility or perseverance?

These are real moral problems that manifest frequently in the convent, as different people, with different talents, manifesting different styles, must live together as a single unified community. The trouble that inevitably emerges from difference is the source of Sister Vivina's damned-if-we-do-damned-if-we-don't sighs and of Sister Savina's fist-smashing 'conflict'. It is also the element that gives life to the convent's order, that provides the source for laughter, for discovery, and for joy. Since this difference is primary to living—and living well—peaceful community emerges as something that involves the virtuous cultivation of that difference as well as its recognition in the other. This is why the differences in personality and culture are celebrated during nuns' rites of passage. It is by struggling to grasp each other, through rational thought and embodied action, by acclimating to each other's differences, that they can live spiritually fulfilling lives. This journey involves the recognition and cultivation of difference through occasionally assimilating to the other and 'digging up' each other, soliciting responses from others (McCoy 2018). These reciprocal processes, I argue, involve imagining oneself in the other's position, impersonating each other in dramas and stories and representing each other to each other.

Sister Savina and anthropologists both know that difference asserts itself, but why should it be so? Like PRR nuns, anthropology has often explained difference in individuals as owing to differences in social and cultural upbringing. Such distinctions served as the basis for Ruth Benedict's theory of personality, in which each society created a unique psychology that dwelt in the minds of each of its members (Benedict 2005 (1934)). Benedict's theory implies that other people influence the conditions under which a person might reason, react, think, or feel. Benedict's work, along with the wok of others in the

early culture and personality studies, continues to influence psychological anthropology today, to explain how exactly culture and society influences our patterns of thinking and our ways of being (LeVine 2001). Indonesian theories about ethnic personalities, psychological discourses taken up by Indonesian religious orders, and anthropological inquiries into the foundations of society and personhood overlap.

One way that this relationship has been figured is by seeing difference as something that is called into being by a puzzling array of questions brought upon the individual from a mass of outside others. From this perspective, a person 'is *made to be* an individual/subject or it is *made to be* a generic non-entity by a swarm of other agencies' (Latour 2005: 213, emphasis in original). With some modification (Latour's theory has been subject to reasonable critique regarding the weight of different 'actants' in one's 'network'), such an approach hints at the importance of company for developing different characters. As nuns differentiate each other's characters they call that difference into attention, if not into being. The way they cast difference psychologises character, altering the experience of selves and providing a prospectus for self-formation.

PRR *bodies* are different too and the style with which they evince their character is rooted in the way they sense the world. Making sense of difference is based on their unique bodies which serve as the 'existential ground of culture' (Csordas 1993: 135), an argument that emphasizes that people are bodies that think and that it is through experience that both subjects and their worlds are made (Csordas 1990, 1993, 1994a). Sensory experiences of others, couched in the intimate embrace of company and monitored through thoughtful reflection figure difference as character, pitching it as part of the self and open to formation.

In an interesting blend of metaphysics and psychology, PRR nuns believe that God creates each person uniquely, endows them with a unique set of talents and sets forth for them a unique path of life. Simultaneously, the nuns believe that our very particular pasts affect us subconsciously, drive us to act in different ways and to develop distinct personalities. Even these theories, concerned as they are with interiority, still refer to sociality, since our *trauma* and joys emerge from the way others treat us.

Nuns cannot help but notice, living close upon each other as they do, that they are different from one another. For people who put so much thought into unifying themselves, into 'occupying the same subject position', they persistently demonstrate incredibly different personalities. The inescapability of difference underlies a more

practical question that the nuns must ask each other regularly: *Why* did she do that? This question represents a very real challenge of living together: mutual intelligibility in the face of different characters, with competing values, motivations, and styles. In its answer lies the solution to living together. As we saw in chapter four however, the heart as seat of emotion and motivation is ultimately a mystery. And yet, commitment to living together and to developing character demands that nuns keep going in the same direction.

Going in the Same Direction

'If you're all going in the same direction, it will work out, you can overcome any obstacle.'

In the final thread of her theory, Sister Savina describes living together as a company movement: 'all going in the same direction'.[63] In this formula, the convent appears not a place to sit and be, but rather a place to move and become. Two elements mark this movement: its direction must be mutually agreed upon and it must endure the passage of time. Movement imagery is inherent to the PRR's work, discussed in chapter nine, as well as to their identity as a congregation. It is present in the Indonesian term for religious order, *tarekat,* which means 'a path' or 'a way to truth'. In becoming a PRR nun, each Sister vows to follow the same path. The directional movement that Sister Savina references is therefore a direct call to the path that they are all supposed to be following. But what is this path? And in what direction are they meant to be travelling?

[63] Tanuwijaya et al (2020) define *komunitas* as people with the same destination, suggesting that 'going in the same direction' is part of a broader Indonesian theory of community.

At a theological level, PRR nuns compare their path to the way of the cross: Jesus's journey from Jerusalem to Calvary, from the time he struggles with his fate to his crucifixion and death.[64] This is the metaphor for nuns' earthly journey; it is also a common Christian metaphor. Following it means developing virtue through mimicry: accept Christ's suffering and enjoy in his glory. Sister Savina's theory turns the lonely journey into an imagined procession, a communal march. She conjures a vision of all those living together travelling up the same hill, each with their own crosses, brought and carried as embodied *trauma*. Such an image implies that every nun walks the path Jesus trod and, in so doing, connects with Jesus' subjectivity, embodying him.

This image evokes another common Christian concept, discussed in chapter four: the idea that Christ dwells in every heart, manifests in each person, and that a Christian ought therefore to treat every person they meet with the same charity with which they would treat Jesus, should he appear before them. Obviously, this is extraordinarily difficult, not least because people usually appear to be merely themselves and not the divine saviour of the universe. For the PRR and others, the operative word is 'appear'. It is not that the divinely individuated self is not real, but rather that the truth of it is located in the heart of the other. To fulfil their calling, to travel along the same path, to reach Jesus, they must uncover each other's hearts.

If virtuous self-formation in company requires nuns to experience the presence of God in each other while they continue to appear to each other as merely their individual selves, how can they travel the path with and as him? Like other Christians, PRR nuns attempt to evoke God amid baffling and conflicting diversity. While some Christian communities seek highly mediated or immediate religious experience (Boylston 2018; Engelke 2007), Catholic communities often seem to fuse the two, refusing to acknowledge a difference between the vessel and its contents, between the body and its soul (Cannell 2005; Lester 2005).

For PRR nuns, the experience of God is twofold. It happens in silent solo contemplation, deep in the heart where the holy spirit may move, where Jesus may speak, and where God may express his desires. It also happens in their social lives. They literally 'find God in the midst of the people' and in their life together. Understood in this way, their striving for God *must* take place through the media of *other people*, especially those other nuns with whom they share their waking moments. At the same time, they assert that they

[64] It also involves other mimicries: Mary's, saints, founders, superiors.

themselves are the medium by which God visits his people.[65] Moreover, each feels herself to be carrying Jesus in her heart: an immediate experience for her, but an experience that must be turned outward for the benefit of others, so that others might experience God through her.

Still, nuns rarely appear to each other purely as the Christ. Instead, they usually seem—to each other—to be frustratingly, unflappably themselves. Their ability to go towards the divine as it sits in each other's hearts is complicated by the glaring differences between people. So how do they go in the same direction? One answer can be found in how the order is structured: the PRR have a mission statement with four priorities. They have a hierarchy of personnel that determines who will assign which tasks to whom. They have a set of rules that dictates the times nuns will eat, pray, sleep, work, and relax. They have a latent extra-religious moral code that is more-or-less unanimously agreed upon. They have a pride in ordinariness, and a cultivated affect of joy.

When Sister Savina encourages companies to 'go in the same direction', she indexes two levels: the structural and the everyday emergent. For the PRR, the general direction is what I have discussed above: the way of the cross which leads to the kingdom of God. This is a metaphor to encourage all Christians to work through humility, pain and suffering to achieve a unified goal: the manifestation of God's will on Earth and reunion with God after death. The second sense of Sister Savina's suggestion is more pragmatic and has to do with the specific part each individual or group is to play in transforming earthly life to be more like God's kingdom. Agreeing on what that role is, what that kingdom looks like and then enacting it in concert with others is the second, and arguably more difficult, challenge of religious life.

Each PRR convent has a work, a mission, or a purpose. Most are 'pastoral,' serving the spiritual and emotional needs of a community. Others have more concrete purposes: education, health, or business. Many combine several *karya* under one roof. The 'pastoral' convent in Belakanggunung, where I met with Sister Savina that hot December day, contained four sisters and as many *karya*. All of these works were meant to go in the direction of providing pastoral care for the surrounding neighbourhoods. Sister Savina managed the convent's affairs, Sister Carmine cooked for the novitiate, Sister Edwidge taught preschool, and Sister Tomasin ran a weaving house. Every morning, after

[65] They often compare the presence of the PRR to Mary's 'yes' that allowed the Word of God to enter into humanity.

breakfast, each would go to her own work, each on her own path, but 'going in the same direction'.

My previous visits to this convent had been when it was under the care of other Mothers. My impression during those visits was of a darkened convent, both literally (closed curtains and dim bulbs) and emotionally (issues unspoken, secrets danced around). My early impressions of Sister Tomasin had been of a woman who seemed older than she was; extremely thin, she carried herself straight and sported a permanent sad smile.

On this day, however, my impressions changed. Sister Savina urged Sister Tomasin to take me to the weaving house. 'It's wonderful', she said, 'what they do over there. Wait until you see it'. I had visited the weaving house several times before and Sister Savina knew it. In the guise of entertaining a guest, Sister Savina acknowledged Sister Tomasin's virtue: her hard work and dedication, despite its difference from her own work. Sister Tomasin absorbed this. Normally earnest and subdued, she practically skipped across the broken pavement, smiling as she led me between buildings, around a gutter, down a dirt path and into a large room filled with enormous Dutch looms. She explained the process of weaving and introduced me to the staff—a small group of widows and the physically disabled—before sitting down to show off a little of her own skill in action.

'I taught myself!' she exclaimed. 'It's like we were saying before, if you *love* your work, it will be easy! If everything in you moves in that direction you will be glad (*gembira*)'. Sister Tomasin was transformed from the staid, quiet woman of a few months before into a being of lightness and purpose, pulling me across the room to drape me in her handmade scarves and press her handmade dish towels into my hands. In describing the movement within her, she connected her emotional and spiritual journey to that of the congregation; the path seemed to extend out of her heart and into the order. When we returned to the convent, newly bedecked, Sister Savina was no less proud than Sister Tomasin herself.

It is that emotion, that encouragement and warmth that I want to draw out. It is Sister Savina's grasp of the situation: of Sister Tomasin's work, where it fits within their company, how it suits Sister Tomasin's character and how it clears a path to God. Good work, for the PRR, indicates a virtuous self, a good alignment of values and talents. Good work also serves the congregation's purposes; it advances—however modestly—the virtue of the order. That virtue among the PRR has a feeling of gladness (*gembira*). When it emerges, as it did between Sister Tomasin and Sister Savina that day, it shifts and swells

and comes closer to rejoicing (*bergembira*). Fostering this sensibility, this potential for feeling is far from easy.

The convent in Belakanggunung had not always felt so warm, nor were the relations between the nuns who lived there always so amicable as they appeared to me that day. Months earlier, long before Sister Savina arrived, Sister Carmine and Sister Edwidge came to eat breakfast at the convent in Lewoina. We all sat around the table making happy small talk about the juniors' progress towards final vows—a seven-year informal process of almost non-stop character formation. The younger Sister Edwidge had to leave ahead of Sister Carmine so that she could get to the school in time to teach. As she bid her farewells, everyone seemed proud of her: this responsible young nun who had barely made her first vows but was already building a career. What hope for the future of the order! She left with exquisite purpose and protocol. When she was gone, however, Sister Carmine launched into an attack on her character, emphasizing her laziness, how she would not clean the house nor rise for prayers. Among these critiques, she cried:

> 'To be honest, this junior should return at ten. At ten. That's when school gets out. It's already been arranged. But she always stays late. I ask her, "What are you doing staying so late at school!?" If she came back, she could do the housework!'

Others (like Sister Savina) might interpret Sister Edwidge's tardiness in a positive light, as demonstrating good work ethic and devotion to the children she serves. Rather than recognising their disparate work, Sister Carmine chose to see Sister Edwidge's actions in relation to her own work, which she felt was underappreciated by Sister Edwidge and her generation of sisters. 'Kids now-a-days' (*anak jaman now*)' she complained,

> 'They're all young! But I don't know what they're doing! I rebuked them in a meeting, I said: "Every day you know what I do? I face the fire and its smoke! I don't face a gas oven or an oil stove. No. I face smoke and fire. Can *you* face smoke and fire?!"'

Sister Carmine might just have been venting away from her community—a perpetual necessity given the intimate relations and the need to spread emotions around—or it might have been a challenge, directed not to the (now absent) Sister Edwidge, but to the others in the room, especially the juniors still seated at the table. She maintains that all nuns, regardless of *karya*, are obligated to participate in the upkeep of the communal space. Either way, Sister Carmine's words conjure a failing. The company in her convent *were not* cultivating their own virtue. They *were not* recognizing each other's merit. They

were not moving in the same direction. At the same time, she invites her fellow nuns to step into her shoes, to better understand the crosses they carry and to continue together, in the same direction.

Cultivating Virtue between People

It is through these three things: the internal development of a virtuous self, the ability to correctly and mercifully ascertain the differences between people, and travel together along a moral path that nuns may live together in harmony. This, in any event, is Sister Savina's theory and it is one with which I am inclined to agree.

In suggesting that virtue, for the PRR and others, is developed in company, I am making two assertions: that one's self—including oneself as a moral actor—is developed in and through the company of others (Hollan 2014; Walker 2013) and second that virtue is a thing that can be developed, held, and experienced communally (Turner 1969). That is, that a group of people, in this case a given convent or an entire congregation of nuns can, between them, cultivate and own virtue (Laidlaw 2013). I also want to suggest that the PRR cultivate virtue by consciously connecting self-development to community efforts (Carrithers 1990). One way of making this connection is through prayerful reflection on how one's actions reflect the congregation's mission. Another involves ascertaining something of other people, pulling them into your own being: in some way, becoming them, as they become you.

In this chapter, I have discussed character as virtuous self-making, principally because it is crucial to understanding life as a PRR nun. Their activities, principles and yearnings are oriented towards becoming better people, defined as those who exist 'for common use' (Agamben 2013), to serve others. The service they have in mind, which we will encounter in chapter eight, requires coordination between the congregation's various houses and members. It requires them to 'cover each other up' by learning to 'uncover' each other's *trauma*, talents and character. Important anthropological work in ethics have also demonstrated how individuals strive to make themselves into better, more virtuous people. Often framed within the context of religion, these efforts involve bodily habituation (Mahmood 2005) and ethical action towards others (Kloos 2018). Both are facets of virtue development among the PRR. This can be seen especially in their communal work, which for them is both cause and effect of virtuous personhood.

In their convent relationships with each other, we begin to see that the practice of virtue involves stepping outside oneself and inhabiting the position of another, that this practice of inhabiting someone else not only changes the self but indicates the many ways that people are not in a single process of becoming but at the nexus of many possible becomings. Embodied imagination is therefore as essential to living together as it is to becoming themselves. In the next chapter, I will build on my suggestion that virtue among the PRR has an affective quality that is crucial to its propagation. It is, I argue, in acting, emotion, and imagination more than rules and knowledge that the PRR to grow in virtue.

Chapter 7: Expression

Twilight passed. The swish of palm fronds and white habits infused the night air—which was warm, the white tiles cool underfoot—as nuns gathered in the courtyard's central chapel for evening prayer. Silence hung; stillness prevailed. Which is why, that evening, Sister Arcangela, Sister Maravilosa, and I spoke in hushed whispers as we tiptoed slowly down the hallway that led from the classroom we used for rehearsal to the entrance hall, where I would leave them to go 'home'—to the convent in Lewoina—and they would leave me to join their Sisters here, in prayer. Despite the solemn duties of the hour—in stark contrast to our recent antics in the rehearsal room, but more on that in a moment—broad smiles filled the faces of my young companions. Like evening prayer, this too was ordinary. They wore happiness like a second habit.

Sister Maravilosa carried my backpack. Sister Arcangela threaded her arms around one of mine. We walked in step, our hips swaying together, contributing to the swish and silence of the evening.

'It is so great', Sister Maravilosa hummed, 'to move and to play. And we can learn people! (*belajar orang*) Turns out (*ternyata*), everyone has a different body, a different way of breathing and walking'.

'Yeah', added Sister Arcangela, 'That's what I like about it: we can learn other people. Someone might feel relaxed when we feel tense'.

'Bebas ekspresi' sighed Sister Maravilosa.

'Free expression', echoed Sister Arcangela.

…

Expression in Anthropology

I open with the evening vignette because of the way it presents two themes uniting PRR experience and performance ethnography. The first theme is caught up in the idea of 'learning people' through a conscious bodily practice. The second theme is caught up in the Indonesian phrase: *bebas ekspresi*, literally translated as 'free expression'. In what follows, I will suggest that these two concepts—fresh and emergent as they were on that soft Florenese night—are key to understanding the ethnographic potential of performative methods as well as the intersubjective experience of perpetually becoming an Indonesian nun.

'Free expression' speaks to the place where subjectivity and representation intersect, generating fruitful questions about truth, authenticity, and anthropological methods. What is the nature of the 'self' in various ethnographic contexts and how is it made known to others? What is the responsibility of ethnographer in representing others, in expressing their subjectivities in the context of her own argument? 'Expression' figures in these questions and in anthropological literature in a few ways. First, it appears as a way of grappling with senses of the self in certain ethnographic contexts as a moral demand to align interior experience with exterior representation. The moral concern with, and possibility for, values like 'authenticity' or 'sincerity' are caught up in specific religious and economic histories that posit an autonomous and responsible self (eg Keane 2002). In many Christian traditions, 'performance' is only 'good' when it is 'true', that is, when it accurately expresses an interior emotional-mental state.

Despite the individuality implied in this concept of interiority, a person is not alone in validating the truth of her expression; other people have their opinions and make their judgements. This situation points to the intersubjective morality of expression even in contexts that support the idea of a completely independent self by revealing that it is the audience—and not the actor—who determine the validity of the performance (Jackson 2005). This judgement is based in part on the way someone's expression matches with

one's apprehension of who another person is, which, as we began to see in preceding chapters, incorporates social and cultural assumptions about race and status into knowledge of the other person's personal biography (Martin 2007: 124–7).

'Expression' also figures as a performative method for producing particular kinds of interior experiences (Butler 1988). Working in Japanese business etiquette classes, for example, Dunn shows how the impression of 'bright, positive' selves may be trained from the outside in. She argues that, unlike Euro-American theories of the authentic self and its proper expression, Japanese theories are concerned with appearances, especially of a subordinate to a superior. Internal experience of self matters less in this context; teachers are apt to assume that students have proper inner orientations, but just need help expressing it, whereas Americans would assume that a surly exterior is the natural expression of a negative interior. What matters is that the individual is able to narrate their transformation from someone with negative habits to someone with a 'bright, positive' self. Narration happens through self-presentation, through expression (Dunn 2016).

Both of these strands bear weight in our concerns with anthropological praxis, especially when it comes to the ethics of representation and how they are tied to ethnographic methods. The authors of (the still important) *Writing Culture* championed the vision of 'good ethnographies as "true fictions"' (Clifford 1986: 6). Conceptualising ethnographies as fiction was meant to point to the fact that ethnographies have authors—they are 'partial truths' constructed by the anthropologist in the company of her interlocutors. The idea that they are nonetheless 'true' points to ethical commitments to accuracy and authenticity in representation. Maintaining the tension between the two—as the authors in *Writing Culture* aimed to do—points to the capacious ambivalence of ethnography as a morally-laden practice of creation (in the sense that something is created) involving both expression and erasure (Clifford & Marcus 1986).

One of the things so often erased happens to be the body. The limits of ethnography's principal medium, the written word, means that, by necessity, not only are the specific bodies of specific interlocutors left out of the 'fiction', but all bodies are left out. Despite its foundations in embodied knowledge gained through long-term, in-the-flesh fieldwork, the body's ways of knowing, expressing and knowing-through-expressing are so often absent from our representations and analyses. One danger of this situation is that it contributes to a hierarchy of field 'material' in which words become more valuable—

because more translatable onto the page—than, for example, the affective qualities of voice (Blackman 2012; Finer 2012), objects (Giordano & Pierotti 2020) or bodies present together in space (Hamera 2013; Hartblay 2020). Our representational end-goal inevitably directs our attention in the field. While, generally speaking, we share ethical commitments to authenticity in our representations of other people in our ethnographies, as anthropologists we hold much diversity about what 'authentic representation' is, and especially whether the 'content' of speech, can (or should) be divorced from the physical presence of a speaker, or the company in which she speaks them. We make choices along these lines all the time; this is how we craft our fictions and express our truths, by directing attention towards the features that matter and doing our best to evoke the whole. Whether theatrical or written, the means of representing is a way of knowing that both responds to and shapes the 'subject matter', which, we know, is never fully divorced from its representation. Ethnographic representation 'is a process of discovery by which something is worked out' (Hartblay 2020: 102).

One choice is to turn to embodied–rather than written–forms of expression as a way to bring the 'liveness' of fieldwork back into ethnographic representations (Turner 1979). Using theatre as a mode of representation or pedagogy is often grounded by two arguments related to our discussion here: first that the expressive capabilities of the body have the potential to advance our ethnographic understandings, and second that 'putting the body on the line' amplifies ethical issues of presence and collaboration that haunt all ethnographic research and representation (Alexander Craft et al. 2007).

The field of terms used for theatrical practice in ethnography is broad. For the sake of this chapter, I will refer to the field as 'performance ethnography'. I choose this term from among many (Saldaña locates around eighty (2016: 13–14)) because of the way it makes ethnography the subject and performance the modifier, ethnography the main thing and performance the method. For my purposes here, I consider performance ethnography to be ethnography done or represented (or both) through performance.

The idea of using performance to 'learn about people' is a frontier facet of the literature on performance ethnography (Hamera 2013; Hartblay 2020; Kazubowski-Houston 2010), emerging from a longer interest in representing people in their sensorial totality (Schechner 1985; Turner 1979)—a project the literature represents as both political (Alexander 2005; Denzin 2018; Jones 2002; Madison 2007a, 2007b) and pedagogical (Denzin 2003; Goldstein et al. 2014; Rossiter & Godderis 2011). Of course, 'learning

about people' through bodily engagement is also a central project (if not *the* central project) of social anthropology. The discipline 'has long staked its claim to truth on the vicissitudes of sensory and embodied experience' (Pandian 2015: 14). 'Learning about people' is also a primary preoccupation of PRR nuns. Their work—both as authoritative religious subjects and as members of intimate emotional communities—relies on their apprehensions of other people. The section of this chapter on 'learning other people' brings these two theoretical strands to bear on our performative practice, showing how performance ethnography helped me, the researcher, learn about PRR strategies of learning each other, as well as how PRR approaches to 'knowing' a person (and the limits of such knowledge) breathe new meaning into performance ethnography as a methodology.

Methodological interventions in anthropology have acknowledged the constant flux of sociality, privileged the contingency of face-to-face interaction over planned research design and encouraged a flexible and reflexive research ethic (Benson & O'Neill 2007). By offering new forms of reflexivity within a truly processual paradigm, one that deals with ethnography not as an artifact of past, but as a theory in-the-making, performance ethnography acknowledges in form what we already know in principle, that our research is a making-with. We engender new worlds through our presence and our participation in other people's lives (Gatt 2014, 2015).

The ethnographic question of the extent to which one can 'know others' (Hollan & Throop 2008) has been echoed many times, not only by others working in the Pacific region, where the 'doctrine of the "opacity of minds"' is widespread (Robbins & Rumsey 2008), but also by ethnographers working with performance as an anthropological method. For it is precisely here that much work in performance ethnography hopes to intervene: by bringing the body's way of knowing, its attunement to others, to bear on our ways of ethnographic knowing. Performance ethnography capitalises on performance and ethnography's states as processes of vulnerability: ritual time-spaces in which we open ourselves to others (Hartblay 2020). The embodied opening of the self, it is hoped, can lead us to understanding something of the experience of other people, their relationships, and the values that drive them.

Representing ethnography through performance often makes use of empathy through capitalizing on and subverting audience's expectations of the genre, drawing them into its emotional pull or distancing them from the scene. This puts audience, actors, and

ethnographic subjects into an 'ethnographic sociality' (Long 2015), one in which all are made aware of the simultaneous presence and absence of others (Madison 2007a). To reach the point of representation, ethnographers working both in text and theatre must work extensively in and through their medium, making the most of the strengths of our chosen genre. In text we might labour to articulate, evoke, argue, or convince, while in performance, we might enact, compel, or affect, for example, but both require lengthy processes of coming into being that happen through the very media of their representation. The ideas in a book take form, become themselves, through words and photographs. The ideas in a performance take form and become themselves 'in relation to body, time, and space' (Schneider & Wright 2013: 14). Both draw upon the lively ways of knowing inherent in ethnography, putting them into new constellations, forming them into new possibilities.

That ethnographic 'material' is disciplined differently through different modes of mediation does not mean that there are actual limits between the two. Performative explorations often rely as much on the power and meaning of words as the affective capacities of bodies. This can be seen in the prominent influence of verbatim theatre on performance ethnography (Long 2015) and the disciplinary history of textuality in performance ethnography, especially in the United States (Conquergood 1998). Similarly, text often benefits from the interventions of other people—important interlocutors in our academic, familial, and ethnographic companies—and is influenced by embodied memories and emotional reactions.

Implicit in the benefits of performance ethnography as a method is the spontaneity of the body and its responses to others. The idea of 'expression' as the externalisation of an internal disposition is complicated by the fact that the body both acts on and re-acts to the bodies of others, altering interior sensations in the process. On paper, this is difficult to explain; in performance, it manifests directly. This is part of what is captured by the term 'free expression'.

When Sister Maravilosa and Sister Arcangela sigh over the way performance offers 'free expression' and a way of 'learning people', they unwittingly speak to all of these ideas. As young nuns in the convent, they stand in a hierarchy in which they must humble themselves, stay (mostly) silent and obey their superiors. At the same time, they participate in practices that deepen their sense of interiority, including prayerful reflection. Coming to terms with what their hearts have dug up, they also come to terms with the

proper times and places for 'freedom' in expression: in convent 'sharing' sessions, in confidential spilling hearts (*curah hati)* with their peers, and in psychologically charged meditations where the self can express itself wordlessly, unconsciously. At other times, expression may be restrained, or, as discussed in the previous chapter, cultivated towards particular, productive ends.

Nuns' 'free expression' also speaks to the ethical, analytical, and stylistic questions raised by an ethnographic turn towards performance. Through performance, nuns come to 'know each other' in a setting of collaborative creation. This is something they do often, in everyday convent life, and they know it. Yet the performative sense is underplayed. Sticking strictly to a theoretical focus on performativity (getting used to convent time, learning the prayers, etc) and on 'digging up' *trauma* and character, we might overlook the small performances they enact every day and the ways that these too help uncover the self through collaborative, spontaneous and sensory acts of expression.

The performance ethnography workshops were meant to capture some of that, to mobilize bodies in the same space to investigate virtues, values and ways of relating that ran through PRR religious life. What these experiments were able to do that the observation of other arenas of PRR life could not was unite 'free expression' and collaborative work in the same space. This meant that the fictions generated within them spoke directly to the nature of self-in-company among the PRR. The experiments we ran together, like so many fieldwork moments, raised questions and issues that span the whole range of PRR experience, but this is the one to which my analysis here will speak. My argument is that: (1) employing performance as an ethnographic method helps the anthropologist learn that (2) PRR nuns become themselves not only through digging up emotional knowledge, but also through modes of performance in which they grasp at each other's experiences, and that (3) the way they do this is through a mode of attention that allows them to subtly take up each other's bodily habits as if they were, in fact, the other person.

I now take up two threads, interwoven, about performance ethnography and about practising it with nuns. I consider what performance as a method can teach us about the experience of being a young nun—with all its attendant trials and triumphs. Additionally, I discuss how the meanings nuns gave to the exercise, as well as their unique ways of engaging with it bodily, reflect back on the method, revealing new possibilities for performance ethnography in anthropological theory and methodology. That is, I seek, in

this chapter, to answer the double-sided question: What can Indonesian Catholic nuns and performance ethnography teach us about each other? I will suggest that PRR nuns slip in and out of two modes of attention, both of which have been introduced in previous chapters. Between reflecting on their interior selves and embracing each other's style and character into their performative repertoire, PRR nuns become who they are in the company of others.

As mentioned above, 'free expression/*bebas ekspresi'*, has ties to both performance ethnography as an anthropological methodology and the mutual becoming of PRR nuns. The section below dealing with *bebas ekspresi* will explore how the term has been meaningful in artistic pedagogies in Indonesia, uniting this with the previous comments on how expression appears in the literature on performance ethnography as a conceptual tool of research and as a political tool of representation.

Simultaneously, this section will explore the notion of *bebas ekspresi* as an Indonesian preoccupation, taken up by the PRR, which reveals the desires of women living within the constraints of the convent. By comparing the way performing nuns moved their bodies in the rehearsal room with how they moved their bodies *outside* the rehearsal room, I will explore how the discipline of dreams and desires plays through the body, especially in its relation to the bodies of other nuns. PRR concern with free expression is linked to the difficult-to-escape tension between their deeply personal experiences of self and their desire to subject themselves to the will of God and to be absorbed into the unity of the congregation. This discussion too will show us what performance ethnography reveals about the experience of Indonesian nuns as well as how PRR nuns provide new approaches to the methodological grip of performance ethnography.

This chapter deals with the embodied, relational aspects of performance. While I will try to describe these ethnographic moments in as vibrant and telling language as I can, words are no substitute for performance (nor, of course, vice versa). Therefore, you will find embedded in this chapter video clips of our performance exercises. I encourage any reader with the time and inclination to 'read' these short films alongside the following text.

One more caveat before I proceed. While I believe strongly in my assertions here, I am also wary of overstating my case. Performative methods are no different from ethnography in the sense that the individuals participating with you greatly influence the direction of your thoughts and conclusions—as they should! I hope the reader understands that I am extrapolating from some few meetings with a handful of young

nuns thoughts about a variable methodology and a rich and diverse congregation. I will do so boldly and playfully, with theatre, anthropology and PRR nuns as my models and guiding stars. But in the end, I merely offer suggestions, ideas. I still *know* so little.

LEARNING OTHER PEOPLE

That afternoon, before Sister Maravilosa and Sister Arcangela walked me out, I introduced the small performing group to a few exercises, designed for two purposes: to notice another's movement and play with incorporating it into their own bodies. These exercises built into scene work in which the aim was to let the body form character and lead the direction of scenes, as opposed to writing scenes to which the body must conform.

We began with a mirror exercise (*cermin*). The six nuns split into pairs. I instructed them to face each other and, maintaining eye contact, follow each other's movements exactly. One person led while the other followed. The idea is for the follower to look like the leader's reflection. 'Ideally', an observer would not know who was leading. The leader can perform any actions she wants, so long as she maintains eye contact with the follower. It is a simple game with a simple premise.

The nuns, rather than mirroring each other's movements, actually performed a carbon copy of the movement they were seeing. That is, if the leader raised her left hand, the

follower would also raise her left hand. What 'should' happen is that the follower (who is facing the leader) raises her right hand to 'mirror' the leader. Instead, all of the nuns performed *as if* they were the leader. This happened unreflexively and automatically. It took several rounds of explanations from me and some serious concentration from the nuns to get them to mirror rather than reproduce.

Outside of our rehearsals, I had often noticed nuns' exceptional abilities to mimic each other. This was most evident in the young as they learned new work and began to take on the bodily comportment of a PRR nun, but it also manifested in their storytelling, in the subtle ways they picked up on each other's expressive style. Seen in this light, the mirror exercise hints at a style of interaction that is other-focused. Instead of echoing back an experience in which the other is a reflection of themselves, these young nuns fell into a pattern of engagement in which their task was to become the other, in place, from her perspective. It is a slight but powerful difference.

PRR Mirror Exercise: https://vimeo.com/504974891/8f67bde4cf

In this video, nuns play with the mirror exercise. Watch how the pair in the front adjust their belts and how that action is repeated several moments later by the pair behind them. Movements spread easily through the room from pair to pair. I think, now, with nearly two years of participant-observation behind me, that this kind of diffuse, or other-anchored attention implies something about the way young PRR nuns experience (and are taught to experience) the world. In their ability to notice subtle motions caught out of the corner of the eye and accurately mimic them lie broader PRR expectations that

young nuns learn by example as well as by a kind of exact mimicry. They might not know anything when they begin their first formal assignment, but after several weeks of living in a convent, with very little direct instruction, they are expected to know what to do and how to behave. Perhaps this osmosis builds on the former strategy, learning by example. Watching and copying elder nuns, young nuns position their bodies in identical formations. They mould their selves to others' through incorporating subtle bodily attitudes. The mirror exercise, however, suggests a form of mimicry that is acutely aware of the other's perspective. The extent of this kind of attention was revealed when we moved on to an exercise in which I asked them to notice the differences in each other's bodies—and then to take them on in their own.

They took turns following each other around the room, trying to mimic each other's way of walking: what was most forward? How did they hold their spine? How did the feet hit the floor? How did the arms swing?

PRR Walking Exercise: https://vimeo.com/505437038/63f4bbf6a2

It strikes me, as I return to this short clip, how strange each nun looks as she earnestly tries to move like another. But on a second watch, I have to admit, it is not the nuns who look strange, rather it is my perception that has been estranged. Having become accustomed to each nun's style of movement, it startles me now to see them falling so easily into each other's patterns. To see solid Sister Arcangela bounce along with Sister Maravilosa's stride. To watch as backward-leaning Sister Eunonia trips along with Sister Simplicia's forward-falling gait. To watch, just at the end of this clip, as Sister Carina pulls

her arms behind her back, just as Sister Vitalia pulls hers, in a characteristic attitude of conscious contemplation. While I played my role of teacher-director, that evening, I saw mainly the inconsistencies and was blind to how well—how weirdly well—they inhabited each other. It is only now, watching this video again, that I notice: they fall in step beautifully. Now the strangeness comes not from the disjunct between their bodies and the ones they follow, but between their bodies now, copying someone else, and their bodies in normal time. I notice the differences just from having been around them for so long. But while I can say I have perceived the way they move, often, out of the corner of my eye, without thinking about it, I cannot say I could mimic them so easily.

They, however, found it easy to fall into each other's patterns. This is related to my previous point: young nuns rely on mimicking subtle bodily behaviours in order to learn how to be a nun. Being a nun, after all, requires specific bodily comportment for different spaces and interactions: to kneel and be peaceful in the chapel, to dance and play with children, to laugh and chew betel with neighbours. In all of these activities, they remain, on account of their clothing, consciously on view. People watch them and they know it. Each set of behaviours for each social scene is not merely one of adapting to the situation, but of adapting to it excellently, performing the role of a good nun and a representative of the congregation while easing and aiding the souls of those around them. So young nuns mimic their elders; they are used to following a physical lead.

Performativity may be part of the explanation, but I also think the ease with which they took to this exercise relates to the familiarity that company breeds. The nuns who played with me lived together in the same convent, the Mother House—which was actually quite large by PRR standards—and did almost everything together. Even if it were not for uniquely PRR attention to the details of bodily comportment, these young women would be familiar with each other's ways of moving from sharing space and time. Add in many evenings of storytelling sprinkled generously with comic impersonations and it is easy to see why these girls might so naturally fall into each other's physicality. Here, walking around the room, they focused that embodied knowledge—both the general skill of mimicry and the specific awareness of their friends' styles—on their Sister in front of them. Afterwards, they reflected briefly on how walking in these different styles altered their moods, attributing each to the regular disposition of different Sisters. That is, they took this exercise in a very specific direction, connecting physical movement to interior emotions to naturalized character. We can start to see how performance ethnography as a method might operate as even these simple exercises concentrate expression to reveal

specific patterns of bodily attention. Reflections on them point to PRR working theories of the relationship between expression and character. Both point to a particular form of intersubjectivity in self-formation, one that emerges in company.

The nuns took these exercises to the next level to build short skits. Working in pairs, they generated expressive movements and then imagined a character that would dwell in them. With these movements, they devised short nonverbal 'park bench' scenes. Here is a short video of their experiments:

PRR Park Bench devising: https://vimeo.com/505447822/587c1c7210

Unlike the mirror exercise, where movements bled from pair to pair, in this exercise, interpretations remained distinct, as each pair took a unique approach to the exercise. The different approaches seemed to me to inhabit a common ground between each member of the pair. On my right, Sister Vitalia and Sister Carina tried to achieve a recognizable scene of everyday life. They worked at communicating with each other non-verbally, pointing and gesturing emphatically, hampered by the exercise's ban on words. In 'real life', these two nuns privileged rules, logic and verbal understandings, a fact—together with their substantial intelligence—the order recognized by placing them in important positions, as assistants to the Secretary and the Treasurer. Likewise, in rehearsals, they were usually the first ones to grasp onto the rules of a game: Sister Vitalia often jumped in to correct a 'mistake' while Sister Carina might intervene with a clear explanation when her fellows became confused. Now here they were, contriving a scene between their two brains, using their bodies as they were accustomed: like language, to communicate.

Meanwhile, on my left, Sister Eunonia and Sister Simplicia found common ground developing characters based on a short, playful mirroring exercise they did together. They adhered closest to my initial instructions—not that it matters at all, except to observe who embraces what—playing their mirror game until they settled on a few ways of moving their bodies. Sister Eunonia held her arms stiff, one folded towards her chest, the other down by her side, wrist twisted backwards. Sister Simplicia listed to the left. Thus limited, they played with obstacles. Sister Eunonia bent her whole body down merely to lift a cup from a desk. Sister Simplicia pushed her whole body against a chair to move it into position. 'We were disabled' (*cacat*), they explained sombrely afterward.

These two took the exercise in a moral direction, using it to experimentally empathise with those of their elderly sisters who suffer from the residues of stroke, diabetes or injury. Living with them every day, helping them perform basic tasks like eating or taking the stairs, these young, able nuns had ample opportunities to notice their elder Sisters' bodily complications, and to experience the effects on their actions and moods. Here, the performance exercise allowed them the opportunity to work through some of these observations using the mechanism of their own bodies.

Whereas, in other contexts, mimicking the elderly (or anyone!) can easily offend, I rarely noticed such concern among the PRR. There is something to say here, about what it means to be a person with dignity, how that can be taken away (and how it cannot), and how the nuns' embrace of impersonation counters a critique of performance ethnography (as well as my own occasional discomfort) that representing someone else is a seizure of their self, a mockery.

Finally, Sister Maravilosa and Sister Arcangela played in the far corner, smiling almost non-stop, bending, twisting, jumping and shaking their arms. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason to their antics. Maybe Sister Maravilosa was trying to respond to Sister Arcangela, who was perhaps just feeling the movements emerge. Every now and then, I sensed Sister Maravilosa trying to edge Sister Arcangela towards recognizable action. Each time, Sister Arcangela would explode out of it, confusing and delighting her scene partner. When the time came to present their skit, it looked hardly at all like their practise.

PRR Park Bench Scene: https://vimeo.com/505452572/7ef9f5a161

They were not alone in changing their show dramatically from practise to performance. As each pair watched the others performed, they picked up ideas about how the game 'should' be played, about how each scene 'should' be performed, and altered their own scenes accordingly. For example, Sister Arcangela and Sister Maravilosa, who went first, shake hands when they sit down on the bench. The other groups did not originally include a handshake in their experiments, but incorporated it after seeing Sister Arcangela's and Sister Maravilosa's scene. As in the initial mirror exercise, ideas, movements, and rules bled unacknowledged from one group to another. This time, however, it only happened during the moment of formal performance and not, as in the mirror exercise, while each pair played freely.

Taken together, these little exercises grant us a small but interesting window into the ways PRR nuns inhabit their bodies: how fluid are PRR's conception of proper behaviour, how embodied and affective, yet how persistently concerned with 'the right way' to be. 'Learning other people' isn't just a matter of understanding different personalities, although that is certainly a part of the story. It is also about adapting to their ways, as intimate exemplars, and 'becoming one' in the spirit of the congregation.

I asked the nuns to each document their performance as a playscript: to write it down in some fashion. The only one to return the next week with a script was Sister Arcangela. Her approach to translating the scene into text surprised me:

The Meeting of Friends

By Sister M. Arcangela

> *Sister Maravilosa, with a dance that is beautiful, accompanied by rays from the visage of her pure face brings God's love to her friend whom she has just encountered.*
>
> *Sister Maravilosa moving both her hands to the rhythm of those, her snapping feet, brings grace and good fellowship to the friend she encountered*
>
> *Sister Maravilosa, with motions of her eyes and eyebrows that bring a soul contact that is strong between the Lord and one another that brings life and brotherly love for to serve without reward.*

The seeming disconnect between the skit in the video clip and Sister Arcangela's rendering of it offers an interesting glimpse into the mindful interpretations of a nun who is frequently difficult for her fellows to parse. And yet, we can recognize some similarities between the performance and the script. Sister Maravilosa's face does seem to shine, she does stamp her feet and twist her wrists and she does meet a friend. These were comfortable movements for Sister Maravilosa. In our workshops, she often reverted to them in moments of awkwardness or unsurety. They are also movements that the other nuns described when discussing the scene afterward. Sister Arcangela's experience of the exercise corresponded in some ways to the experience of those around her. Only, this correspondence was not in the medium of time, nor in the order of events. While her fellows described a chance meeting between friends (frenemies?) who spontaneously engage in a dance battle then part ways, Sister Arcangela saw in her scene the seeds of PRR virtue: grace, joy and the fellowship of souls.

Although the exercise was contrived, it echoed familiar scenarios in nuns' everyday lives. In her script, Sister Arcangela elicits an underlying theme: a PRR approach to the encounter between self and other, a meeting simultaneously playful and deeply serious, even metaphysical. Sister Arcangela's account turns every wrist flick and smile into a symbol of God's presence in the world and of his working through the willing vessel of Sister Maravilosa. In chapter three, I addressed these two aspects of mystery in nuns' lives: the conscious seeking of signs of the divine in the tiniest things and the recognition that God is to be met in and through other people. Here, Sister Arcangela articulates how she finds these ideals and in Sister Maravilosa's style of being a PRR nun. Perhaps when she remarked that these workshops gave her the chance to 'learn people' she was referring, in part, to this.

I have also suggested, above, that PRR modes of attention might sometimes be other-oriented, not in the Christian sense of putting another before oneself, but in the sense of experiencing one's own self as if from the perspective of the other. In the scene above, although it is Sister Arcangela writing, it is Sister Maravilosa who appears as a character, while Sister Arcangela describes the character she played merely as 'her friend' (*sahabatnya).* The script provides a sense of Sister Maravilosa's internal desires or motivations: the love of God, selflessness, and boundless joy that literally radiates out from her. The script also describes her effect on others. She brings God's grace and forms a strong 'soul contact' (*kontak batin)* with others. At the same time, the script still maintains some distance from its main character and her inner life. We are seeing Sister Maravilosa before us, but we are not her, even if we know what she does, why she does it, and to what effect. This 'meeting of friends' is a meeting in the physical sense, but it is also a meeting in the spiritual sense. Sister Arcangela apprehends Sister Maravilosa, not by meeting her halfway, but by imaginatively leaping into her, before shifting back into her own perspective. Something like this, I suggest, is a mode of attention the PRR use. And, like many aspects of their lives, it is simultaneously a practised habit and a mysterious event.

Because I am dealing with performance, I want to acknowledge the practice that might lead young nuns to manifest this mode of attention more explicitly than elder nuns. Junior nuns (those who have yet to make their final vows) are still relatively fresh out of the training ground. Although their naivete decreases every year, they often emit the pious language of the idealistic and inexperienced, something their older sisters condone with fond and knowing smiles. They are especially prone to express themselves in pious terms in moments when they are being watched and monitored, which is often. Junior nuns must keep semi-private journals in which they log their spiritual and communal experiences. Each day (ideally), they record their successes and their failures, their doubts and epiphanies, the conflicts they have with others and the moments they reunite. These journals are regularly reviewed by a Superior, who might offer them counsel and comfort.

In addition, each nun, old and young, must take her turn at giving the morning sermon. When mediors and seniors preach, they often take one of three tacks: presenting an exegesis of the readings, commenting obliquely (but transparently) on an issue in the convent, or suggesting everyone just takes the time to meditate privately. When juniors give these sermons, however, they are often filled with pious platitudes. An understandable approach; their elders are watching and they might not have the insight

or the courage to preach to them. Rather than provide an original perspective, they attempt to perform as good nuns ought. Only in time to they come to realise that expressing individuality is, in fact, proper to a PRR nun.

In giving the performance ethnography group a written 'assignment', I unwittingly played into these experiences of performance in another sense: of properly performing one's role for adjudication by others. Scripting changed the free-form physical experience in the rehearsal room by translating it into a new genre (written homework) that carried with it its own array of expectations and values. The fact that Sister Arcangela was the only one to submit a script suggests that she might be someone for whom pleasing authority and meeting expectations are very important. Whereas in the performance exercises, we see PRR values of freedom, expression, creativity and intersubjectivity play out; the written work showcases the PRR's Catholic ideals of piety, humility and virtue. At the same time, Sister Arcangela's interpretation of her own scene shows how the two genres—two modes of being, experiencing and attending—overlap with and inform each other. The character of Sister Maravilosa shines with God's love through her dancing and smiling. A wiggle of her eyebrows, and suddenly her friend is infused with 'grace and good fellowship'. Through this kind of engagement, we see a process of seeking and interpreting at work, a process that is carried out through the littlest things and vaulted to the loftiest places.

If this instance of play showcases a uniquely PRR process of experience with and interpretation of others, it also suggests something about performance ethnography as a methodology. By artificially abstracting bodily expression from written articulation, then by stitching them back together, we can see the different stages in the process of experience for these PRR nuns. By taking a step back, and letting the play and the performances wash over us, we gain a sense of the diffuse expanse of undifferentiated experience (Bruner & Turner 1986): the morass of bodies and movements, of gestures that may or may not be meaningful, of emotions that need or need not be managed and of relationships that may or may not last out of which PRR nuns 'uncover' themselves and dig in to the hearts of others. It is true that the researcher-inflicted, artificial method of performance ethnography changes the content, but then, as we well know, so do interviews and video recordings, so do notepads and so does our mere presence. But just as all these changeful methods reveal something profound about ordinary experience, so too does performance ethnography. In this case, what is revealed are the minute,

seemingly insignificant actions of the body and how they come to influence the communal becoming of PRR nuns.

When, that night, Sister Arcangela looked up at me with sparkling eyes and professed that our afternoon performance experiments were a method of 'learning people', she was referring to the particular experiments described above: taking on each other's bodily habits, breathing and walking, and linking them to internal emotional states. Both she and Sister Maravilosa were speaking to me that night about what performance ethnography did for them, namely, that it helped them learn each other: an imperative for PRR life together. Our sessions playing at performance ethnography helped me understand how PRR nuns interpret the minutia of each other's bodily gestures, how they respond to each other's actions as if they were already in each other's position, how they transform each little act into the stuff of emotion and religion and most of all how all of this happens in the company of others.

The way that these young PRR Sisters engaged with performance ethnography expands the method's horizons as it applies to learning others. Performance ethnography typically aims to represent real people; it is often described as 'the staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes' (Alexander 2005: 411). Often, performances are explicitly about educating an audience, about familiarizing them with a society or a social issue, and provoking them to action. Writes D. Soyini Madison: 'The major work of performance ethnography is to make performances that do the labor of advocacy, and do it ethically to inspire realms of reflection and responsibility' (2010: 12). The academic and artistic debates around the ethics of representation in performance ethnography often characterize the effort as 'approaching the gap between self and other' (Alexander 2005; Alexander Craft et al. 2007; Wilkinson 2015). This implies that there is a central core of personal truth that is in danger of violation by theatrical representation somehow more so than by written representation.

While I do not disagree with this fundamentally, especially in the urban cultural contexts that much performance ethnography plays with, especially against a colonial backdrop of the appropriation of indigenous land, bodies, stories, ways and self-determination (Smith 1999; Trask 1991), I suggest that the PRR case teaches us something else about the interpretive power of performance ethnography. Within even such a small group, there could be many different interpretations, many meanings, many different perspectives on the same experience. Nuns share experience. They share presence and conceptualize

experience as shared. When their interpretations conflicted, as they often did, they held them all up, not as equally possible, but as equally true: 'Someone can feel relaxed while we feel tense'. This is the kind of attention these young nuns brought to the method of performance ethnography. Here, the exchange of motions, moods and values was vital—and it happened through group movement (sometimes effervescent, sometimes lumbering) in which what I have been calling interpretation was momentarily (and barely) suspended. The fact that they felt the exercises to be useful in 'learning people' suggests that they tapped into desires they already had (to understand others) and methods they already pursued (mirroring physicality). It moved me to attend more closely to these strategies outside of the rehearsal room.

Bebas Ekspresi

'Free expression' for the PRR has several layers. It implies the expression of things that might otherwise be repressed, such as *trauma*. It also suggests something lighter: expression that is unstructured and spontaneous. The former gives 'free expression' a weight that ties it to the intentional practices of piety: digging up the heart is a way to 'free' burdensome memories and emotions for expression. 'Free expression' as something unstructured and spontaneous, however, is no less tied to the selfhood of PR nuns for being the 'lighter'. In fact, 'free expression', or in its everyday use, 'spontaneity' (*spontan*) relates to our discussion of the self in company in two ways. First, it indicates that a nun has reached some kind of benchmark, some interim telos, in her becoming. For something to arise spontaneously and express itself freely, a nun's heart must be sufficiently dug up, open enough to allow influences from the outside.

In his discussion of ritual speech in Sumba, Kuipers (1998) observes that Weyewa dwelling on spontaneity in performance as divine intervention occludes the actual techniques of trial and error that initiates attempt in company, experimenting with ritual speech so as to master it. PRR nuns, on the other hand, become well versed in the relationship between practice and performance; the more open the hearts, the more open their beings to divine inspiration, manifested in mysterious desires, actions, and words that seem to emerge 'spontaneously' (*dengan spontan*) or 'by themselves' (*dengan sendiri*). This openness extends not only to God's influence, but also to other humans. A 'sincere heart' (*hati tulus*) is one that is also open to others, such that 'free expression' emerges as much as a response to another as it emerges as a 'truthful' translation of a pre-existing self. This openness points to the relationship between nuns and the company they keep; openness developed through the excavation of *trauma* provides the opportunity for another to influence a nun's self, leading her to take action 'spontaneously' that then becomes reflexively interpreted as part of her personal style.

A country with rich and diverse traditions of both democracy and performance, it is unsurprising that a concept like 'free expression' carries positive value in Indonesia. A slightly altered form, *ekspresi bebas* is a method for teaching the arts in schools and universities. In these settings, *ekspresi bebas* is part of an 'emerging curriculum,' one that is not fixed beforehand, but materializes in the course of the class, following students' lead. This process is intended to develop values like imagination, intuition, thought, creativity and sensitivity and to motivate students who struggle to connect to their lessons (Wulandari 2015). Some educators even use it as a way to determine students' pre-existing

qualities: what learning style they favour, whether they are creative and independent, intelligent and clever, or whether they are overinfluenced by their environment such that they lose self-esteem (*tidak percaya diri*) (Citra et al. 2016).

While such curricula may indeed produce such virtues in students, increased freedom can also pose a challenge to creativity (Dewi 2017) Some of the methods employed in these pedagogies are similar to (even exactly the same) as those employed by performance ethnographers in Euro-America. Kusuwastuti, for example, trains students in specific and varied cultural heritages of dance. Deploying this embodied repertoire, as well as their own capacities for free expression, she encourages her students to come up with their own movements by responding to objects, images, and ideas (Kusumastuti 2010).

The benefits, Wulandari writes, include 'the formation of people who are creative and take initiative, along with becoming people who can value artwork, of noble character (*watak*), being of sensible and glorious nature, honest, humble, disciplined, faithful, open, tolerant, caring, compassionate [this bit in Javanese], and just' (Wulandari 2015: 52, my translation). Spontaneity is also added to the list (Citra et al. 2016). A tall order, but one that resonates with the PRR. Freedom, expression, and creativity are all linked to the development of moral character which intersects with national concerns about human development.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the method of such development is practice within the confines of work. Like other Indonesians, the PRR value creativity in their members. A creative impulse demonstrates not only the moral character of the individual nun, but also reflects the benefits of working and becoming in company. What is more, nuns' creativity directly affects the congregation's image and efficacy. Creativity serves other Indonesian organizations as well, directly influencing their management, acting as 'the basis for strengthening and applying the entrepreneurial competence' (Syam et al. 2018: 1). Creativity is value as a means of expression that can encourage others to be creative (Akmal et al. 2020).

Bebas expresi is also considered to be a beneficial feature of public communal areas, such as public places to eat out. This is because public, social places away from work allow people the opportunity to express themselves in ways that they might not be able to under the watchful eyes of their superiors. Through expressing freely together in these places, people come together as a community (*komunitas*) with the same destination (*tujuan*)

(Tanuwijaya & Ratnaningrum 2020). As discussed in chapter six, here too community appears as a company of people sharing presence and going in the same direction.

In what follows, I connect this Indonesian preoccupation with free expression to PRR experience, showing the specific ways that 'expression' features in PRR lives, constrained as they are. Although they choose their vocation themselves and—if given half an ear—will passionately defend it, they occasionally yearn for creative expression: all of them, at every age. This is not a secret, nor is it fully removed from PRR rules—creativity (*kreatif*) and self-expression are virtues that the order values and for which it creates space.

When Sister Maravilosa told me that she liked our performance exercises because they allowed for 'free expression', I assumed, in the moment, that she was talking about our warm-up exercises, the ones that had us passing movement and energy around the circle, generating noise-gesture combinations, or the ones where we built tableaus, adding one person at a time, as in the photograph above. These exercises required no meaning or explanation (although we did sometimes use them to tell stories). What a nun tried during these exercises was very low risk. It would pass in a heartbeat and be forgotten, so it allowed her the chance to explore her range of movement. The chance to 'freely express oneself' might be a precious commodity for young women in a religious order, even as one as loving and light-hearted as the PRR. Their monastic rhythm and comportment were so important to them, as a community and as individuals. As young nuns-in-training, junior sisters were especially vulnerable to control and critique—which they tried to accept with humility. It might have been nice for obedient Sister Maravilosa to throw her body and voice around a few times every month.

I started to wonder, however, if her expression did not also imply a deeper, more communal sense of expression than the cathartic release of a constrained individual; if perhaps there were moments in which she appreciated the chance to express—in means other than words and comportment—the communal values that had been instilled in her, in which she passionately believed, and to which she strove to mould her being.

When Jean Hunleth used role play as an ethnographic tool in Zambia, she found that it allowed the children she was working with 'the opportunity to play with and invert the structures of power that constrained their usual engagements' (2019: 171). PRR nuns, however, often used role play as an opportunity to re-enact and submit to the structures of power in which they were embedded. When I asked the nuns to share the thoughts they had during a 'walking meditation', their list was full of virtues, littered with a few

references to failure and recovery. Choosing sets of words from this list, they devised bodily images to match them.

PRR Virtue Images: https://vimeo.com/506277782/65d7085749

In this video, four nuns perform a symbolic journey from disappointment, through prayer, to renewal of morale (*semangat*). My young friends led towards a symbolic expression of the things that sat most heavily on their minds. These virtues were things upon which most PRR nuns could agree, in which they had been handily trained. Here they were freely expressed. They took the opportunity of the performance workshops to play, physically, with things that mattered to them.

Here is the video before the bench scenes again:

PRR Park Bench Play: https://vimeo.com/505447822/587c1c7210

While in the section above on 'learning people' I drew our attention to the ways the junior nuns responded to each other, now I would like to draw our attention to the sheer range of bodily movements in this room. Look at Sister Carina pointing and stamping on the right side of the frame. Look at Sister Maravilosa and Sister Arcangela stretching, swaying, and bending in the far corner. Look at Sister Eunonia on the left slowly stitch together some isolated body movements, think, then try again. They are experimenting with their bodies, what they can do, what they can mean and what they can express. Whereas I suggested earlier that my position lent my suggestion of 'assignments' a level of authoritative demand that I did not intend, turning playful suggestions into surveillance homework, here I want to clarify that the juniors never balked at these physical experiments. They engaged with them according to their particular taste and in their particular style, to be sure, but they all played along.

This mode of 'free expression', of moving the body in strange and liberating ways, is not completely unknown to PRR nuns, whose repertoire of acceptable movements is refreshingly wide. At the same time, it is clear from Sister Maravilosa's comment that these physical exercises brought with them an experience of freedom. But freedom from what? Freedom, I might suggest, from a typical style of movement that—although looser than popular representations of nuns might imply—is nonetheless constrained.

If these exercises allowed nuns to express themselves in ways 'free' from the constraints of their everyday lives, the question remains as to how they express themselves to and with each other in everyday modes. How might performance ethnography provide insight into modes of expression that are more constrained, more everyday, more apparently part of people's lives? One way, I suggest, is by carefully watching the little choices they make, as individuals and as a group, in what they choose to perform and in how they move their bodies. Helen Thomas' comments on dance apply here:

> In dancing... individual embodied subjects/subjectivities enact and 'comment' on a variety of taken-for granted social and cultural bodily relationalities... As such, close attention to dancing can provide the social and cultural analyst with layers of insights into culturally contingent relations and practises which have hitherto gone largely unnoticed or unexamined (Thomas 2003: 215).

It is this little attention to what the body can tell us that performance ethnography has long-promised and that I want to push forward in this in-depth, intricate examination of some brief performative moments in ethnographic fieldwork. The next few video clips come from a performance ethnography session some weeks after the exercises I just described.

On that night, all were in high spirits, fresh off a riotous English lesson on verbs. Switching over to 'drama', I paired them up and asked each to tell her partner her 'calling story'.[66] While they were speaking, I asked the listeners to pay attention to the things we had already worked on in previous workshops: the way the body moved and the images that appeared in the story. I also asked them to pull out one word that their partner was fond of using.

After they told their stories, I asked each to share what they had noticed about their partners' performances while I took notes on the white board. Shy Sister Cinthia presented Sister Arcangela's story: she was inspired by a priest's homily, met the PRR, then became PRR.

'Sister Arcangela stood firm', she told us, 'and often used the word *mengenal* (to be acquainted with / to come to know)'.

After all the stories had been recited, they chose Sister Arcangela's to re-enact. In keeping with her favourite word, there were indeed many meetings. Taken with the experience of enacting each other, they appointed someone else, not Sister Arcangela, to play out her part. They settled on Sister Cinthia. She had been the one to witness the story, they reasoned, and so could best impersonate Sister Arcangela. Then they fleshed out the other parts: Sister Simplicia would play the priest who first inspired the young Sister Arcangela, Sister Maravilosa would play the Sister Superior, and Sister Arcangela herself would play all the other characters: children in the dormitory and a nun who helped her with her application to the PRR.

'We need a director', they said, and appointed Sister Carina.

What interests me about their subsequent play were the small shifts in gestures and language that implicated each character as a member of a certain social role, each with its own hierarchical distinctions: priest, superior, child. The nuns not only recognized the differences in movement between these groups, but could slip into and out of these roles with ease. It was as if these characters were already in their bodies, perhaps from the process of perspectival attention I offered earlier, perhaps from constant reminders to respect their superiors—and to do so in formal, recognizable ways.

Here is a clip of Sister Simplicia performing as the priest.

[66] The calling story is a local genre: a story every PRR Sister has about how she came to become a nun.

PRR Priest Role: https://vimeo.com/507666607/e81db6b05e

Watch how she moves casually, but confidently, sticking her belly out slightly and leaning back. Watch especially how she puts her hand out to be kissed, paying scant attention to the girl kissing, but instead speaking over her to the 'Superior'. This is how priests often behave in Flores. Sister Simplicia offers neither a critique nor an endorsement, but she is performing a role—and doing an uncannily good job, it seems to me.

While familiar social roles certainly informed these PRR performance, I also recognized the personal idiosyncrasies of a few individuals we all knew. For example, the next clip shows two scenes portraying Sister Maravilosa. In the first she is the Mother of a PRR convent, the first PRR nun that Sister Arcangela encounters, a classic figure of PRR calling stories. In the second she is the Superior General of the entire order. As you first watch, try to notice the slight differences between these two characters. It is a little tricky for two reasons: first, the character of 'PRR superior' is ideally warm and welcoming, and second, because Sister Maravilosa portrays both through that beaming smile of hers. Still, there are some slight differences.

PRR Superior Role: https://vimeo.com/507731862/63893867f3

As the first superior, Sister Maravilosa hunches ever-so-slightly and points in a way that I couldn't help but recognize. It is exactly how Sister Ignatius punctuates her sentences. The former Superior General of twenty years still lived in the convent where we held our workshops and where the girls lived. They knew her well. She is the classic superior: wise, caring, sturdy and fiercely protective.

I suggested earlier that the ease with which these young women adapted to the embodiment exercise I set before them might imply a form of attention that the PRR use more generally, outside of rehearsal. Here we see that idea in motion. Sister Maravilosa is performing two roles, both as superiors. In her performance, she seems subtly to borrow from the movement vocabulary of her actual superiors. I could be wrong, but I doubt she thought to herself consciously—as might another actor in another context (e.g., Tinius 2018)—'I will take pointing from Sister Ignatius. I will try to use that hand gesture to flesh out the character and make her more believable'. Instead, she seems to slip unintentionally into their bodies, to take up pieces of them.

As the second superior, Sister Maravilosa changes her stance. She pulls her shoulders back, stands more erect, and pitches her voice higher. You can watch her transform in the video clip (at second 38), when Sister Arcangela's character as a medior nun introduces the young 'candidate' to the Superior General. Already reaching for her hand, Sister Maravilosa asks Sister Arcangela, 'I'm the Leader?' Sister Arcangela confirms that she is and Sister Maravilosa instantly transforms, albeit subtly. You can hear it especially

in the timbre of her voice, which suddenly becomes high and breathy, almost artificially so. Her voice and actions here reminded me exactly of Sister Simone, the actual Superior General at that time: an intelligent, soft and gracious woman with a gift for hospitality, speeches, scholarship and storytelling. It had been her excitement that allowed these workshops to happen at all. A particularly telling moment in Sister Maravilosa's performance is when she expresses awe at the 'candidate' coming all the way from Papua: 'from Papua?! Tsk-tsk-tsk…' Sister Arcangela's origin had not yet been mentioned in the performance (which ran for over half an hour), but the mission in Papua was one of Sister Simone's most beloved subjects. She wanted to see more candidates from Papua and had been personally responsible for furthering the education of many Papuan girls. I had seen her several times greet new Papuan candidates with the same fond 'tsk' of admiration. In both of her roles, Sister Maravilosa seemed to draw on the physical 'style' of two of the order's most well-known figures. At the same time, the impersonation seemed unintentional, or at least lacking the intention to be interpreted as such.

Sister Maravilosa was not trying to replicate a historically accurate circumstance, as one might in documentary theatre—neither Sister Ignatius nor Sister Simone held the correlating roles at the time when Siter Arcangela applied to the PRR—she was improvising using the tools at her disposal. Those tools included a common scenario (applying to the PRR), stock characters (the superiors) and the bodily ways of familiar individuals (Sister Ignatius and Sister Simone). 'Tools' is perhaps the wrong word. Her performance was not so instrumental, not like an artisan reaching for a hammer nor like an artist accessing skills she has previously learned. The pieces of her performance came together with seeming naturality, cohering in a way of being in the world that was familiar to her—one in which she drew on those around her, responding to and incorporating them. On the surface, her improvisation is a form of free self-expression, limited only by the direction she received from Sister Carina and the structure of the story the group drafted ahead of time. Should it mean something that her self-expression incorporated the bodily behaviours of (at least) two other people?

In watching the next couple of video clips, I would like to consider this question a little more fully, alongside the notion of *bebas ekspresi*. What does it mean for PRR nuns to channel other people in their acting? More generally, what does it mean to include other people in the stories that define us?

These next two snippets show Sister Arcangela performing as bit parts in her own story. Parts that she filled as the need arose, with no one else's intervention: they were all her ideas. The first shows her performing as the children in the dorm where she first met the PRR, while the second shows her performing as the nun who helped her with her application.

PRR Bit Roles: https://vimeo.com/508104736/adba682ff7

This was Sister Arcangela's story. While the other performers, like Sister Maravilosa, were familiar with the story from hearing it from their friend and having experienced similar journeys themselves, they might not have been so aware of the side characters that filled out Sister Arcangela's world, those who ushered her through and accompanied her on her journey from girl to nun. When there was a hole in the play, Sister Arcangela filled it. She became the children who sat with her and welcomed her. Later she became the nun who guided her through the application process, finally accompanying her all the way to the convent: 'Get ready: tomorrow we go to Larantuka.' The scene contains very specific instructions for applying to the PRR. It was important to her that this woman and this information appear in her calling story. In the story that most distinguishes a nun, these extra figures—friends and guides—must manifest.

This sense that Sister Arcangela has, that others *must* manifest in the story of herself resonates with anthropological concerns with ethical representation. This is particularly true for performance ethnographers, many of whom seek first and foremost to address the absence of others as concomitant with the excising of the senses and to 'decolonialise

anthropological research' (Gatt 2015: 337) through performative, collaborative 'acts of activism' (Madison 2010). If we want to commit to decolonizing our discipline, it is not enough to put forward and theorise processual embodied methods, although this first step is still sorely needed.[67] We must also 'get caught' in the complexity of materiality, intersubjectivity and positionality in our fieldsites (Giordano & Pierotti 2020). We must also attend to the moral valences tied to knowing, grasping and representing others. Furthermore, we must acknowledge and theorise the relevance of company as a mode of self-making sociality in the field and in the rehearsal room, amongst our interlocutors and amongst our performance collaborators, many of whom (ourselves perhaps) may figure in both ensembles.

Devising a performance that draws audiences into the worlds of our fieldsites unfolds according to the unique constellation of collaborators. It works through the operations of company. Because of the ways that performance differs from text—the way it engages the senses in shared presence, prompting an ephemeral 'ethnographic sociality' (Long 2015) that makes research live (literally) beyond the bounds of our fieldsites—it is so crucial that it continues to have a space in anthropology.

But everything that goes for performance as a mode of ethnographic representation—processual and full of discovery as it is—also holds for performance as a method in the field. We need to continue to experiment with this, to let the mystery of company emerge performatively in our fieldsites, with our participants. We can continue to explore in this way: to play and notice and listen with our bodies and all of our senses, to let our interlocutors not only have a say in what goes onstage, but discover alongside us—differently from us, maybe, but tied into us—what is happening, and to notice what, specifically, performance ethnography helps us know. Such an approach may, in fact, not only 'free' our 'expression', but also help us 'learn other people'.

Conclusion

Like other Indonesians, PRR nuns value creative self-expression. In the previous chapter, I discussed how each Sister is supposed to possess unique talents and gifts and that a nun and her community collaborate in encouraging these gifts to express themselves.

[67] It has been half a century since the Turner-Schechner collaboration that set performance ethnography in motion and there are still only a handful of academics actively practicing it within the discipline of anthropology.

Responsibility falls primarily with a junior's convent Mother, her formation teachers, and the Superior of the Juniors. Both the individual nun and her teachers attempt to discern these gifts through meditation, prayer and introspection. They also manufacture practical challenges, typically assigning girls to atypical tasks to discover which she excels at. They might send the farm girl to the office, for example, the city girl to the fields. But there is a third element in this arrangement that is less structural: appraising a junior's creativity, a term that encapsulates both industry and imagination. How does a nun fill her time? What extra projects does she start under her own direction? How much initiative does she show? What beautiful things does she make? The assessment of creativity is at once moral, aesthetic, and personal. The fact that a junior nun does something—anything—to fill her 'spare' time indicates initiative that the congregation admires and prizes. But what, specifically, she does is taken to indicate her own special gifts, and even her own self, as it fits into the jigsaw puzzle of communal life and congregational aspirations. This is a process of creating space where a woman's truest self can express itself, free(ish) from the constraints of desires, *trauma* and designation–a nun's own or someone else's.

Of course, the expectation of creative self-expression means that it is already, to a degree, not entirely free. It does not emerge independently nor apparently miraculously, but rather through nuns' good faith efforts at serving God and their congregation, thereby deepening their identity and their practice. Often these attempts are clumsy and unsure ('I don't know… I saw the others making seashell art…'), at others they are frankly brazen ('Look! I planted an acre of papaya trees next to the cemetery!'). Sometimes nuns are praised and rewarded ('Yes, very pretty. We must put them all over the convent!'), other times they are chastised severely ('Didn't you realize that's right over the electric lines?!'). Very frequently, their efforts go unnoticed.

And so, what nuns do of their own volition is a somewhat free, somewhat constrained effort at self-expression, of working the ground towards a discovery of the self that begs to manifest and is always in process—a somewhat natural, somewhat constructed, process of change and development. When Sister Maravilosa proposed that she liked the performance ethnography workshops because they allowed the opportunity for *bebas ekspresi*, she was probably, as I have said, referring to the chance to move her body in strange ways that felt right, that meant mostly nothing and had no standard against which to be judged. These very things made the workshops initially stressful to Sister Carina.

'Expressing' is something that PRR nuns are always doing. For nuns, each act a sister performs in her life is sign and method of a unique soul striving towards God. And yet, we saw in this chapter how PRR nuns actively connect their 'free expression' to their Catholic mode of self-becoming. We can see this in Sister Arcangela's transcription of her performance with Sister Maravilosa. We can also see it in the virtue images nuns constructed, charting a path through struggle to triumph. We see it too in the transformation of 'free expression' to experimental embodiment of disabled bodies. In making this connection, PRR nuns are in the company of other Indonesians who likewise feel 'a pleasure in aligning or directing [their] self-expression to an ambience of divine revelation, to awareness of God's care and closeness' (George 2016: 58).

For PRR nuns, this divine ambience, as might be opined from Sister Arcangela's performance choices, is constituted and influenced by so many others. These others are overwhelmingly female Writing about women artists in Indonesia during different moments in the nation's history, Dirgantoro suggests that women's art challenges 'the prevailing view of art as a direct, personal expression of individual emotional experience', arguing instead that art is 'actively produces personal expression of individual emotional experience meanings. Furthermore, it is constitutive of ideology; it does not merely illustrate or translate the artist's personal life on canvas' (Dirgantoro 2019: 105). Seen in this light, PRR creative self-expression is part of forming the character of each nun. As it happens socially, in company, PRR nuns contribute to the opening of a space for female subjectivity in Indonesia. Their occasional reminder that they are women first thus does not only encourage nuns to express their femininity, but also reinforces the fact that their modes of expression are productive. They help to constitute Indonesian femininity—or they ought to.

The way the PRR express, I suggest, is through a perspectival leap embedded in the body. The children, priest, nuns and teachers who led her to the path she is on today are part of who Sister Arcangela is. I do not mean this tritely. I mean that they are a part of her story that she will include in every retelling and that they also appear to be an experiential part of her acting body, characters in her repertoire (Tinius 2018). In the retelling of her story, it is as if she has inhabited, briefly, the bodies of these other people. As if she has stood in their shoes, seen from their perspective and sensed within their experience.

Performance ethnography, then is important not only for its representational fullness, nor merely for its political interventions, nor even for its epistemological promises. It is also

valuable for the kinds of things it helps us, as anthropologists and audience members, see. Specifically, I suggest, it can help us to notice, articulate, and experiment with different modes of attention and different kinds of experience. I have tried to show this through two of the facets that most interested the young nuns who participated in these workshops: learning other people and *bebas ekspresi*—free expression. I have tried to show how these two specifically PRR preoccupations changed the shape and direction of our performance workshops and broaden the perspective of what performance ethnography is for, how it might be done and what it can become. At the same time, I have tried to show how the embodied, abstracted method of performance ethnography showcases how these two preoccupations link between them a specifically PRR way of being in the world, a mode of experience that implies a special kind of perspective and embodiment of the self that incorporates other people, a kind of attentive, diffuse awareness that consolidates others into the self.

Living in the company of the convent is a complicated challenge. Their embodied method of attention, I suggest, helps them meet this challenge by fostering subtle empathy with each other, by allowing them to grasp each other's bodily habits, and by connecting those habits to the other person's interiority. This connection, I suggest, happens through fleeting moments of experience, of actually *feeling* as if one were the other. The differentiating notion of character discussed in the previous chapter means that nuns' repertoire-building never implies that PRR nuns *actually* become each other; they are always themselves. Bodily attention that facilitates the ethical act of empathy occurs within the moral demands to continue forming the self. Nuns are helped in this by the discourses of creativity and free expression that enliven Indonesian pedagogies, arts and conceptions of the self. These discourses emphasize the connection between creative expression and the development of virtuous citizens. When nuns express themselves creatively and freely, then, they form themselves as virtuous Indonesians as well as good PRR nuns. Creative, free expression, always happening through their different bodies, further reinforces PRR nuns as distinct 'characters', thus necessitating a form of empathy to live together.

Company serves as audience and co-actor to nuns' free expression, their experiments with and performances of character. Company is also comprised of a collection of these characters and gains its qualities by the ways they play off each other in the 'rehearsal room' of the convent. Nuns' embodied strategies of attention direct this play, allowing nuns to understand and incorporate each other into their performative repertoires. By

pretending to be each other in their stories and narratives, they cultivate affective modes within themselves, decentre themselves in an event and thereby gain insight into how each other might feel.

In chapter four, I discussed the role of mystery in PRR sense of themselves and approach to their self-formation. In that chapter, I hinted at a mode of attention that actively seeks the divine in little things. These 'little things', I suggested, include the person of the other, especially the people with whom they live. In this chapter, by employing the methodology of performance ethnography, I have presented another layer to that attention. Whereas chapter four covered a mode of attention that is conscious, active and imaginative, this chapter presented a mode of attention that is subtle, inhabited and expressive. This chapter has attempted to present this strategy in fine detail, showing how PRR nuns become themselves in moral company that values free expression by attending to the bodily experience of others, extrapolating from that to sense their interiority and characterize them as unique individuals. This embodied mode of attention adds to the mode of attention presented in chapter four by showing *how* nuns come to experience the divine in each other.

'The way you learn to pay attention', write Luhrmann, 'determines your experience of God' (Luhrmann 2012: xxi). PRR attention to each other happens within a theology of practice that asks them to practice Christian love on each other. For the PRR, an important side of love is understanding people's personalities, their style, their concerns, needs and desires. These are the questions at play in their embodied mode of attention, in their self-expression and in their experience of company. The next chapter addresses what happens when nuns take these strategies out of the convent and into diverse Indonesian communities.

CHAPTER 8: SERVICE

I was in Timor one evening, visiting Sister Pia in her new convent, when a man arrived with his father and a few relatives. The man, they said, was on the brink of madness. Whenever they tried to discuss the problem as a family his father would become furious. And so, they clarified, they had come to the PRR Sisters for help.

Quickly ascertaining that the family struggled to communicate together without becoming aggressively emotional (*emosi*), the nuns split the man from his father and talked to them separately, drawing out the family *trauma* that led to the madness and leading each to recognise the love that had previously been overlooked.

> 'Bapak', Sister Pia asked the father, 'do you ever give your son attention?'
>
> 'No, never', he responded, and cried.
>
> 'That is what this child needs: attention, love and care from his family, but especially his father'.

Meanwhile, seated apart, fiercely maternal Sister Dalmatia spoke with the son:

> 'Who paid for your Master's degree?'
>
> 'My father'.
>
> 'That's a sign. If he didn't love you, there is no way he would pay for your Masters'. The man, gently nudged into a new awareness, shed tears.

The nuns took the family into the chapel where we prayed a 'rosary for freedom' (*rosario kebebasan)* on the man's behalf. Sister Pia doused him with water drawn from the convent

spring, praying aloud in a stream of improvised invocations. When she was finished and, the man was drenched. She urged father to embrace his son. Both men wept. Afterward, she spoke in a breathy voice meant to perpetuate an atmosphere of stillness, silence and quietude (*hening*):

> Beloved mothers and fathers… young man … we Sisters … Nona Ros … we have prayed for you. This water (*she gestured to the barrel of water sitting by the altar)*, is holy water. Many have come here and many have been healed … the sick … the mentally ill … healed. But it's not a sure thing either. We can't promise. Because the healing has to come from you, young man. Well, first it has to come from the Lord, second from the intercession of Bishop Gabriel Manek, but also it has to come from within yourself, young man. And from the help of your mothers and fathers … the rest of the family. You have to say, 'I *must* be well. I *must* be well'. If there's an improvement, don't come running back here immediately to tell the Sisters. Instead, wait and see … Or, if you want to come, you may. We are always here twenty-four hours, ready to serve.

Thus far, I have written primarily about PRR nuns in the convent. In this chapter, I will expand the horizons of company to encompass the laypeople that make up the communities in which nuns live and work, laypeople like the family who came to seek the PRR's help that evening. I will do this by working out the contours of 'service' (*pelayanan*) as the governing mode of sociality between nuns and other people. PRR approaches to service draw on gendered divisions of labour in global Catholicism and everyday Florenese life to focus on being present with others (*hadir*). For the PRR, keeping company is service: 'We are always *here'*, Sister Pia assures, 'ready to *serve'*. This chapter considers what it means for live presence to be a mode of service. By looking at how

religious and cultural values inform the experience of co-presence, we will advance our understanding of the workings of company in PRR self-formation.

As I was researching for this chapter, seeking anthropological approaches to 'service' in various settings, I was surprised to find that such a conversation does not yet seem to exist. Although service-like work has been described in accounts of volunteerism (e.g., Jakimow 2018; Parreñas 2012) and invoked as a category in accounts of the 'service industry' (e.g., Durrenberger 2005; Mankekar & Gupta 2020) and 'military service' (e.g., Gill 1997; Sørensen 2015), 'service' does not appear as a central analytic. Nor does 'service' figure as a primary axis in the anthropology of Christianity, although we might speculate that idioms of service hold meaning for many Christian communities. This chapter, provides one contribution toward thinking about service and its ethnographic meanings.

Although it might be somewhat hidden in anthropological analysis, service of the kind practiced by the PRR draws together two important strands in the anthropological literature: feminist positioning of care as a form of labour and the aspirational labour of volunteerism and civil service. Classic critiques especially 'reiterate the argument that the unpaid domestic work of women is as socially productive as industrial labor', but insist that categorizing it as 'affective' or 'immaterial' 'creates a false binary that attributes inherently different creative energies and communicative powers to forms of labor ordered in a hierarchy of value' (Bear et al. 2015). This binary, slippery though it may be theoretically, aligns with PRR ways of thinking about work as differentiated along gendered lines and set in a hierarchy of value. These very features of inequality allow them to act when men cannot, address issues that men cannot see and be present with people where men cannot go.

The struggle to navigate between 'a care system fashioned to accommodate working adults, private property, and insurance, and another kind of care that hinges on proximity, accompaniment, and mutuality of being' (Danely 2019: 216) persists in people's real lives as much as (and perhaps because of) our theoretical constructions of labour. It exists for Florenese parents, especially women, away from home who must make choices between 'short term' affective and 'long term' material care (Allerton 2019). At the same time, being away from home opens new bounds for Florenese women who may move their work outside of the domestic sphere and into the realm of economic production (Graham 2008). Nuns, who leave home and family, who work in the 'service industry' and who

participate in economic and social production do so through the intimacy of co-presence as a feminine form of care.

Their hope is to generate moral moods: atmospheres of quietude (*hening*) and gladness (*gembira*). They also hope to improve the material lives of the poor and to grant the rich opportunities to serve (monetarily). Like many volunteers and public servants, they set out with aspirations for an ideal world, expressed for them through the personal experience of company. The organizational aspect of their service connects them to regimes of state authority, especially when they take up positions as civil servants. Aligning with the state on the basic contours of need—what is needed by whom—structures the provision of service. At the same time, nuns 'translate' state concerns about development into Catholic idioms (Giordano 2014). The state must bring electricity to every corner of the archipelago. The nuns must 'be present in the midst of the people' (*hadir di tengah umat*).

Without discounting the powerful affects generated by state forms of care (Bubandt 2015), it matters that PRR nuns see mood as an important goal of their social services. It matters because of the implications for intimacy that draw 'the line of thought combining the bodily and emotional aspects of carework with the sociality of the workplace, showing their interplay with the ideas of national and cultural difference' (Świtek 2016: 26). When nuns share presence with other people as a form of service, they co-create a sense of intimacy premised on hierarchy while also reversing it. Often this intimacy includes physical touching: a hand resting gently on another's knee, a massage to loosen tight calf muscles, fingers stroking dishevelled hair. Świtek suggests that bodily intimacy is a matter of crossing boundaries that emerges on an individual, not cultural level, opening a space for intersubjective becoming, for empathy not based on assessments of *trauma* or character. The affinity generated in intimacy speaks back to cultural ideas about difference and transforms them. Bearing the potential to alter national ideas, intimacy first alters the relationship between the carer and the person receiving care. Relationships of intimate care allow for something other than culture to become a reference point of interaction.

In the impulse to service work that rises to answer moments of chaos and destruction in Indonesia—tsunamis, religious violence, ethnic massacres—Indonesians draw on yet another form of intimacy: their own experiences, their own intimacy with the violence at hand. Commenting on one such responder, an Acehnese psychiatric nurse whose own run-in with a mutilated body as a child brought him bad dreams, Grayman writes that the

nurse's 'own experience has helped him summon the great reserves of empathy required to work with the conflict victims he assists today' (Grayman et al. 2009: 291). Unfortunately, we are not told whether the nurse emphasized his experiences in his interactions with Acehnese. Still, this suggests how direct experience in Indonesia figures as a source for understanding that can be turned into service, specifically through the idiom of *trauma*. This is exactly what nuns are doing.

The PRR's official motto, 'give me strength' (*da mihi virtutem*) is rarely heard outside of important feasts. It emerges, however, in their daily labours within Indonesian communities. Nuns and laity alike often represent the PRR as struggling through enormous trials for the sake and with the help of the people. Lamaholot Catholics who, as discussed in the chapter two, feel ownership of and responsibility to the PRR, are especially like to position the order this way. In the face of East Nusa Tenggara's overwhelming development and spiritual needs, it might indeed seem suitable to wail, 'Give me strength!'

However, the PRR are more likely to quip something else when discussing their mission and their character as an organization: *masuk pintu sampai ke dapur*. Glossed in English, this means something like, 'we enter the front door and continue to the kitchen'. The front door, in Flores Timur, is where guests enter a house into a modest receiving room, where they will sit and stay, while the hosts serve them sweet coffee and stone-flattened popcorn. To 'continue to the kitchen' in Flores is to do two things simultaneously: to imply an intimate kinship that trumps the formality that even casual visits demand, and to suggest that the erstwhile guest is not someone who needs to be served but rather someone who ought to be put to work.

The kitchen, in Flores as elsewhere, is also the domain of women and the work done within is women's work. When PRR nuns 'continue to the kitchen', they emphasize their femininity; a priest could not continue to the kitchen so easily. In fact, given the respect afforded priests, Florenese women would likely be scandalized should a priest appear there because it would imply that their hospitality is lacking. The work of the kitchen is serving guests (*melayani tamu*). In return, guests offer good humour and friendly sociability that helps to cultivate an atmosphere of liveliness (*ramai*). As Catherine Allerton has shown for Manggarai, West Flores, the liveliness produced around acts of hospitality is not only 'intensely enjoyable', it also serves to protect homes and families from bad spirits and bad emotions (Allerton 2012). The reciprocity involved in Florenese hospitality, then,

might be seen as one of food and drink for good company. The service of hospitality is answered by the service of company. This is why presence in and of itself can be so powerful. It is also why PRR nuns are able to construe presence (*hadir*) as a form of service (*pelayanan*).

Presence as a form of PRR service is further directed by the Christian virtue of charity and mandate to love. Nuns enact charity by engaging with the lives of the community in which they live: distributing the Eucharist, providing marital counselling, financing children's education and solving any other problem presented to them in the neighbourhood's many kitchens. This is challenging, but largely straightforward and fulfilling work. It is enlivened and complicated, however, by a mandate to love by providing company in which presence is an act of service. This service work is an act of reaching out, of 'entering,' as PRR nuns move beyond the convent to work in local communities. It is also an act of pulling in, of inviting laity to live and work in the convent, folding laypeople into the intimate communities of their convent 'families'.

PRR nuns learn to recognize themselves as special kinds of religious subjects through their relationships with the laity. Likewise, they learn to occupy and grow into their roles as religious actors through periods of intimate accompaniment in which they call forth each other as individuals (Walker 2013). In sharing their presence with others, they also share (and experience) a sensibility of God's omnipresence. Learning to inhabit this position builds on their working knowledge of how a self forms in general and the formation of their own selves in particular. They build on theories of *trauma,* style and talents previously discussed. They performatively approach others' ways of being,

attempting to grasp each mysterious self. They alter the moods of places they enter to more closely align with the moral, godly emotions of gladness (*gembira*) and quietude (*hening)*. The medium of all of this is their presence and service in and for the community.

People in Larantuka refer to the PRR proudly as 'our order' because they were founded in town. But they are also called 'our order' because of their enduring presence in the area. At every funeral, every feast, every baptism, first communion, neighbourhood meeting, and market, you can find a PRR nun. Their periwinkle habits and round medallions allow locals to identify them at a distance, even amongst the throng of other religious orders that have found a home in Larantuka. Many people told me sincerely about the impact the PRR—in the guise of one or another of its members—had on their lives. Couples told me their marriage had been facilitated or saved, parents told me their children went to school, widows told me of the comfort they received, and families talked of the roof over their heads, thanks to PRR intervention. They are linked by kinship and experience to the people of Nusa Tenggara Timur, especially Flores. At the same time, their unified self-subjectification—their identical dress and their recognisable comportment—allow PRR nuns to stand in for their congregation. Each, equally, represents the PRR, an order with a reputation for hard work and endurance. Each PRR nun, then embodies all of this in her presence and must uphold it in her service. The particulars of their service are transfigured through their position as especially graced religious subjects. They represent God as they present themselves to others. To the Catholics of Flores Timur, the PRR are often seen as an exemplar of who they are as a community and are experienced as mediators of divine presence.

As they move beyond Flores Timur, however, nuns enter into different kinds of relationships with the laity. These different kinds of relationship mobilize different modes and associations of presence, engendering in turn different types of service. There are three general types of relationships that PRR nuns form with the laity outside their convents: professional, temporary and neighbourly. These types of relationships are connected to different forms of service: nuns form professional relationships with their co-workers and employees in their formal service work, temporary relationships with the people they serve in the mission-type visits nuns sometimes make to remote or underserviced communities, and neighbourly relationships with the people they visit. Each of these comprise a nun's company and aid her self-formation, to different effects.

In the sections that follow, I first discuss the role religion plays in nuns' acts of service. I then turn to PRR ways of being present.

THE PEOPLE – CATHOLIC, MUSLIM, CHRISTIAN

The PRR's work brings them into friendly relations with Indonesians of all religious backgrounds. Outside of their convent family, nuns are likely to be closest to those who live immediately around the convent, whose lives bleed through the convent's barriers, as well as those with whom they work: fellow teachers or pharmacists, laypeople who hold leadership positions in the local church, and local characters. The convent in Lewoina, for example, was surrounded by houses of employees that had been built with help from the nuns. At the end of the road lived a masseuse whose inspired fingers eased the stress built up in nuns' bodies (and healed the broken bones of anyone who needed). At evening in the cemetery, nuns might nod sympathetically to neighbours tending their loved-ones'

graves. As the road approached the high street, where a large mosque stood, the neighbourhood became more Muslim and nuns might stop to chat or request fruit from their trees.

The market in Larantuka where nuns frequently shop is a mixed-religious zone: a collection of shrewd and vibrant Bugis/Makassarese hawkers mingled with somewhat more timid vendors come over from Solor for the day, as Sister Diana did in her youth. Although it is predominantly Catholic, Flores is also home to many Muslims. Some have deep roots in Flores and count Catholics as kin.[68] Others are more recently arrived: in a familiar pattern that occurs across Indonesia, the coasts of Flores are largely inhabited by Muslim migrants and their descendants. While anxiety over being 'colonized' did occasionally emerge, the predominant narrative in Flores is one of inter-religious harmony. This pattern of familiarity was, somewhat surprisingly, unshaken by three church bombings that happened in Java over Easter, the holiest feast in the Catholic calendar. Florenese Catholics' fear of strangers (especially those that dress 'Arab') escalated in the wake of these attacks, but was not extended to their local friends and neighbours. On the contrary Catholics were warmed by the display of care their neighbours extended and spoke gratefully about the Muslims guarding their churches and increasing vigilance in their place at the entrance to neighbourhoods

Perhaps bolstered by the experience of Catholic majority, PRR nuns in Flores took a beneficent approach to their Muslim neighbours, emphasizing their sameness in interactions and incorporating them in their dinner-time stories and everyday acting, an act that, as we saw in chapter six and seven, also incorporated them into their own beings. Returning from a fundraising trip to Jakarta one day, Sister Pia regaled us with stories of her travels. 'A Muslim man approached me in the airport', she began. He recognised her habit and so identified himself as a long-time resident of the PRR's hometown. 'That means we're the same, *Bapak*!' she exclaimed. 'You're from Kupang and spent a dozen years in Larantuka and I'm from Manggarai and spent a dozen years in Larantuka!' He offered her biscuits and they sat laughing and talking until the plane came.

This kind of intentional camaraderie—no less meaningful for its performativity—while common in Flores, is a far cry from the situation in Indonesia's metropolitan centres.

[68] Mixed-religion marriage is legally prohibited in Indonesia. If people want to marry across religions, one half of the couple must convert, usually the woman. While nuns regretted the necessity of this, they often agreed that it was right and proper for a Catholic woman to convert to Islam in marriage, taking solace in the hope that the Catholic faith must still be 'close to her heart'.

From that same trip, Sister Pia's stories through the Jakarta airport rang with confusion and misapprehension: 'They called me *Ibu*!',[69] she said, 'They didn't know what a rosary was! They wanted to confiscate it!' Safe in our Catholic enclave that night, we laughed at the bumbling airport officials, cooed over the Muslim man's generosity of spirit, and finished our meal. But for nuns who are stationed in Muslim Java, engagements with the laity—both Muslim and Catholic is, if not more fraught, at least more apparently in need of reflection.

The PRR Sisters in Jakarta lamented the image their Muslim communities had of them. One complained:

> They flattened a church near my university. They said they didn't want the church there. No—they didn't want any [Christian] prayers there. They always think that the church building is to blame. We never force anyone to stay in our religion. We don't demand that they stay. If Christians want to become Muslim, we say, 'Please, go right ahead!' But they don't think that way. They think if there are lots of churches, they'll lose people. They always think we're coming to build churches—we Sisters or other Sisters or priests or Christians—and they don't want to lose people. So, they flattened it to the ground. Empty. Flat.
>
> Even my friends! At school, on campus, in the neighbourhood, everyone thinks… 'She must be here to convert us'. That's wrong! We're not even thinking that at all! At most, we're thinking, 'Yeah, we're brothers, we're friends. If you need help, I'll help you', not, 'and then you enter my religion'. No such thing![70] I'm the kind of person, I like when people call me or greet me or ask, 'Where are you going?' I like

[69] *Ibu* is a common form of address for women in Indonesia, as *Bapak* is for men. In Flores, however, *Ibu* is reserved almost exclusively for civil servants. Regular women are called *'Mama'* or '*Ina.'* Nuns, however, are properly referred to as *Suster*. To be called '*Ibu'* then, was doubly jarring for Sister Pia.

[70] Contrast with Hare Krishna 'branders' in the U.S. who downplay their doctrine and emphasize wellbeing to appeal to a 'Western' audience (Karapanagiotis 2021).

to say 'I'm going there!' (*She pointed at me, as if I were the person who had just called out to her).* Even though their house wasn't my aim, but just to sit and chat. Of course, people think it's to spread religion, but it's not! Just sitting, telling stories, sharing… Just to be friendly and pass the time.

While this confession revealed my friend's distress at being mistaken and mistrusted by her classmates, it also cast her as an emblem of PRR moral subjectivity: not only does she visit the neighbours, but she is *the kind of person* who visits the neighbours.

> People will share until they cry! As soon as I leave, their neighbours will come over and say 'what were you talking about with the Sister—religion?!' Even though we weren't! So, I have to be careful not to go too often to the same houses, so their neighbours don't cause them trouble. So maybe two times in a month I'll visit them… but then they'll say, 'Sus, why don't you come over anymore?' Like they miss me!

The thought moved her almost to tears herself and she put a hand to her heart.

> There's one woman I am friends with who always comes to visit me at my boarding house[71] and she brings food. Usually, after we're sharing, I'll offer to pray with them—they in their religion, I in mine. She shared until she was crying and she said she felt so light after being listened to. In that state, they don't need advice. She said, 'Sus, after sharing all my problems, I feel like they're all solved. I feel light, like I don't have burdens anymore. It's not an issue of me not following my own religion, but right now, I just can't… Sister, go ahead and pray.' Then, she had to hold my hand while praying! I thought, oh no, anyone who passes is going to think I'm trying to give her religion! I told her, 'Good thing you aren't alone. Your husband knows, your children know [what I'm about], but what will the neighbours think?!'

The presence of a nun in a Muslim community, she feared, could cause trouble for the people with whom she drew close, who needed her most. Emerging from her characterful retelling, she analysed her situation for me:

> The thing is: people see us as other. We look other, we dress other, we are other. And so, their thoughts run accordingly.

Whereas the sense of difference that emerges in the company of fellow Sisters is one that evokes her own unique character, the sense of otherness that emerges in the company of lay Indonesians places her in a distinct subject position. Ironically, even as these processes of othering separate her off from her Muslim neighbours in certain ways, they unite her to other nuns and indicate her embodiment of the subjectivity she is trying to fill.

Despite her concerns, she continued to visit. When she could not visit, she fretted about her neighbours' wellbeing. She believed that merely being with people in need was a

[71] Most PRR nuns live in convents, but there are some exceptions. The university that this nun attended was too far from the convent, so she spent Monday through Friday in a boarding house (*kos*) with other university students, returning to the Jakarta convent on the weekends.

service performed for them and that the sign of this service was the overspilling of pent-in emotion until it clarified into a (moral) mood of quietude.

My friend's reflection that day did a similar thing for her as her visits with Muslim neighbours did for them: unburdening her heart helped her feel light and prepared her anew for her daily, highly-visible foray into the community. At the same time, the content of her speech bears weight for her self-becoming. Many PRR nuns experience a similar kind of culture shock when they move from the rural regions of Flores where casual visiting is innocuous and a nun's goodness (typically) unquestioned. Instead of viewing themselves, as they may in Flores, as familiar representatives of both the Church and the people, PRR nuns learn to view themselves as 'other'. Outside of Flores, their ways are strange and their persons are suspect. Rather than rejecting this difference, however, PRR nuns usually embrace it. If, as Retsikas (2014) argues, part of the process of becoming is the creation of difference both within oneself and between others, human and divine, then observations about themselves, here from the intuited perspective of Javanese Muslims, emerges as a process of transformation: both reinforcing the idiosyncrasies of their own religiosity and expanding the breadth of their cosmopolitan capabilities.

The refrain of religious confluence, so prevalent in Flores, does not seem to work in Java. Instead, the presence of convents and Catholic communities in Javanese cities is an anomaly; part of being a PRR nun in these places is fitting into the fabric as much as possible. Maintaining a low profile helps protect the nuns (and their convents) from provoking any latent prejudice that may be directed at them and the other Catholics in Jakarta. PRR nuns in Java minister to and serve the island's relatively small population of

Catholics, many of whom are of Chinese ancestry. For these people, the nuns' presence often serves as a bulwark, a source of strength and surety as a minority group.

Nuns in Yogyakarta, sometimes went to the market dressed not in their habits and veils, but in track suits and slick ponytails, looking like extremely well-groomed housemaids.[72] At the convent in Jakarta, an elder nun was pressured to hold a conference with the dozens of schoolchildren in her care (many of whom were orphans from East Nusa Tenggara) to chastise them about the volume of their play: 'Catholics are supposed to be good', she pleaded, emphasizing that the children ought to respect the prayerful atmosphere of Ramadan. But she also reported that neighbours had claimed that their voices were 'harsh' and 'coarse', words potent with racially-imbued meaning (Anderson 1972; Geertz 1960; Keeler 1987). She begged them to become more 'refined' and the children, uncharacteristically attentive, perhaps sensing her undertones of caution, agreed.

In encouraging the children to become more refined, this elder nun was speaking from her training and her experience living in diverse communities. She urged them to adapt; to surrender their eastern/Catholic/foreign/coarse ways in favour of the western/Muslim/native/refined manner presumably more palatable to their neighbours in Java. This is adaptation to place through bodily grasping and transformation, one that figures place as the effects of company. By aligning their bodily comportment so as not

[72] It is fairly common for middle- and upper-class families in urban Java to hire 'helpers' (*pembantu*). These are often young, unmarried women from the lower classes who live in the house, cleaning, cooking and minding children. Florenese women who move to the cities in search of work often find work as *pembantu* (Williams 2007). Wendy, who we met in chapter five, is one such example. *Pembantu* often dress casually and practically, in shorts or leggings and oversized t-shirts. One of their essential tasks is going to the market daily.

to disrupt the moral mood of Ramadan, children and nuns alike entered into a process of en/inculturation discussed in chapters three and four. The company of Muslim neighbours in which they are enmeshed brings more than a threat of hostility, it also presents new understandings of divinity in the world. Adapting physically to Muslim places is a mode of attuning oneself not only to difference, but to divinity. This adaptation transforms the self. It also helps them to empathise, to uncover another's heart, and to manoeuvre into a position where they can solve problems and ease burdens. Adaptation is a PRR way of 'just beginning', one that opens the possibility to serve.

I saw PRR nuns try to adapt to the cultural and emotional atmospheres of every place they worked, an endeavour that required a great amount of study. The nuns in Yogyakarta, living adjacent to a small but active mosque, were especially keen to know the strictures of Islam and to accommodate their Muslim friends who came to visit, especially in the provision of halal food and proper company. This provision was provided with the awareness that a Catholic convent was probably a context in which their Muslim friends might feel uncomfortable. They were, however, sometimes bothered by enacted but unspoken tensions, not least the kind of violence that was hot in the news and on their minds during my stay. They felt this tension even in their relationships with their neighbours who sometimes 'wanted nothing to do with us' and other times sent their young children over to play under the nuns' affectionate gaze.

Despite their belief that their Muslim neighbours technically were not allowed to socialise with Catholic nuns, despite their awareness that some Muslims see the habit and 'think we're magic', (*majis)* and despite their creeping suspicion that idioms of hate, exclusivity, and violence were encroaching on Indonesian Islamic discourse 'from Arabia', the PRR nuns in Yogyakarta held onto the belief that 'the Holy Spirit guides people to the good'. On a more practical level, they reasoned that no one could hold onto hate when they were confronted with real flesh-and-bone people, whatever their religion. Their role in non-Catholic communities, they believed, was to *be* the presence of the Holy Spirit, without evangelizing, in the manner of the people whose company they kept.[73]

Sometimes, however, they could not resist pushing the boundaries of adaptation. One suppertime in Yogyakarta, a nun in her early thirties from Timor-Leste tentatively explained the custom of greeting one's neighbours during the Muslim feasts commonly

[73] Contrast with Fletcher's informants whose expectation that their presence and good works in the community *would* lead people to convert was repeatedly disappointed (Fletcher 2016).

known as *Lebaran*, demonstrating how men will avoid touching women by tapping their folded hands at them in an imitation of a more intimate handshake.[74] With peals of audacious laughter, her senior—a bold medior then on retreat from her usual post as head of a high school in Timor—re-enacted a time she and her cohort ('troublemakers all!') purposely shook the hands of all the Muslim men, pretending throughout that they were unaware of the gender taboo. 'We did it purposefully!' She announced with glee. 'After greeting all the women, we went right over to the men and went down the line, shaking all their hands! They were amazed!' She continued, 'We just acted like we didn't know. When were back at the convent, only then did we laugh naughtily, but we knew they might hear, so we didn't laugh out loud. We stifled our laughter'. A senior Sister dampened the mood, cautioning the others against laughing, 'because any little thing can be called blasphemy'.[75]

The emotions that ran across the faces in the room—delight, shock, concern, annoyance—registered the background of everyday relations and national politics against which the nun recreated her scene. It recalled painful memories of rejection—many had seen neighbours wipe down their chairs after they rose, to clean off the stain of Christian presence—suspicion, and threat. But it also acknowledged the very real and meaningful

[74] Although the prohibition goes both ways, this nun represented it as unidirectional (men must not touch women). While most nuns who grew up in Indonesia—even in East Nusa Tenggara—know a lot about Islam, nuns from majority-Catholic Timor-Leste typically know less.

[75] This is a reference to the former Governor of Jakarta, a Christian, imprisoned for claiming, during his re-election campaign, that the Koran does not forbid Muslims from voting for Christians. See Keane (2018) for a discussion.

relations of friendship and trust that embolden Catholics to visit their Muslim neighbours on the feast days and Muslim students to attend their classmates' Catholic services for the renewal of religious vows. The performance and the reactions it engendered point to the purpose of physical presence not only for generating ideas of difference and sameness, but also for practicing virtues and revealing divine presence through things like harmony, peace and joy.

Her story also contains an implicit feminist critique of gender relations prevalent in Indonesian communities, but which seem to nuns to be structurally enforced in Islam. This critique is embodied in the moment of handshaking, in resisting an implicit placement of female and Catholic bodies as abject. That several nuns managed to process down a long line of Muslim men, shaking all of their hands without anyone drawing back suggests that the men themselves were somewhat open to this critique. These small moments of adaptation—Florenese nuns adapting their practices to Javanese expectations and Muslim men receiving the handshakes of Catholic women—are risky. And yet, they do not explode into violence or conflict. Live presence changes prejudice and ideology. It allows opportunities for subtle influence that blur the bounds between bodies and selves. This, I suggest, is because of the ways they figure each other as company through an everyday moral commitment to neighbourly relations.

While PRR nuns attempted to adapt and sink in to the flow of people's everyday lives, there were certain situations in which they resisted adaptation. In the previous case, the situation was the build-up of complex tensions and affections intersecting with a set of nuns who shared a personality trait, being 'troublemakers all' (*orang kacau semua).* PRR nuns also felt a latent wariness towards new Protestant Christian churches—blossoming across Indonesia—which they suspected of bribing new members to join with promises of money and rice. There is a large Evangelical[76] church in Larantuka, but the PRR nuns I lived with rarely mentioned it, despite the way its members could be seen flooding home midday on Sundays.

In other cases, Protestant Christians proved important nodes of differentiation precisely because of their close religious relationship to Catholics. Neighbours who left Catholicism in favour of Protestantism sometimes did so for reasons of faith, reasons they boldly shared with their community. Such people forced PRR nuns to contend

[76] Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) was established as an indigenous Christian church with the help of the Dutch and is now one of the largest denominations in Indonesia.

publicly with some of their received wisdom: the holiness of the Virgin Mary, for example, or the authority of the religious class versus the Bible. Concluding one dinner-time discussion of such an event, a young nun from Timor-Leste cried: 'Catholicism isn't a religion of debate. Catholicism is a religion of tradition and following the rules. If there is debate, then that means it's politics and not religion'. A medior, who also happened to be a passionate politico, fervently agreed.

Protestants too sometimes came to stand as a class in opposition to Catholics. At one point, Catholics in Larantuka got wind, via social media, that a popular Islamic religious teacher had explained to his listeners that crosses make them feel uncomfortable because of the *kaffir jinn* living inside them and that they should avoid using things like ambulances that have crosses painted on them. The nuns' initial helpless fury was softened in the weeks that followed by an overwhelming show of Muslim media support for Indonesian Christians, critiquing the teacher's arguments, as well as by the nuns' own conclusion that, even if Christians were punished for much less, they shouldn't seek retribution because 'our religion is one of love-and-peace'.

But this vision of Christianity, and their own position as the nation's peace-lovers, was somewhat endangered by the slightly different perspective that Protestant Christians took. Preachers in Kupang, the regional capital, loosely Protestant, reacted strongly against the teacher. Priests and the more scholarly of the Catholic religious class feared that the people might be swayed by their arguments into taking a more vindictive approach (to this and the countless other slights that arise against Christianity in Indonesia's social media economy). One priest encouraged his congregation of elderly PRR Sisters to see this incident, like 'everything that happens' as happening 'in accordance with God's plan. This may be a way for the holy spirit to work', he continued. 'Who knows, he may become a great disciple, a second Paul!'[77]

Live presence, for PRR nuns in multicosmological Indonesia, is complex. It has to do with community—with diverse people living side-by-side, moving together and apart, adapting and resisting, each discovering herself through the eye and the action of the other. For the PRR, too, it has to do with theology, with a belief that the Holy Spirit guides God's plan to fruition and that good people suffer regardless of religion and that divinity may be present even in places (or people) where it seems most absent. And of

[77] The apostle Paul persecuted Christians in the early days of the religion, under the Roman Empire, but experienced a dramatic conversion and became one of the faith's great champions.

course, presence for the PRR is part of a mission: a mission to bear the divine to others (or at least to manifest it) and to seek to grow in and closer to God themselves. The texture of this process, as discussed in other chapters, is meant to be peaceful and joyous and ought to deepen the uniqueness of each individual person. As it unfolds, however, both within the convent and without, the process is full of unexpected obstacles. These difficulties are perhaps most obvious when they arise in interactions with people of other religions, but they nonetheless exist in nuns' attempts to be present with Catholics.

Ways of Being Present – Professionals, Missionaries, Neighbours

In many ways, the PRR's service work is similar in kind to other development and charity work: they run schools and health clinics, serving as nurses and teachers. They teach religion and lead the committees for local feasts and parties. They provide for the poor, handing out clothes, food, and materials for housebuilding and housekeeping. They run orphanages, taking in the abandoned and the disabled[78] and watch over dormitories full of school girls.[79] They ride long distances to minister to villages too small, remote, or irrelevant to have a full-time priest. They care for people suffering from leprosy, finding them where they are 'discarded', bathing their wounds, and tending them until they are healed. They manage care homes and preschools, advise on matters familial and

[78] Ability is defined differently by the different communities in which nuns serve and, generally speaking, nuns abide by the local definition, mainly accepting abandoned or proffered children rather than seeking out those who need special care (but who might be well-loved and cared-for by their families).

[79] In this role, they sometimes act as surrogate parent, being the first to meet and vet the boyfriend, for example.

economic, and breed pigs and positivity alike. A point of pride for the PRR is that it is *they* who perform the difficult and dirty work, an aspect that laypeople also cite as their reason for loving or respecting the PRR.

Although the state in Flores has increasingly assumed the burden of education and medicine, the religious class still plays an important role in development. The PRR have found a particular place for themselves by aligning themselves with their colleagues at work—in schools, clinics, and parishes, often forming sibling-like relationships with them, cemented in mutual affection. In relationships that seem to parallel the entanglement of Church and state on Flores, both nuns and lay people take advantage of these relationships to secure surprising new futures for young people. Nuns draw on the middle-class networks of their colleagues to help secure funding for their projects, especially homes in urban centres, like the one in Jakarta, described above. Colleagues use their position of familiarity with nuns to secure places for their daughters and nieces in PRR dormitories where, it is hoped, young people will benefit from both the opportunities of a large metropolis and the diligent, strict care of Catholic nuns. The PRR's particular success at opening opportunities is due in part to their presence in the communities of Flores, but it is also thanks to the enduring friendships that they make with the people with whom they work professionally, every day. Professional relationships contribute to the making of PRR selves. They draw the PRR into equality with laypeople, working with and learning from each other on the job. This is one feature that helps communities, especially in eastern Flores, think of the PRR as 'theirs.'

Temporary Live-Ins

PRR nuns feel especially called to serve those in remote locations who do not see many religious. Their desire to serve people in remote places, places where other religious orders would not dare to venture, demonstrates how central live presence is to their ideas of service. They have to be there. PRR nuns occasionally organize what they call *live-in*. A large group will descend upon a hard-to-reach village where there are no nuns and spend the weekend among the people. They will bring small offerings of rice, water, cooking oil, and snacks for the children. They will organize prayer meetings and Sunday school and will take the lead on Sunday Mass. They may take up an emergency project—cleaning the homes of childless elderly, or helping open new gardens in villages depleted of its youth. These are additional services, however, to be performed if the need appears. The primary service is their presence. For the few days of the *live-in*, they will live in the homes of community members, sharing their meals and their company.

I had the chance to attend two *live-in* almost back-to-back early in my fieldwork. one in the famous whale-hunting village of Lamalera (see R.H. Barnes 1996) and one in a less famous village on Solor. *Live-in* are a lot of work for the organizers (usually a small committee, if not a single nun), but they can feel like mini-holidays to those invited along.

Nuns from Larantuka's several PRR convents gather at the pier, mingling with the laity and filling the tiny ferry with liveliness: shouting jokes, swapping benches, and sharing snacks with friends from other convents. Their excitement is complicated by their purpose as they travel. In the backs of trucks on 'broken' roads, observing landscapes of

need and hope, they are awakened to their reason for being there and, frankly, their reason for being nuns.

During one *live-in* to Solor, some twenty Sisters made themselves comfortable on the veranda of the chain-smoking priest's house, remarking, 'Truly, the name for this place is "palace!"' so distinctly did the place differ from their own experiences of religious life, and so impressively did it contrast with the bamboo huts spotting the hillside below. A pair of curious little girls scampered up the stairs to greet the newcomers. They were fondly welcomed and made to introduce themselves to each of the nuns in turn, pressing their little noses against the nuns' work-worn hands and squirming in their laps as the nuns grinned broadly in delight, plying them with compliments and questions and encouraging the girls' claims that they want to become nuns (*mau jadi suster*).

On this occasion, I was assigned to share a home (and a bed) with Sister Patricia, one of the order's superiors. Graceful, reserved, and self-assured with a quiet voice, she had been born and raised on this island and the work of returning for this *live-in* seemed deeply important to her. Perhaps because of her high status, Sister Patricia and I were housed in the modest home of the primary school teacher, a woman of local importance. We sat in the receiving room and listened to the teacher 'spill her heart' (*curah hati)*. Her story was good: her husband (who sat beside her) had loved and married her, saving her from a life of destitution and she wept grateful tears as Sister Patricia listened intently and sympathetically. The teacher shared her home with a woman whose husband had left her,

leaving her kin-less and landless. Now she and her teenaged daughter lived on the goodwill of the teacher (and a little household labour).

After the initial act of listening and sharing presence (a pattern repeated by each of the nuns in their own assigned homes), the afternoon was filled with active service work. The nuns distributed bags of supplies to members of the community, posing for pictures as they did so, an act which re-enacted the performative formality of exchange prevalent across Flores (Allerton 2012; Howell 1989; Smedal 2016).

They practised choir, arranged flowers, rehearsed dance moves, and met with elders. They did as much as possible in the short time to address immediate issues, generate a performance of religiosity, and participate in familiar patterns of gift (and provision) giving.

In the evening, after we had all bathed and wrapped ourselves in worn-out sarongs, neighbours gathered for a prayer session at the teacher's house.[80] We stuffed who we could into the teacher's tiny reception room while the rest of the group sat, squatted, or stood outside.[81] One of the neighbours brought the group's icon: a simple print of Mary, mounted on a shaft of wood and bedecked in tinsel and glitter paint. We prayed the

[80] The neighbourhood prayer association (KBG) is the smallest social-political unit in Catholic east Flores. A small designated group of households (around ten) take turns leading prayer each night. They also compete as teams in local sporting events and baking competitions and will often work as a unit during neighbourhood farming workdays or house-raising.

[81] I also had the opportunity to attend neighbourhood prayer sessions at times and in places unaccompanied by nuns. Numbers fluctuate, but I would say that the presence of nuns encourages (or compels) more people to join.

rosary. On this night, as in most others like it in Catholic Indonesia, those gathered passed around a lit candle. The effect was intimate and serene—a group scene wrapped in each other's presence, manifesting an atmosphere of quietude that signals the divine (that is always among them). After prayer, the mood persisted. Young women came from the kitchen and served the guests coffee and bowls of flattened popcorn while the neighbours relaxed in each other's company, chatting softly.[82]

As suppertime drew near, the neighbours dispersed, but Sister Patricia and I sat in the kitchen with our host family and took our turns doing *curah hati,* spilling out our experiences, concerns, fears and opinions. This kind of conversation, was just as integral to the *live-in* as the explicit religiosity. It was important to the PRR to be (and to seem to be) 'regular people'. Even more, it was important for their own hearts to have this chance of spilling over, to confide in people who confided in them, people who were not part of their everyday lives and did not govern their politics nor observe their every act. Sharing the heart with those 'outside' helped nuns continue that unending process of excavating the heart and strengthening the self. Sharing company with those who did not, on a daily basis, make up their company allowed nuns to release emotions that would be harmful to togetherness if released in the convent.

At night, Sister Patricia and I lay down on the bamboo bed. She laughed as she fought off the divebombing mosquitoes and remarked on the familiar smell of the borrowed sarong and the sounds of the village as it shuffled off to sleep.

After the next morning's Sunday Mass, in which the flock of nuns performed their presence again, making themselves visible by serving all of the ritual functions that would normally be occupied by the laity, Sister Yubilatia, as the nun who organized the event, explained the nuns' presence to the community:

> In August the PRR will celebrate its 60th anniversary as a native congregation (*konggregasi pribumi*). All PRR sisters come from villages *(kampung)*, just like this one. So, we don't feel foreign here. Here, we already have family.

A point dry-humoured, Sumatran-born Sister Liberta compounded by asking:

> Are there are any girls who want to be Sisters? We'll be waiting for them!

[82] Someone talked to me about terrorism, which might indicate the profound integration of world religions and national politics into people's lives, as well as their long engagement with the world at large, despite their 'remote' designation.

Then Sister Yubilatia introduced Sister Patricia, applauding the fact that she rose from this island to the PRR's highest ranks, emphasizing that the women who lead the PRR were once girls from the village, just like the little ones that Sister Liberta summoned. Sister Patricia smiled uncomfortably before adding:

> The PRR emerged from the people. We are a fruit of the people. And so, when we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we celebrate the faith of the people of Flores Timur that is so strong. And that is why we have this programme to go into the villages and visit, to thank the people and to show them what their faith and prayers have made.

She continued by inviting parents to consider sending their children to school in Larantuka where they could stay in PRR dormitories, and to discern if their girls have a calling to the PRR. Becoming a PRR nun, Sister Liberta and Patricia suggested, is a matter of personal discernment of a God-given vocation that is nonetheless developed within the embrace and with the help of the community. Parents can send their girls to live among the PRR, can get to know their character and their particular talents, and can pray for the realization of God's plan for their lives, but they should not force upon them something that is not for them. Back in our homestay, Sister Patricia encouraged the husbandless woman to consider sending her daughter, 'to us, in Larantuka'.

The post-Mass speeches, and indeed, the whole experience of PRR *live-in* emphasize the double-nature of religious life as mysteriously gifted and socially nurtured. A religious subject first recognises herself as such because of some odd, everyday combination of the two, unique to her. A nun's life requires acts of service and provision, but these acts are always, in the eastern Indonesian idiom of exchange, considered an *answer* to a previously

rendered gift and service. PRR nuns are construed—and construe themselves—in this manner. It is the laity of a community who gently draw a girl closer to God and to her divine calling. They do this through their constant presence, both physical and spiritual. PRR nuns feel this strongly; they each attribute their own calling to the devotion of their childhood company. Devout Catholics in Flores Timur, too, are aware of this; many are motivated to perform Catholic piety and to generate atmospheres of quietude and gladness in their own homes with the understanding that vocations are born out of childhood experience. *Live-in* invigorate a sense of ownership between PRR nuns and the communities from which they come and in which they serve: each nourishes the other, body and soul.

Visiting

Visiting is a fundamental feature of PRR service that all nuns must practise. Ideally, each PRR nun is required to spend one afternoon a week visiting the neighbours. In pairs they stop by a neighbour's house full of kindness and good humour, wait to be invited in, which they almost always are. Once inside, they might receive a bit of hospitality: a biscuit, or a cup of water, before the work begins: a nun's slight, precise question allows a member of the household to spill her heart. In these cases, nuns listen sympathetically, their whole body engaged in taking in the other's lament: eyes soft, brows creased, hands folded, leaning in, voice muttering soft 'ha ha' or 'tsk-tsk' or even 'oh my love/what a pity!' (*sayang e!*). Long practised in spilling hearts between themselves, visiting their lay neighbours required PRR nuns to act as vehicles for others to dig up their hearts, to share emotional

burdens that might be too heavy borne solo. As we have seen, emotional burdens can lead to *trauma,* significantly altering the course of the self. Listening to the laity like this, then, was a service: direct and difficult. Many times, it was enough to listen; the speaker was visibly relieved, their heart unburdened in spilling out to a nun—someone who was not only a listener but a local arbiter of morality (thus the speaker could gauge whether or not her claim was just) and something like divinity embodied.

The PRR's visits among their neighbours have a religious salience. In the New Testament of the Christian Bible, there is a story about Jesus' mother, Mary, visiting her cousin Elizabeth, while both were pregnant. Upon seeing Mary, Elizabeth's infant 'leapt in her womb' and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit greeted Mary in words that would become integrated into the Ave Maria prayer: 'Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb'. Mary answered in words that would become the Magnificat, another Catholic prayer (Luk: 1:39-56). The whole experience is encapsulated in and meditated on in one of the 'mysteries' of the rosary: 'The Visitation.'

This biblical visit demonstrates two things that are important to understanding how and why visits become meaningful work and productive processes of self-becoming for both the PRR and their Catholic neighbours. The first is that Mary and Elizabeth recognize a distinction between them: God has blessed Mary in a way that he has not blessed Elizabeth. In her speech, Mary suggests that the grace that has been bestowed upon her is entirely from God and that it has been given to bring relief to many. She, then, becomes a very special medium between God and people, a gift—separate from her—that she literally bears in her body and shares with her cousin via her live and physical presence.

The second thing to notice in this visit is the give and exchange. Mary visits her elder cousin, both surprisingly pregnant, out of a family duty that many Florenese recognize. Then, when Elizabeth speaks, Mary answers. This form of call and response, or speech and answer, is a familiar feature of ritual speech and action in eastern Indonesia (Fox 1988). The PRR call it the *balasan* and will often foreground their formal speeches or action by saying, 'Good. We answer.' (*Baik. Kita balas).* The exchange of visits, both of that between Mary and her cousin as well as that between the PRR and their neighbours emphasizes that each part is a unique piece, differentiated from the other partly because of socially structured roles (younger cousin/older cousin, nun/neighbour, guest/host), but partly because of mysteriously gifted talents or blessings. The implied lesson is that each Christian has her role to play in the grand drama of salvation. And the lesson is

couched inside a very banal meeting of two women, kinsmen. The biblical visit prefigures an encounter between PRR nuns and their neighbours in which divine mystery emerges through an everyday event—the visit—and the intimate company it engenders. 'An answer' (*balasan)* is exactly how the PRR frame their missionary efforts and trips to remote Catholic places, emphasizing that it is because of the example, prayers, and sociality of lay Catholics that they have the strength to endure their religious work.

When PRR nuns live and work in places unfamiliar to them, they try to get to know the place, learning the local language and moving in time with local rhythms. They attend community meetings and assist on community projects. They go visiting and welcome visitors into their convent. They sit down in house after house and, when asked—after the small talk and the first sip of tea—narrate their origin. If they can, they wiggle their way into the kitchen, where they might comment on some excellent cooking, or coo over toddlers playing on the floor. After a while, they might place subtle prompts, small questions that invite people to open up about a personal, household, or community problem. Ethnographers are familiar with his strategy of inquiry; it might form new horizons for anthropological investigation and work. For the nuns, it serves as a diagnostic tool as well, identifying sources of need and places where they can be of service.

The nuns who run the leper hospital in Timor go visiting throughout the surrounding villages, listening between the lines to discover if there are people who have been cast out by their families because of the sudden appearance of alarming sores. The nuns then seek them and bring them to the hospital, keeping them there until they are healed (which often requires cajoling). When they are healed, they return them, personally, to their families and explain that they are cured and that there is no danger of contagion (a conversation which also may take some time and tact). They keep regular visits to ensure the formerly-ill person is reincorporated into their family and, where this proves unlikely or impossible, they bring them back to the hospital, or to another convent, and offer them jobs, thus embracing them into the 'big family' of the PRR.

To find lepers living alone in the forest and to convince them to come to the hospital requires nuns to extend themselves beyond their comfort and to embrace the person as they are, often literally. I heard many stories of long-time members of this convent who shared beds, clothing, and meals with people suffering from leprosy. The stories were often told by newer members, who were brought into the fold of this convent by

following in the footsteps of the elder. Only a handful of Sisters are medically trained to treat leprosy. The majority of nuns, especially young nuns, at these convents are there for their assistance and their lively company. They do not always learn what exactly leprosy is, how it is transmitted, and that it can be cured before they go visiting the afflicted. Accordingly, they must learn by experience, mimicking their elders and performing confidence until they overcome their fear. They must use the strategies of attention discussed in chapter seven to take on not only the physical work of their elders, but the proper emotional expression of such service work as well.

One story related how an old woman with leprosy living on her own in the forest could not manage to grind corn flour with her wounded hands, so instead mashed it with her mouth, spitting it back into the pot. 'Sister Elisa just smiled and ate it like it was the most delicious kind of food, as if made for a king!' a younger nun blurted to me admiringly, adding, scared and pious, 'that's how we learn'. As much as PRR self-making demands living as the people do, the moral, practical, and performative requirements nuns place upon themselves also differentiate them as separate kinds of subjects, ones that are able (or expected to be able) to endure severe trials.[83] This endurance, they might say, is divine in origin, and so its practice suggests that PRR nuns are becoming the kinds of 'little things' discussed in chapter four that bear the mystery of divinity to others. The form that this mystery takes here is service.

Visiting a widow hard-pressed to finance her son's wishes to attend seminary, a senior nun offered the woman work sweeping leaves in the cemetery, a job that is not, strictly speaking, necessary. Many nuns operate in this mode—offering instant and seemingly unsustainable relief to the poor through casual employment. The people they take under their wing require them to find ways to generate or seek more funds to support them, as well as to strategize financially for the short term. Nuns' capacity for financially accommodating new members of their convent families always impressed me. The Mothers of Lewoina, Sister Diana and Sister Pia, took periodic trips to Jakarta to 'search for funds' (*cari dana*). Both had built good relationships with wealthy Catholics of Chinese ancestry and both also had an uncanny ability to form new relationships of patronage. On more than one occasion, I watched as Sister Diana, openly weeping at a story a neighbour had just told her, texted one of her donors in Jakarta. She received almost

[83] Endurance is an important virtue of monastic life in different religious traditions (Carrithers 1983; Laidlaw & Mair 2019; Lester 2008).

instant replies: 'Ready. (*Siap.)* Sister, just tell us how much to send' and the money would be in the convent's account before we left for the next house.

Sister Diana's presence as a unique human being with *trauma,* talents and style all her own is crucial to understanding how these situations unfolded. A self-dubbed timid but stubborn girl from Solor, she initiated relationships with donors during her time studying for a university degree in hotel management (sponsored by the congregation). She often regaled us at the dinner table with tales from that time, about how these people would call her and take her out for lavish meals in Jakarta's extravagant shopping malls, sending cars to pick her up. As she told her stories, Sister Diana would giggle—she was a school girl again lapping up the delights of life's excesses. She neither praised nor critiqued the life of the rich, but rather mobilized her own endearing character and sincere concern to bring together these separate characters of the Indonesian Catholic community.

Not everyone, of course, holds Sister Diana's impressive ability for fundraising or empathy. Their talents lie elsewhere, growing towards different *karya.* Receiving visits from Sister Clara-Francesca, for example, neighbours were unlikely to experience the same kind of immediate relief or solution to their problems. I sat with her during one visit to an ailing neighbour who wept and moaned about a sore leg. Sister Clara-Francesca listened politely and patiently, but expressed only a minimal amount of sympathy. After a half hour or so, she tried to end the woman's gapless monologue on a hopeful note, but it took several tries before we could extract ourselves from the house. A friendly smile pasted obligingly on her face, Sister Clara-Francesca waved and walked quickly away, shivering slightly.

No, her gifts lay more in engendering happiness, in lifting the spirits of a household, and having hers lifted in turn. She loved visiting the houses of employees with babies, talking to them sweetly and pressing her nose into their chubby cheeks. For my part, I loved watching the glow that came over parents faces as they watched this display of affection, the child pulling at her medallion or veil and giggling at the faces she pulled. Likewise, she enjoyed visiting the houses of neighbours with flower gardens. She would call out gaily, approaching the front door, saying oh we were just passing by and look what lovely flowers! The owner would inevitably emerge, smiling, pleased, and insist that she cut whatever she wanted. Sister Clara-Francesca would thank them profusely and, pulling out a pair of scissors she just happened to have in her pocket, babble about where the new plant would go in the convent and how beautiful it would look and how she loves flowers and thank you thank you thank you. Many times, the owner would push a couple of extra potted plants into my arms to carry home for the spirited little nun.

Walking back up the hill to the convent, one of us skipping the other panting, Sister Clara-Francesca would lecture me gaily on what these visits meant. 'People love to give to the Sisters', she would say, 'It's a blessing for them. We give them the opportunity'. Sister Clara-Francesca's relationships with neighbours, like the relationships of many of her fellows, was one of reciprocity on several scales. They materially benefitted each other, but they also fed into each other's mood of gladness (*gembira*), which, we have seen, is a moral act for both that manifests and draws them closer to the divine—together, as a community.

As these examples attest, part of the art of the visit relies on attuning to the mood of the room, which is not predictable. Because their mission of service by presence is to engender moods of gladness and quietude, they can be of most use in rooms saturated with 'heavy' anxiety and fear. Visits to different homes in different cultural contexts over the course of their lives might teach them what to expect, but visits always involve a huge amount of improvisation. This is not only because expectations may be flouted at every turn (and they often are), it is also because mood depends so much on the play of characters present together in a space, that is, on company. To alter the mood is to alter the quality of company. To make her effect here, a nun must first enter into that company, must grasp the mood as it stands. Grasping it requires an openness that also puts a nun at risk of incorporating negative moods into her own being, which in turn puts her at risk of participating in, even exacerbating 'heavy' moods (Gammeltoft 2018). This is why the visit is not just a job that must be done, but an act that must be practised. Fortifying

oneself against the depressive moods of others that threaten to suck one in (Throop 2017) and remaining sympathetic, while managing to influence the emotions of the other (and the mood of the room) is a skill that must be developed. In the manner discussed in chapter six, some nuns are revealed to be more skilled than others at the art of the visit. This may then become a source of her character identity and a metric against which she judges other nuns.

These modes of being present with and to the laity reveal several things: (1) that the PRR apply their own methods of self-becoming to others they encounter; (2) that the PRR incorporate their experiences with laity into their own self-making practises; (3) that live presence, conducted empathetically in a mood of quietude and gladness is itself a mode of service; (4) that live presence opens up new relationships, linking people and communities just as they are mediated (through another person, through social media); and (5) that presence plays on tropes of exchange and kinship just as much as it relies on a particular mode of religiosity.

Being Present, Serving Others, Forming the Self

Straight and clear? she said, '*If there's one thing that will heal the world, it is presence.*

In the anthropology of Christianity, the question of presence figures as a 'problem', a challenge for Christians to realize God's presence despite his apparent absence (Engelke 2007). Christian communities solve this 'problem' by making use of various forms of media (Bielo 2020; Csordas 1994b; Irvine 2018; Meyer 2011; Norget 2021; Orsi 2004). While we might interpret PRR service in this light, attempting as it does to cultivate

atmospheres in which the divine can be sensed, they are not media of God in an uncomplicated way and the presence at stake is not God's presence, but human presence. By sharing their presence with and entering into the company of others, PRR nuns aim not so much to bring about a realization of God's person (although they do that too), but to foster an atmosphere in which God can be sought and divinity can be felt. That is, they aim to cultivate company that approximates the feel of godly relationships. Such a situation, however, emerges not from nuns alone, but from amongst the play of persons gathered.

Nuns use the Indonesian term for being present, *hadir*. A common word with profound implications, it was to be heard every time PRR discussed their mission. They see themselves as being present among the people (*hadir di tengah umat*), a sentiment that is not lost on the people of Flores Timur. The PRR's *hadir di tengah umat* was an important theme of the high school students' play that opened chapter two. PRR nuns work hard to make themselves seem (or, in fact, to be) 'villagers', regular people, from the village. In fact, 'all' they are doing is often simple things, apprehending other people's moods and styles, grasping their selves, alleviating their suffering, and listening to their stories—human things that laypeople often do themselves.

The PRR's take on *hadir* implies a logic of intimacy rather than of mediation. Their casual visits, in which listening and empathizing are primary, certainly deal with this. Their relationships with others speak to 'the relationship between creature and creator—in other words: the precise nature of divine presence in the world' (Mayblin 2012: 243). But what is interesting, I think, is that it is not God's presence only or even primarily that is overtly in question in these relationships. It is human presence. Sharing company enables intimate relationships enacted in physical closeness—sitting, touching, sharing food. As emotions are elicited or soothed, it is hoped, space opens not for divinity per se but for noticing and feeling it. It is in co-creating liveliness that divinity might be felt, just as selves are formed as distinct characters. Presence, then figures as a particular form of religious service just as it figures as a form of psycho-social service in allowing for the spilling of hearts. In fact, for the PRR, these two things are closely entwined.

Intimacy, reciprocity and gratitude mark PRR Sisters' own experiences of the communities in which they work, especially in Flores Timur. During *live-in,* they might be reminded of their childhood, as Sister Patricia was in Solor: dancing traditional dances in the church hall, sipping fresh coconuts on the beach, or squatting on the cement floor to

poke the sticks of the fire. They are not altogether struck by the differences between what their life could have been and what it is; after all, the life of the villagers bears some similarities to their life in the convent, where they also dance together, harvest wild(ish) fruits, and tend the hearth. Sharing company with lay Catholics throughout Indonesia, PRR nuns not only perform good spirituality, nor do they only cultivate the moods of quietude and gladness, nor just open space for the experience of divine mystery, but they also witness prayers *for them* within a cosmology where prayers are believed to have power.

These experiences are what Sister Patricia referenced when she spoke about the great faith of the people of Flores Timur. It was not detached admiration, but deep gratitude that the faith of the laity had provided the conditions in which she could uncover her heart and realize her calling. The white-clad person standing before them, she was claiming, existed because of the Catholic community in Flores Timur—the religious milieu in which she was raised and the continued prayer support they offered. This sense of the self emerging from a community might have been the same for other religious from Flores, but they were particularly keen for the PRR whose organization itself existed because of the physical and spiritual labour of other Florenese.

While presence figures as an aspect of all PRR service, reinforcing the importance of company, it takes different form in different *karya*. The specific *karya* that a nun is called to affords opportunities for specific relationships to emerge, relationships that might aid or challenge her efforts towards presence-as-service. Lay co-workers help her develop the talents and facilitate the style that characterize her not only as a religious subject but as a unique individual. PRR nuns tending lepers in central Timor for example, gain a strong

sense of themselves as servants of those that society has cast out. The same goes for many of the PRR nuns who teach children, or tend the elderly, or distribute medication. Nuns in these roles perform work that is classically associated with nuns, a fact that further fortifies their identities in a sense of self that is rooted in service work. Nuns in convent-based *karya* develop working relationships with the people employed there, tightening the connections between gift and answer. The people in the community contribute to company as people with their own unique *trauma*, talents and style. Through their presence, laypeople perform a service to nuns and contribute to nuns' processes of self-becoming.

In their relationships with the laity, PRR nuns follow the same processes of self-becoming that apply to their relationships with each other. They try to grasp their *trauma*, talents, and styles. They also debate their actions, never resting on an answer, but leaving the question open, represented in the statement: 'She's just like that.' They pray for them and for their relationships with them, and they assume their colleagues do the same, each working on her own spiritual development with the prayerful support of the others.

When PRR nuns work in the villages of Flores they are moved in their process of self-becoming by patterns of recognition and familiarity. They know the serious social and economic problems that confront people in this region because they have lived through it. They see themselves in little girls and old schoolmates. They also see the increasing gap between who they were, who they are, and who they might have been. The difference, triggered not by environment but by persons, can emerge as a startling jolt. Something that might have—in another life—been a non-reflective experience of familiar encounter

becomes—because of the subjectification that nuns undergo—a moment of conscious reflection and awareness of oneself as other, or, if not other, certainly altered. The emotions and sensations that stem from this jolt range from discomfort and shivers, to pity, to longing, to matter-of-fact acceptance. Many nuns stop enjoying long holidays at home as they grow in the order, preferring the temporality and company of the convent.

The shock that nuns experience might not be too different from that of many anthropologists returning home after long bouts of fieldwork, or emerging from an engrossing period of ethnographic writing, wherein the familiar suddenly seems strange. The resonance might have something to do with the similarity in methods: the commitment to 'being there,' to being present in a particular place with particular people and learning to soak up what one can of another.

Almost everywhere PRR nuns go, they are identifiable as religious subjects, an identification which assumes a particular orientation toward piety and a special relationship with God. People often ask nuns for their blessing or their prayers. Catholics in Flores, especially, will often take the mere presence of a PRR nun as a blessing in itself. Nearness, presence, and proximity have special salience both in Catholicism—where pilgrims will travel great distances to be near a holy relic or place—and in Florenese spirituality—where mundane objects left near people or objects with great potency will gain some of their power for themselves. Laypeople often behave towards nuns differently than they would towards lay people (or even priests), demonstrating great respect (often genuinely felt). Receiving and participating in these kinds of everyday relational performances fortifies a nun's position and sense of herself as a religious subject

and her presence as an act of divine service. The structural effects are apparent, as nuns slowly learn to expect to be treated *as nuns*.

A focus on the performative and structural aspects of PRR self-becoming, however, would belie the sense of divine presence that some people feel when they are visited by a PRR Sister. As the *live-in* showed, the presence of PRR nuns in a community can stir excitement and joy. On many other, more everyday occasions, their visits may bring peace and calm to a person, or a household. When I went visiting with Sister Nicola, for example, small-talk often unravelled into comfortable silence as the elderly nun sat with her hand on the body of a widow living alone and quietude settled on the house.

The simplicity of these acts should not distract us from the hard work involved. Emotional atmospheres of gladness (*gembira)* and quietude (*hening*) are not effortless; they are the result of feminine forms of labour. PRR nuns work hard to transcend their own *trauma*, suspend their own desires, and draw on their own gifts to sooth the soul and lift the spirits of those around them, as well as to live—to be—with them in company, as a spiritual community. In keeping company with the laity, there is little recourse to the moral wrangling they may have with each other; they cannot hold the laity to the same moral standards that they hold each other. Sister Clara-Francesca cannot critique the woman with the sore leg for complaining, as she might a fellow Sister. Rather, she must subdue her own self and offer it in service to the other, trying subtly to alter the mood. Sister Clara-Francesca's struggle to do this gracefully, the woman's continued complaints, the cheerful nun's shiver of distaste, should alert us that this is hard work that takes time

to master and that, in the mastery, transforms the self. Bearing divine peace and joy to others is their calling. Its successful performance makes them who they are.

In the next chapter, I will discuss closeness and separation, about movement and nuns missing each other, separating, then returning together emotionally and physically in the celebration of large annual feasts. Throughout that discussion, we might keep the lessons from this chapter in mind: that PRR nuns are serving each other through the presence of their own selves. Each becoming herself, in company.

CHAPTER 9: MOVING

I was sitting at the dining table one sunny morning, probably scheming to delicately extricate myself from the continual stream of guests and the requisite demands of hospitality,[84] when an unfamiliar nun strode into the room. That I did not know her was not unusual: many PRR Sisters visited the convent in Lewoina during their passages through Larantuka. These last few days in particular had brought a steadily increasing flow of nuns flying in from all corners of Indonesia to attend a weeklong workshop on their constitution: an event the congregation organized in expectation of their 60th anniversary. Sister Gemma was merely the newest addition. She had a beard-like birthmark across half her weathered face. Her dark eyes were crowded with laugh lines and overcome by a mischievous glint. Ever-polished Sister Pia screamed '*Teman*!!' and enfolded the newcomer in a fond, welcoming, petting embrace.

For the next hour, Sister Gemma sat at the head of the table and held court, keeping me in the oven-like room with the dynamism of her stories. She had travelled from Papua, where she served as the sole nurse for an ostracised leper community in a swampy forest. She was also the *teman*, the friend, or more specifically, the classmate, of Sister Pia. Not only had they entered the PRR together some twenty-odd years prior, but they were also from the same region of Flores—a fact that often solidified bonds between nuns. It had

[84] Which mainly consisted of continuing to sit in a straight-backed chair under a tin roof in oven-like conditions.

been years—close to a decade—since the two had met and Sister Gemma's tea grew cold as they reminisced. The rest of us cackled with laughter, trying to jab our own jokes in edgewise.

Sister Gemma playfully reminded Sister Pia that they had both arrived *late* at their beginning—the convent for postulants—because they failed their entrance exams. Sister Pia protested that she did not fail the test—she was late because her acceptance letter was late and, in fact, *she* actually was excused from taking the test at all. 'It means I'm smart!' she yelled in mock anger. Sister Gemma rolled her eyes and laughed. Whatever the cause, this much was clear: their mutual tardiness opened the door to a fast affection and a long-lasting friendship.

What would become the PRR's largest cohort,[85] the class (if you will) of 1996 first entered the convent for postulants, then located in Manggarai, western Flores, in 1993. At the time, the women who would become Sister Pia and Sister Gemma had different names, given to them by their families. There were thirty girls then and they lived in that convent in Manggarai for the first year of their training. When the time came for them to enter the novitiate, five were deferred and quit the order rather than repeat the year. They returned home.[86] The rest moved east, to Larantuka, to Lewoina in fact, to finish their

[85] Some cohorts have begun with more entrants, some in excess of fifty, but none have retained so many as the class of '96.

[86] Nuns often refer to those who have left the order as still belonging to them, albeit in a nostalgic sense. They will say 'our former Sister' or 'our ex' (*kita punya mantan Suster / kita punya eks)* and will often call them by their PRR names, and not their birth names.

education in the convent in which we sat that day listening to Sister Gemma's stories. They made their first temporary vows (to be renewed yearly) in 1996 and promptly received their first assignments, each to a different place. The once tight and intimate cohort dispersed.

This is the story of all PRR cohorts. As discussed in previous chapters, it begins with an intense period of initial togetherness rightly called 'formation' in which new subjectivities emerge in the company of (very specific) others. They live intimately and intensely with an increasingly smaller number of other young women, who they learn to call *teman*, a word which means friend, companion. They are privy to each other's early successes and failures; they share time, space, praise and punishment. They keep each other company and participate in each other's spiritual development. They witness when their friends 'excavate their hearts' and uncover their *trauma*. They go visiting through the neighbourhood in pairs. They share in each other's spiritual triumphs and childish gambols. But after this period of intense life-together, they are separated, each sent to a new community to form new relationships and to—as nuns sardonically say—enjoy the suffering of convent life. From this point on, their lives are characterized by equally intense years of mobility, of moving from place to place. They sometimes share convents or cross paths with their *teman*, as Sister Gemma and Sister Pia did that day, but they will never be together again in quite the same way.

While previous chapters of this thesis dealt with the importance of intimacy to the experience and becoming of PRR subjectivities, this chapter wrestles with something else: the interruption of intimacy that mobility ensures. I discuss mobility as a defining feature of PRR lives: what movement and travel mean to their morality, what emotions attend the experience of re-placements, how intimacies are stretched and strengthened across space and how this alters women's subjectivities over the course of their lives. Experience varies and women change. Overall, this chapter is concerned with the productive tensions between intimacy and separation. I ask how the two substantiate each other and how this tension makes PRR experience at once unique and profoundly, generically human. Whereas the string of vignettes on the performance workshops emerged as a micro-ethnography of some few hours, this chapter is sprawling, fragmented, and wide-ranging. The combination of intimacy and separation, of intensity and attenuation constitute life among the PRR.

Work in the anthropology of mobility offers a rich ground for understanding the importance of interpersonal connections, revealing how new relationships in new places contribute to the making of new subjectivities and demonstrating how the connections travellers keep and cut with others 'back home' become meaningful to the experience of migration. Many such works focus on relationships with family (Aguilar Jr. 2013; Constable 1999; Forde 2011; Green 2015; Richman 2012; Telve 2019), but others have revealed how different kinds of connections and relations come to matter. This is evident in the work of those writing at the intersection of mobility and religion, for whom transnational religious movements afford networks and connections that allow for migrant incorporation, as well as for the shaping of new horizons of religious communities, landscapes and subjectivities (Amster 2009; Levitt 2003). For religious specialists, non-kin connections help in cultivating their subjectivities and fulfilling their religious projects (Bernstein 2012; Kitiarsa 2010). In all cases, movement, mobility, and migration sketch the outlines of a moral field borne between people. Through distance, strings of affection and obligation bind people to each other. And while these strings are often imagined as definitively emplaced, anchored between 'home' and 'host' location, in the PRR case, the principal emotions and anxieties lashed to the experience of mobility are not about place, but rather about people (cf. Stack 1996).

The 'particular channels [that] facilitate, organize, and constrain movement' are somewhat different for nuns than for other Indonesians, as are the 'structures of indeterminacy' and the specific 'desires and emotions' (Lindquist 2009: 6–7).[87] Although they can certainly be described as 'chronically mobile', (Malkki 1992: 24) nuns' movements are, of course, unlike those taken by many other subjects of mobility ethnographies (Williams 2007: 33) for at least three reasons. First, their movements are not principally determined by economic conditions, but rather by religious ones. Second, they do not typically remain in a single place for a very long time nor do their movements constitute a migration between home and one other location. Rather, nuns make many moves in their lives, moves that are (ideally) neither forced (Hammons 2016) nor personally motivated (Graham 2008: 121–2). Third, the social relationship that structures a nun's mobility—

[87] A cursory survey of articles on Indonesia in the journal *Mobilities*, for example, reveals some important themes in Indonesian travel, including labour (especially as female maids), tourism, and medical care. Searching the literature for religion-related mobility reveals a primary focus on pilgrimage (Maddrell et al. 2016). While patterns of PRR mobility occasionally fall into all of these, they are not characterized primarily by any.

with the definite exception of her first poignant journey from the natal home to the convent—is not that of kinship, but of friendship.

While kinship continues to matter profoundly in the lives of PRR nuns and others, friendship is slowly receiving attention as a 'form of relatedness' (Carsten 2000) in its own right (Bell & Coleman 1999; Desai & Killick 2010). Two anthropological collections on the subject observe that friendship's relative invisibility in anthropology may be due partly to its integration into kinship and the newer relatedness paradigm. They argue that such moves, while often productive, might elide indigenous distinctions between different kinds of relations. One such distinction is the one PRR nuns commonly make between the 'real' kin of 'flesh and blood,' marriage, and adoption and the 'like-to' kin[88] of the convent and the congregation. Both of these categories carry with them variably felt bonds of affection and obligation. Although I will not cover the full distinction here, I will draw our attention to the PRR's category of the friend.

There are two words in Indonesian, commonly translated as 'friend': *teman* and *sahabat*. *Teman* typically implies an acquaintance-like relationship between peers: everyone in your class is a *teman*, whether you like them or not. *Sahabat* implies a deeper relationship, often characterized by mutual affection. It is also more formal than *teman*. Nuns commonly used it to refer to Jesus (as in: 'Jesus is the *sahabat* of your heart'). Only rarely did I hear nuns use it to describe another human; in those cases, it was often applied to an unusual or heightened alignment. Sister Arcangela, for example, used it in the title of her playscript discussed in chapter seven, but in everyday life would not refer to Sister Maravilosa as *sahabat,* but as *teman*.

While there seems to be a descriptive abyss between these two terms, *teman* and *sahabat*, as much as between 'acquaintance' and 'dear friend' there is no such experiential gap between the possible feelings nuns might have for each other. While Sisters of the same cohort will call each other *teman*, as Sister Pia hailed Sister Gemma that day, their emotions towards each other span the spectrum. Even between those that do not get along so easily, the bonds of intimacy they formed during their three years together in the crucible of the formation convents do not disintegrate easily. *Teman* is reserved almost exclusively for members of the same cohort. Nuns refer to the members of other cohorts using nicknames and kinship terms, a common practice across Indonesia. In this chapter, I share the stories of Sister Pia's cohort to give a sense for the mobility that characterizes

[88] See (Howell 2009: 154–5) for a good critique of 'fictive kin' as an analytic category.

PRR experience and to investigate the nature of this very important relationship. Movement attenuates the relationship between a nun and all the *teman* of her cohort. This discussion here will lead us to grasp something about connection and attenuated intersubjectivity, that is, to understand something theoretically about mobility, sociality and self-formation.

In her moving ethnography of mobility in Manggarai, Catherine Allerton (2013: 151–177) describes the importance of 'rooting' oneself in a home-place before undertaking long or important journeys similar to those that PRR nuns make frequently over the course of their lives. She notes that such a 'concern with rooting only makes sense in the context of a landscape of *movement*' (168) and moreover that movement makes the landscape what it is: 'dynamic and profoundly social' (156). While I never witnessed rooting rituals of the kind Allerton describes, much of the heart of her account still resonates with PRR nuns, many of whom are from Manggarai. Before girls leave their villages for the convent—and any time they make a long visit home thereafter—they must take proper leave of the place. Usually, they light a candle at the grave of each ancestor, asking them to mark their journey.

Like Allerton's interlocutors, PRR nuns also 'claim a number of different dwellings as "their own house"' (166). They think of their current convent as their home, but will also often welcome each other into it by emphasizing 'this is *all-our* house' (*ini kita punya rumah).* What is more, in the way of the structure of clan houses prominent in Flores (Howell 1989: 433; Rappoport 2016; Schröter 2005), PRR nuns learn to think of the convent in

central Larantuka as the 'Mother House' (*rumah induk)*, a nun-specific term that correlates to the 'Big House' of family clans. Should anything go wrong in the convent, nuns—young nuns especially—are encouraged not to 'run away' (i.e., return to a relative's house) but to 'run home' to 'our Great House'.

This strategy works. Several of the girls who participated in my performance workshops had fled unsatisfactory conditions in their working convents to 'come home' to the Mother House. On passing through Larantuka, PRR nuns must always visit the Mother House, pay their respects to the elders, and light candles at the graves of their deceased Sisters in Lewoina, just like they do when passing through their natal homes.

Although less formalized, these leave-takings operate in many of the same ways as the rooting rituals Allerton describes, allowing for safe journeys and for the persistence of stable selves. At the same time, the intensity and enduring salience of a nun's formation years, together with the way she tracks her fellows in this 'intensely social' landscape, leads me to believe that the nuns of the PRR 'root' themselves (their hearts, if not their feet) in their *teman*. Their 'rooting' is not only spatial—in the Mother House in Larantuka—but also relational, situated in the people with whom they shared the most intense and intimate portion of their self-formation. I want to suggest here that the *teman* is one of the most crucial relations a nun can have. In it lies the roots of her spiritual subjectification. In the distance that stretches between *teman* as they move around the world lies the emotional poignancy of PRR experience. We might imagine the bonds between *teman* like strings that, counter to the intimate experiences of relationships in the

convent, tighten the further they are stretched, lying lax when nuns occupy the same town. The distance between *teman* makes reunions as joyous as moves are painful. Moreover, the emotional experience of having *teman* unifies disparate experiences of places and the journeys in between.

After almost a decade travelling their separate paths, the class of 1996 reunited to prepare to make their perpetual vows. They extracted themselves from their multi-generational convents and met at the Mother House for their *probasi*. Like initial formation, this period separated the cohort from the rest of the congregation, this time for six months of intense reflection, prayer and emotional intimacy. Once more, some nuns were detained until the following year. The rest, after they made their vows, separated again, each to her own new assignment and now fixed in her profession (*karya*). Sister Pia practised hospitality. Sister Gemma, nursing. Another Manggarai *teman*, Sister Hilari, studied economics. Each settled eventually and only ever temporarily, in a convent where her skills were essential: Sister Hilari in the Mother House, Sister Pia at Lewoina, and Sister Gemma first at the PRR leper hospital in Timor and then at the leper colony in Papua. While they remained *teman*, they found themselves in completely different places, moving along entirely separate trajectories, having thoroughly different experiences of life, and becoming different kinds of PRR nuns.

The day that Sister Gemma arrived in Lewoina, she told us about her journey. She explained how she came to move islands and work in a Papuan leper colony:

> A travelling doctor saw the place. She saw how dirty the villages were, how dirty the people, how plagued by leprosy. The doctor told the Bishop to request the PRR to come. 'But do they want to come?' he asked. The doctor answered, 'Whether they want to or not, ask. The point is, don't ask another order. Only the PRR can do this work.'

Which is how Sister Gemma came to receive a call from a pastor in Bali.

> I don't know where he got my number. I was in Timor, at the leper hospital there. When he called, I was wrapping a patient's wound. I didn't have my phone on me. So, I called him back. He asked me to come to Papua. I told him to call the Superior General, which, at the time, was Sister Ignatius. The priest protested: 'No. I want you, Sister.' I said, 'Me or no, you have to follow due process.' Eventually, Sister Ignatius asked me if I wanted to go to Papua. I answered, 'I can.'[89] So, I went to visit the leper colony in Papua.

At this point in her story, Sister Gemma re-enacted her entrance into the settlement for us, conjuring a host of people peering through windows and staring silently at her.

> 'Is this call from God or from man?' I wondered. But upon seeing the people I stopped my wondering: 'This is the will of God. So be it.'[90]

When she returned, passing as she must through Larantuka, Sister Ignatius asked her if she had changed her mind. But her answer remained the same: *bisa saja*. I am willing.

[89] *Bisa saja*: a humble answer, like 'I am willing' or 'whatever you like' or sometimes, 'it is possible'.
[90] Indonesian: *sudah*, lit. 'already.' Nuns often use the word to end a line of thought, debate, or conversation.

Sister Gemma's story is a good example of how nuns come to move places through an indeterminate, serendipitous chain of relationships, epiphanies and expressions of humility. Movement is suspended between two decisions: the superiors' decision to send (*mengutus)* and a nun's decision to accept the assignment, her willingness to go. It is a structural and practical act with moral and emotional consequences. In many ways, Sister Gemma represented the ideal approach to PRR mobility (as, indeed, I was often told). Upon being assigned to a challenging task in an isolated locale, she replied with humility and grace that she was willing to go. What is more—and herein lay the admiration many PRR nuns held for Sister Gemma—she actually *did* go, stay and perform her duties with skill and good humour. The convent in Papua's leper colony has a high turnover; all former inhabitants to whom I spoke had nothing but respect for Sister Gemma, her work and dedication. She stood as an excellent example to other Sisters and a worthy follower of their greatest exemplars: Mary, whose *fiat*[91] is the theme of many PRR celebrations, and their order's co-founder, who was famous for saying 'Just begin' to any obstacle, especially to the opening of new convents as the beginning of new endeavours in new places. Sister Gemma's stories reveal to us—and to younger members of the PRR—that PRR mobility happens through a moralized economy of places and personalities.

PRR nuns have an ideal model of their mobility: to be sent to the most remote and difficult place and to humbly, willingly accept. Tandem to this ideal sit nuns' desires for ease, friendship and fame, desires which, to be moral subjects, they must fight, suppress or ignore. In this battle, a nun 'places her ambitions and fears in the context of everyday religious expressions' (Silvey 2007: 228). Constantly on guard against their own wills, PRR nuns frequently draw on their ultimate exemplar, Jesus, whose words before his execution[92] often serve to strengthen their resolve. That is, nuns often frame their choice between the wills of two persons: God and themselves. Through the mediation of their superior's decisions, God's divine will touches nuns at their limits (Csordas 2004: 5). It is precisely in calling them to places, people and *karya* for which they are not quite ready that the divine is shown to be the primary actor, 'using' PRR selves for divine purposes. Additionally, the humanity of the superiors introduces the possibility for doubt, leading some to wonder: 'Is this man's call or God's?'

[91] The response that, in Christian scripture, Mary gives to the angel announcing her impending pregnancy: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word' (Lk 1:38).

[92] 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.' (Lk 22:42)

The challenge that re-placement presents is a difficult one and not all nuns comply. Accordingly, PRR nuns often say 'she follows her own will' (*dia ikut dia punya mau)* to critique Sisters who resist orders to move. Respect for *teman* may strengthen or dissolve along these lines. When interrogating themselves and their own motivations, they will often wonder, as Sister Gemma did, about voices. 'Who is speaking: me or God?' As they are often reminded, PRR nuns have a moral imperative to accept whatever task is spoken to them or, as they often put it, 'to go wherever we are sent'. The mixed emotions sprayed across faces after a first vow ceremony, when new nuns receive their first assignments, testify that the acceptance and the going are not always easy. The next photograph shows new nuns after receiving their first assignments. Newly-vowed Sister Pieta (waving) was assigned to her home island of Solor. Her friend behind her was assigned to Papua to help Sister Gemma.

But it would be unfair to characterize PRR assignments as entirely a battle of wills, for in a profoundly-felt sense, the congregation is like a family of intimates. The superiors I knew cared deeply for those in their responsibility and made consistent, sustained efforts to 'get to know' each individual nun personally. Sister Ignatius, especially, was still known for her caring ways by the time I arrived, a decade or so after the setting of Sister Gemma's story, taking the time to personally call each and every Sister on her birthday. By all PRR (mostly Florenese) accounts, a Papua assignment is difficult[93] and the leper convent the

[93] Sensibilities like this are tied to colonial histories and national patterns of racial hierarchy that position Papuans as most removed from 'civilization'. It also linked to the province's poor infrastructure, the legacy of warfare leading, and indigenous suspicion of and hostility toward the Indonesian majority.

most difficult of all. Sister Gemma's move was deemed even more difficult because of the necessity to start from nothing: to open a new convent in an unfamiliar place, caring for people that others spurned, in a language and a lifestyle unfamiliar to most nuns. Accordingly, as Sister Gemma emphasized in her story, Sister Ignatius allowed her a free choice. Although this was an extreme circumstance, the process itself is not so unusual; nuns' preferences are generally sought and (if given) considered. However, young nuns' piety and naivety, paired with a strong hierarchical sensibility and the oft-quoted injunction to 'go willingly,' often means that novices will not venture to lay their desires bare, but will rather attest that they are 'ready to be sent wherever' (*siap diutus ke mana saja).*

REUNIONS

The excitement that Sister Pia felt at reuniting with her *teman* lay partly in the love she bore her friend, and partly in the communal feeling surrounding the impending gathering of a hundred or more PRR Sisters. There were to be many reunions of this kind among the crowd, but the crowd itself, unified as a community, would also breed a feeling of relief at distances bridged.

The constitution workshop opened with a prayer and an invitation to journal 'our feelings (*perasaan*) at this moment'. After a few minutes of silence, accented by the swishing of ballpoint pens over new notebooks, Sister Gemma rose and gestured for the microphone to share her entry with the hundred gathered. Her 'feelings' reflected the distance she had recently travelled, and her enduring experience living so far away from the PRR's spiritual home, when she read:

> My feeling is one of joy because I am once again in Larantuka. If our Sisters die, we don't know. We may only see them in our dreams. At first, I didn't plan to come. Sister Ignatius told me I must come. I thought, *Ai! There is no money…*

Her audience giggled, responding both to her mock-anxious tone and to the all-too-familiar situation of convent poverty. Sister Gemma laughed and continued, ad-libbing now that she had engaged her audience's attention:

> So, I borrowed money. I begged money from Mother. I begged for the best habit because I was going to Larantuka! …

The story of her journey unfolded then as an epic odyssey fraught with obstacles and riddled with spiritual lessons: someone gave her a brand-new suitcase, but once she got to the provincial capital, she realized she had left its key back in the village. Then there were no planes because of rain, which did nothing to alleviate the worry of '*Sister Igna says I must come.*' A woman and a priest noticed her and asked her what was on her mind. When she told them, they said they would take care of everything. 'In my opinion,' she finished at length, '*That* is what is interesting and extraordinary. It shows that I am always helped.' In answer, an older nun rose, looked around the room and said, 'I see all these faces that show a single joy'.

If the places they are sent affect and characterize nuns' moral experience, the journeys between them figure equally in their telling. Both the difficulty and desirability of a Papua assignment emerged in one of the plays developed during the Constitution workshop. A group of nuns that did not include Sister Gemma dramatized a story that was remarkably similar to her tale. In the opening scene, the Bishop realizes he needs people to work at the leper colony in Papua, so he texts[94] the PRR. The Bishop's text prompts an anxious moment of communal discernment: how should they answer a call to serve when they do not have enough manpower? The nuns in the play decide to send some Sisters to Papua to assess the situation. The group staged this by walking down the central aisle. The Bishop indicates the landscape, the lepers, and the school children, pointing as he did so to different Sisters in the audience, who laughed in pleasure at being so implicated in the drama. One Sister observes that the 'residents' seemed sleepy and do not sit politely: clearly, they need guidance (more hysterics from the audience. Some rally themselves and

[94] Texting over phone and WhatsApp are common ways that religious business gets done in Indonesia. It's also how *teman* maintain connections—at least those who are allowed phones (most juniors are not). Mediors sometimes spend their rest hours viewing and responding to each other's 'stories.' While most nuns' social media posts focus on spiritual encouragement, they also provide little windows into what *teman* are doing, wherever they are.

try to open their eyes and sit up straight). Having gathered their data, the group enacts the speedboat ride downriver. They dodge branches and rapids, crocodiles and snakes. One Sister falls off the boat and has to be pulled back on. The audience screams with laughter. The journey and the people make the potential assignment provocative enough.

But back home, the community faces their original problem: there are not enough members in their urban Papuan convent to send to the forest. One Sister suggests 'plucking' members from other communities and mimes yanking a plant out of the soil, an action that earns her appreciative laughter. The debate continues between the need to serve and their unpreparedness to do so properly. It goes on so long (all the dramas did) that one Sister in the audience shouts 'The End!' at what seems a reasonable point. But the show is not quite over. The group turns to address the audience: 'We need workers to help us here', they implore. 'We pray for workers!' The audience greets their summons with hearty applause. After the play, Sister Gemma—who filmed the whole thing—cannot resist standing and correcting some of the facts, undeterred by her Sisters' exasperated shouts that this is just a play ('*Kasus!!*').

Although there clearly exists a moral hierarchy when it comes to the unspoken feelings surrounding differently situated convents, in principle, every PRR convent is on equal moral footing. Most PRR nuns told me that they would prefer to be sent to one of the order's many tiny convents in remote places and that they would be pleased to have the assignment of cleaning out the pigsty. And some are! I spent one enjoyable weekend at a convent outside Jakarta, in the company of a nun who had built a kind of Florenese

agricultural oasis in the dense metropolitan area. She seemed truly happiest in the animal stalls, working habit-less in her trousers and visor, up to her elbows in mud.

On another occasion, I accompanied the congregation's treasurer on a trip to the order's plantation on Flores's eastern cape during which she stopped to personally hose down the pigs. Even Sister Pia, who was constantly on guard against any human baseness, when I visited her in Timor, seemed thrilled to be away from the heat and bustle of Larantuka. Because of its remoteness and history of issues (interpersonal and maybe occult), her new placement was considered a difficult and morally potent assignment. While others found

it stifling because of poor cellular and internet signals, a perpetual dearth of food and resources, and frustration with neighbours' choices, Sister Pia seemed truly unburdened. In many other cases, however, the moral superiority of a small station in the middle of nowhere often did not quite outweigh the appeal and convenience of the city.

This is not to denigrate the challenges of convents in the towns and cities, where 'there is everything', but only to point out how PRR nuns themselves weigh and navigate the moral landscape. Nuns from 'easier' convents might complain to deaf ears, to subtle censorship, or to outright resistance. Sisters who were stationed in Papua, on the other hand, whether in the city or not, could complain all they wanted and earn nothing but respect and a little awe from their fellows. Depending on the character, any convent can present an exciting adventure or a horrifying prospect.

Despite the appeal to nuns' morality and sense of adventure, Papuan convents see a high turnover. 'It is difficult to assign Sisters to Papua', the Superior General once sighed to me, 'Many just refuse to go. It gives me a headache.' You can imagine why; the play I described was not merely an imaginary situation, but a real-life problem facing the congregation, and the Superior General in particular. Every year the Bishops of Papua and elsewhere request more nuns to work in their domain. Other orders reportedly refuse requests point-blank, citing the lack of financial support and cell service. Meanwhile, many of the PRR's rural convents are stretched thin, home to only two or three nuns while the numbers in urban convents swell. Incidentally, the audience's enthusiastic

reaction to the call for manpower in Papua is part of what the Superior General laments: expressed willingness that is not always matched by action. The PRR's numbers are also increasing. Now with over five hundred members to reassign every year, the Superior General might have a headache even without the resistance she so frequently meets. Almost everyone says they are willing to be sent 'wherever;' but the follow-through is sometimes more difficult.

Nuns get their chance to be sent 'wherever' every second of July. The day after the annual eternal vow feast, the PRR hold what they call an 'announcement' (*benuman*) during which the board of directors announce who will be moving where. It is a highly anticipated event that prompts much speculation. In the weeks leading up to both that I was present for, Sister Clara-Francesca talked often about the possibility of movement, specifically about how she hoped to be sent to Italy. Fiercely maintaining her readiness to go anywhere or to stay in place, as called upon, she nonetheless appealed to my own wanderlust: 'We must have dreams, right, Nona Ros?' Both times, her dreams were frustrated; she remained at Lewoina. Still, she bore these disappointments with her characteristic resilience and optimism.

Typically, nuns are given a new placement about once every five years, although this is far from a fixed rule. I knew nuns who moved three times in as many years and others who remained in one convent for an excess of twenty. Everything depends on a nun's personal skillset, the needs of each convent, and Superiors' sense of personal relations, congregational growth, and—allowing for God's master plan—a good dose of serendipity.

When nuns make their first vows, they are often assigned to a convent that needs workers; they often take on housekeeping tasks, visiting, errands, and other odd jobs. Around the age at which she makes her perpetual vows, a nun may be assigned to further education, generally in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Kupang, or Makassar, although some lucky few are sent to study in Rome. Those who are not assigned to academic education may be given the opportunity for further development, usually in culinary or agricultural school. After her study is complete and her perpetual vows are sworn, a nun will likely be sent somewhere she can turn her skills to good use, where she will be required if not to lead, then to take initiative on her own projects. As she ages, and depending on her leadership ability and her health, she may be moved to a convent that needs stewardship, a Mother, or the company and wisdom of an elder. If her health starts to seriously deteriorate, she will likely be moved—sometimes against her will—to the Mother House and then to the elderly care home, where she will end her days.

This is a general picture of what happens, although it does not apply to every nun and might not even apply wholly to any. But as mentioned before, the machinations and motivations of nun assignments are improvisational, contingent on personalities and personal relations, and always changing. The big picture seems like a huge, complicated game of strategy and chance, during which there are intimate moments of coming together. The experience of frequent mobility is at once deeply personal and integrated with the order's narrative as a whole.

To give you a sense of how the frequent movement affects everyday life, consider the makeup of the convent in Lewoina in my experience. When I first stayed during the

summer of 2015, Lewoina was home to five nuns: Sister Nicola, Sister Pia, Sister Clara-Francesca, Sister Purificata, Sister Hyacinth, and Sister Leah. During that time, Sister Clara-Francesca left for Jakarta for what I thought at the time was a permanent move, but what turned out to be a routine medical visit. When I returned to Lewoina in 2018, I found Sister Nicola, Sister Pia, and Sister Clara-Francesca still there, but Sister Purificata and Sister Hyacinth had both moved to a convent across from the old mosque in Larantuka, and Sister Leah had moved to a convent in Borneo on the border with Malaysia where she provided nursery care to migrant children who cross back into Indonesia for the school day. In their places, I found Sister Joy, Sister Diana, and Sister Mattelina. That July, Sister Purificata was moved to a convent in the mountains of Adonara, and Sister Hyacinth to some other place (where exactly was never clear to me; she seemed to turn up everywhere and never where I expected). Sister Joy left the order (there had been a bit of a scandal, as I understand, when she lost her temper on some of the worker girls, threatening to beat them with a skillet). As for Sister Pia, the Mother of Lewoina for the past eleven years, she was finally relieved and relocated to Indonesian Timor, on the border with Timor-Leste. In her stead, Sister Diana was named the new Mother of the convent, upsetting many other contenders, and spurring much gossip among religious and laity alike. For almost a year, the large estate at Lewoina was managed by only four Sisters, who were stretched thin and spoke frequently about their need for extra hands. Finally, two more nuns joined the community: Sister Osanna from a convent in Maumere and Sister Vivina from her post as the Mother of the Mother House. After I left the field, Lewoina gained a new member in a young Sister who had just made her first vows, a choice probably made in anticipation of Sister Clara-Francesca's own move to the Mother House for her *probasi*. On top of these more permanent moves came an almost daily stream of guest nuns, those from the Larantuka area just dropping by and those from further afield staying overnight on their way to other places.

If all of this doesn't baffle your mind—as it often baffled mine—then you are in good company. PRR nuns learn to keep an extraordinary internal log of where their fellow Sisters, and especially their *teman*, are at any given time. I remember a conversation one evening when Sister Diana and Sister Clara-Francesca effusively chastised the younger (and not Indonesian) Sister Mattelina for not knowing the name of a nun she met on the twelve-hour Timor-Flores ferry. '*Ade*', Sister Diana started, in an exasperated-yet-proud shift into a Mother's pedagogical mode:

> You must sit down with the catalogue and memorize all the names of all the Sisters and where they are assigned! That way, you have a point of reference for when their names are mentioned! That's how we were taught in formation in my day.

Sister Clara-Francesca had some subtler, more creative advice, filtered, as many of her stories often were, through me:

> Nona Ros must already know: during that conference? Sister Leader Patricia asked me to go around with the sign-in sheet and get the signatures of everyone who hadn't signed in yet. I didn't know everyone, but I didn't reject it, I accepted. I went around and if there was a Sister I didn't know, I would ask someone, 'where is Sister Who sitting?' Not, '*Who* is Sister Who?' but '*Where* is Sister Who *sitting*?' Within those two days I memorized hundreds of Sisters' names.

PRR nuns expect each other to know every other member of the more than five-hundred-person congregation scattered across eighty-plus convents in seven countries on four continents. A big ask, especially for a young newcomer like Sister Mattelina who struggled daily to understand basic instructions in a foreign language. But it seemed to be no trouble for anyone to remember where their *teman* were stationed, tied to them as they were.

The reader will hopefully view with sympathy my own struggles, unrooted as I was, to quickly memorize the names and faces of hundreds of identically-dressed women, let alone to mentally chart their individual journeys. I was frequently surprised, upon entering a new convent, to find a familiar face—someone I had known back in Larantuka. While the July second announcement is an event, it is also an ideal model. In reality, nuns may be moved at any time to fill gaps. Moreover, nuns may be given a new assignment, but prevented from ever leaving their old one. Sister Maravilosa, for example, was assigned to Belgium before I arrived. When I left Indonesia two years later, she was still waiting for her visa.[95] Sister Pia had been all set to move to Lembata around 2013, until the nun who was supposed to replace her in Lewoina suddenly abandoned the order.[96] As was her style, Sister Pia never complained, but by the time I arrived, anyone could tell that she was eager to move.

Perhaps because of its prominence in their physical lives, mobility is also the means by which nuns structure their narratives of self. If you sit down with a nun for an open-ended interview, if you ask her to tell you about her life, she will inevitably narrate her life as a series of moves. With the more reserved, this may be essentially all you get: a list of

[95] Not even nuns can infiltrate state bureaucracy when it comes to transnational movement.

[96] I gathered that, before I began fieldwork, there had been a minor spate of nuns with newly minted economics or accounting degrees abandoning the order. A few of them were Sister Pia's *teman*. From the conversations of other religious, I also gathered this problem was not unique to the PRR.

years and places. These moves give structure to PRR experience. They also give it forward momentum. The PRR are people who are always on the verge of going somewhere else.

So it was when I sat down with Sister Hilari, another of Sister Pia's *teman*, to interview her about her experiences. At the time, I was chiefly interested in her thoughts on her current role as supervisor of the girls' dormitory. I wanted to know about her relationships with laypeople. But before we could get to that, our interview started, as did all first encounters and formal interviews with nuns, with her life journey in the PRR: from her home and the postulancy in Manggarai, to Larantuka for the novitiate. She described how she received her first assignment on the island of Lembata (east of Flores) and was then sent to the Javanese city of Yogyakarta to study economics. After she graduated, she was stationed at the Mother House, back in Larantuka. There was a month or so between her graduation and the beginning of her new position, so the story she told to me included the various short stints she did at convents in Jakarta. For seven years she was in Larantuka before being sent to Papua as the accountant for the diocesan hospital. While she was out there, they discovered a lump in her breast, which triggered another year's worth of brief stays: Jakarta (for chemotherapy), to Larantuka, back to Jakarta, home to Manggarai (for traditional medicine), to a PRR convent in Manggarai, to her new assignment as the accountant for the convent in Lewoina. Beginning to regain her strength, she was also reunited with her *teman*, Sister Pia, who was then the Mother of Lewoina. But the reunion was short-lived. Sister Pia endured a severe motorbike accident and was whisked off to Jakarta for surgery. Sister Hilari was promoted in her place. Unable, in her weakened state, to handle the stress of managing the large estate, she requested leave. Time granted, she went back to the traditional healer in Manggarai, then again to the convent in Manggarai, and finally to the convent in Larantuka, where I sat speaking to her. She told all this in the span of a few minutes.

I have two principal points to make here. First is just to reiterate that the story PRR nuns tell of their lives is a series of moves, of points on the map and the lines in between. For Sister Hilari, as for most PRR nuns, this emerged in her story as a kind of erratic back-and-forth across Indonesia. The second point I want to raise is that, although the narration may come almost as a series of all too brief bullet-points—many times, I held myself back from interrupting with questions of economics degree? chemo? traditional medicine?—it also includes brief internal stories about the role of relationships in their life journeys.

In narrating her initial calling, Sister Hilari described the challenges she encountered in her family—a stepmother who refused to sponsor her schooling ('Ros, you must already know, with stepmothers, there's the good and there's the bad…') and an older sibling who shouldered the cost. Once in the convent, stories move away from family and towards *teman* and teachers who made significant impacts. Sister Hilari told a story of how one of her *teman* became angry with her one day ('She was a little rough, in my opinion') to the extent that she went to her teacher to resign from the PRR, but two of her other *teman* intercepted her and refused to let her go through with it. She enacted this part of the story like a dialogue, playing both parts. 'They gave me encouragement', she said. The relationships between a nun and her *teman* seem especially vibrant in the retelling because of the manner of delivery. As nuns frequently do, Sister Hilari adopted new voices and physicalities when narrating the things other people have said. The self-narrative emerges as a kind of solo dialogue in which others are (almost) present, manifesting through not only the memory, but the body of the teller.[97]

A nun's story, then, emerges as a linear narrative of places and movements enlivened by the presence of other people who facilitate or challenge her forward movement becoming a PRR nun. These people also reveal to each nun the 'nature' of her own self, the contents of her character. To herself, Sister Hilari was sensitive, someone who avoided confrontation and disappointment. To others, Sister Hilari was shy, even timid. The difference between is not one of perception only (although it is partly that), it is one of co-creation of character through playful, committed presence. The story with her friends demonstrates this: nuns form each other through opposition. Although *teman* go their separate ways, these relationships and the characterizations they evoke, rooted in particular places and times, remain important to PRR nuns. They are touchstones, rooting places, reminders of who they are. When *teman* reunite, as they did for the 60th anniversary constitution workshop, these stories resurface, enhanced by nostalgia and the sudden memory of other experiences, now grown rosy by the merit of physical distance and the current physical presence of the *teman*.

UPROOTING, CONNECTION, SELF

After one perpetual vows ceremony, the Superior General rose to address the new permanent members of her flock, *teman* of the class of 2010, and announce their new

[97] I am indebted to Omar Sangare for the persistent idea that 'there are no such things as monologues' and that performers are always in dialogue with *something*.

placements. 'This is just the beginning,' she told them. 'You have sworn to travel the hardest path: the journey of self-becoming.'

There is a lot of work in the anthropology of Christianity about the role of rift in self-creation. The rift is often both temporal and social as a new Christian self emerges in distinction to a non-Christian past and communities of non-Christian others. This is part of what happens to young women when they become PRR nuns: they leave their families and their old ways of life behind in favour of a new home and community in the congregation. They are uprooted, removed from any kind of grounding and permanent home. Of course, the physical move also implies a dramatic change in subjectivity. Girls become nuns. On formal occasions, superiors praise nuns' families for 'sacrificing' their daughters. The term is not arbitrary; it acknowledges the real economic and emotional losses families sustain when their daughters join the convent and summons visions of transfiguration, of one substance becoming another.

But these powerful metaphors of disruption belie an everyday continuity. Women are not reborn in the process of becoming nuns, nor are they fundamentally different people. Nuns continue to identify with their kin and many live close enough to relatives to visit now and again. In a similar way, the long separations *teman* endure belie the intensity of their connection. Part of the reason for frequent moves, I was told, was to prevent nuns from becoming dangerously attached to each other, as such attachment could lead to heartache, physical illness, and susceptibility to other unspeakable kinds of influence. Still, *teman* sometimes long for each other: they will have long phone calls and send care

packages with through-travellers: handkerchiefs, oversize rosaries, any trinket that comes into their possession.

Movement and reunion, separation and intimacy are two sides of the same coin for the PRR, a coin that is riddled with mundane concerns and saturated with spiritual significance. It is in both detachment and unification that they feel the divine and know themselves as particular kinds of moral persons. The frequent moves make the PRR experience profoundly lonely at times, but reunions remind Sisters that they never are truly alone. They are, as they say, 'one in the spirit of the congregation', bound to each other. They are also never separated from their kin, for as we discussed in another chapter, their self-forming *trauma* originates in the family. These two sets of people, *teman* and family, continue to act as a nun's company despite their distance in space. They continue to figure in her self-formation, as people who 'offered her up' and who participated in her *trauma*, and as people who dug up her heart and who formed her character in opposition to their own.

As discussed in this chapter, mobility for the PRR is about separations and reunions, humility and hierarchy, narration and performance. Mostly, it is about relationships, about the connection between the self in community and about the attenuated relations of *teman*. This approach to self-formation is supported by work in the anthropology of friendship that points to the ways groups of friends evoke individuality while disciplining it into certain gendered forms. From ecstatic feelings of 'one-ness' to the moral judgements that pull them apart, friendships are the relations by which girls in places as different as Flores and London become who they are and know themselves as such (Winkler-Reid 2016). This is precisely why company matters for PRR self-becoming.

And yet, a PRR *teman* is not a friend in the way that London schoolgirls are. For PRR nuns, the importance of friendship lies not only in the intimate relationships and emotional bonds that form between *teman* like Sisters Pia and Gemma. Its importance lies also in having one's basis of self emerge in the company of structurally identical others, of having people with whom one is *supposed* to form intimate bonds and *against* whom one compares oneself. PRR *teman* dig up their friends' uniqueness and attend to mysterious synchronicities. They have a moral duty to do so, the performance of which alters their own subjectivity, enhancing the virtue of their character. This duty continues throughout their lives, compelling them to know each other's position and to enact their characters in their own bodies, through their own stories. Unlike other sets of friends who may go

on to live entirely separate lives across unknowable distances, the ground of friendship in which PRR selves are rooted continues to anchor them, encircling them in meaningful, hilarious and uncomfortable reminders of the selves they are becoming and those were before, when they were always together.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have laid out a theory of company, documenting how it unfolds within the convents of a congregation of eastern Indonesian Catholic nuns. In doing this, I have dipped in and out of many anthropological conversations with the primary aim of intervening in two: subjectivity and methodology.

While theories of subjectivity dealing with relationality help us understand the intersubjective dimensions of self-formation, they undertheorize the ways people are embedded in company, in groups of people variably committed to each other who share presence. Many of the meaningful relationships at the heart of theories of intersubjectivity in fact arise in situations of company. Without attending to the 'sensual world-making…the intimate, compositional process' (Stewart 2011: 445–6) of being-with that arises precisely *because* of company, we run the risk of missing much of what is happening. Similarly, orienting self-formation to competing social values risks erasing the forces that are most urgent and compelling in many people's lives, namely the influence and presence of others. We risk missing the point of living.

In my introduction, I positioned this thesis as contributing to work on sociality. I have tackled this task by presenting a specific case—unique in many ways—that not only adds to our repertoire of ways of being-with, but also illuminates the shape of sociality and its force on the formation of the person. Through this line of argument, I have aimed to

chart a course through the waters of self-formation that provides due space for the reality of other theories—upon which I see myself building—while suggesting how they might find their centrifugal force and effective urgency in the everyday intimacies of company.

To this end, I have tried to show how PRR lives are immensely influenced by moral experience and pious self-fashioning, aspirational community development in pursuit of the good, intersubjectivity and affect, bodily practice and performance, theology and hierarchy, and cosmopolitan movement and narrative autobiography. At the same time, I have suggested that (1) none of these things happen outside the bounds of company and that (2) company may be both the metric and the immediate reference for the self, the thing towards which self-formation is oriented. Being in company is what makes being oneself, I argue, not only possible, but wondrous—wondrous, and also traumatic, challenging and rewarding. Company, I suggest, is what you find when you dig up the heart.

My understanding of company as both the necessary requirement for self-formation and the thing that gives self-formation, indeed life, its beauty and its urgency is in no small way influenced by Indonesian sociality more broadly. Indonesia is a place where people value lively (*ramai*) sociality, finding comfort in the noise and energy cultivated when people gather together (Just 1986: 125; Lindquist 2018: 84). 'Liveliness' and 'togetherness' are construed and constructed not merely as circumstances of co-presence, but as values, felt qualities of the good that people, together, can cultivate. By cultivating liveliness, Indonesians fashion themselves as moral contributors to moral communities (Schut 2020).

That liveliness stands as a prominent, felt feature of sociality in Flores in particular is testified to in recent ethnographies of the island which characterize Florenese experience as a 'being-in-common' (Curnow 2016) and which evoke in their writing the lively, sensory qualities of life in Flores. These accounts show how liveliness, in Flores, makes things; it is sign and practice of moral people and communities (Schut 2020). It is simultaneously a kind of intersubjective atmosphere, one with moral qualities, that holds people in their togetherness and threatens them with its dangers (Allerton 2012). The confluence of this work, the increasing focus on the 'liveliness' of 'being-with' as something good, as a central value and driving force of sociality in Flores, suggests to me that we are already (almost) talking about company. Company, as I have outlined it here,

is the ever-fluctuating entity out of which liveliness emerges and within which it gains its moral flavour.

Although my argument here has its feet rooted in Florenese sociality, I have focused on company and not liveliness because liveliness is enabled by company. The moral, intersubjective affects that run between people together may vary with time and place, as we saw with PRR approaches to gladness (*gembira*) and quietude (*quietude)*. Perhaps not everyone shares the positive feelings Indonesians associate with liveliness, but almost everyone shares company—monastics, as it turns out, included. This discussion of liveliness should point to the ways that company can generate affective atmospheres that have their moral valences. Engaging with these 'moral moods' (Throop 2014) can tell us a lot about what a community values, what their ideal of good sociality is and what role the person has to play.

I have tried, in this thesis, to push these ideas even one step further, showing how the people who comprise a company matter to these moral intersubjective qualities and ultimately to the social achievement of the good in sociality. I have tried to show how different characters are elicited through the play of company, describing how some people clash while others have an eerie 'sameness' of 'feeling'. In relating this, I have claimed that mystery underpins the variability of company's quality. Among the PRR, the meaning of enduring mystery draws on Catholic theology, on local custom (*adat*) and on regional ideas about the opacity of minds and systems. The ontological position of mystery in workings of company, I argue, has profound effects on the position of knowledge. The PRR accustom themselves to ultimate unknowability.

At the same time, mystery does not discourage the pursuit of togetherness. I have represented some of the ways in which people sharing company might change and adapt, understand and redirect both themselves and others. I have suggested that this may happen, as it did among the PRR, through everyday, bodily efforts to 'dig up' the heart and to 'learn' each other. Through everyday performances enacted with the practice of a nuanced, embodied mode of attention in which PRR nuns frequently act *as if* they were each other, selves form and cohere in company, which is also the ground out of which they grow. A theory of company in anthropology, then, can contribute to our understanding of subjectivity, sociality and morality by focusing our attention on the immediate field of relations in which selves form, intersubjectivity happens and moral worlds emerge.

Becoming a PRR nun in the company of others begins with self-knowledge, the kind that is learned in the formation convents and dug up from the heart. It progresses with embodied imagination, by intentionally and performatively trying to grasp the world from another perspective. It reaches its perfection in empathy, in truly *feeling* the desires, emotions, motivations and thoughts of the other. It finds completion in surrender in the face of things one cannot know, feel or understand. Becoming a PRR nun requires the willingness to become someone else for a moment, to understand how each nun came to be 'just the way she is'.

Were you to 'enter the convent', you would be met by others and incorporated into their company. Together, you would lead each other to recognize your own shifting place in a sea of others; to imagine the world and your lives from the perspective of an intimate, all-knowing Divine, out of time, encapsulating the universe, yet dwelling in your heart; and to do this all within a set of rules that leaves you little time for rest, which keeps you busy at tasks that may or may not be appreciated by others in your convent, which asks nothing less than your whole self. To do this takes an imaginative, creative impulse. It also takes an ethical commitment to make divine mystery part of your everyday interactions with others. And it is a practice that is developed in particular places, with particular people who are always, like you, trying, failing and changing.

In this thesis, I have presented many layers of PRR experience to show how each contributes to the formation of PRR selves. I have argued that PRR selves form in the company of others, especially their Sisters and those laypeople who live with them in their convents. This company works on PRR selves in several ways. First, it operates through reflexive practices of formation: eliciting a nun's character through an excavation of her *trauma* and the development of her talents, both of which are directed at enriching communal life. Second, company works on PRR selves by giving body and voice to divine mystery, facilitating its 'feeling' between people with 'sameness,' and habituating nuns to notice the little serendipities of everyday life that, for the open-hearted, speak God's love-and-care. Third, company works on nuns' selves by providing the opportunity for empathy, understanding and the co-creation of character. By 'grasping' at each other through practices of embodied attention experimented with through performance, storytelling and mimicry, nuns 'learn each other' and become themselves through processes of identification, differentiation and recognition. Fourth, company works on PRR selves by producing a shared world, ever-shifting, that has its moral and affective qualities. Nuns learn to interpret mood as a moral metric of their life in company. Consequently, they not only alter it affectively, but may also attempt to shift its tone to better approximate their understanding of good sociality. Life in company forces piety into practice. Fifth, and most simply, company works on nuns' subjectivities by constituting one of their guiding values: 'togetherness' (*kebersamaan*). Without togetherness, they feel, they are not fully themselves, a sentiment which points to the centrality of company for PRR nuns' self-formation.

This manner of self-formation in company requires intellectual understanding, intersubjective openness and bodily attunement. Chapters three, five and six—covering origins, *trauma* and character respectively—dealt largely with the first element in this list, explaining some of the rubrics by which PRR nuns take each other's measure and direct each other's development. Chapters four and seven, on mystery and performance, dealt with the latter two, suggesting how nuns open their hearts to receive God's divine call and focus their efforts to enact it, crucially by adapting to others. Chapters on service and moving projected the workings of company out into the broader community, showing how PRR nuns attempt to bring their lessons to bear in the communities in which they work, at once performatively grasping at others while also adapting themselves to new places and people, settling into new company.

I opened with the story of Sister Diana because her transformation was the one that, during my fieldwork and emplaced as I was in her convent, was the most apparent to me. I not only observed, but was part of her company during this time, and so played my part in contributing to the convent's moral moods, participating in the give and take of spilling hearts (*curah hati*), chiming into debates about habit and character, and declaiming the inhabitants of the convent of Lewoina as 'my family' despite the blatant misfit of this claim and despite my occasional ethical misgivings.

Sister Diana came to me sometimes, to express that she 'wanted to scream.' I came to Sister Diana sometimes to hold as an ally in troubling situations. 'I *know* how you *feel,*' she would claim, tears in her eyes when my own excavated *trauma* held me in its sway. 'I *know* how *hard* it is', she would say, speaking of the young people stranded in her convent, given over to her care. And I don't doubt that, at the heart of it, she did know how we felt. I know living in the convent and attempting to act as a PRR nun led me, sometimes, to *feel* her burgeoning terror, her overbrimming frustration and her overwhelming love amidst all the struggles that came with being the Mother of a convent, something that she was 'just beginning', even as I left the field.

Because I was part of her company, I played my own small part in her formation, just as she played her (much greater) part in mine. On my last night in the convent, Sister Diana

gave a farewell speech, as is proper for the head of the convent household. During its expression, I was struck by the thought that she had really come into her own as a Mother. She bore interruptions more gracefully. She fielded complaints and made her own decisions, defending them admirably. She resisted the urge to take things personally. She bore herself with such grace and composure that I thought to myself, not without a twinge of pride, my eyes sweeping swiftly around the table where all the other nuns, our company, had their attention fixed upon her: she really, finally does feel like the undisputed ruler of this place. My heart, unearthed and opened by their lively company, swelled on her behalf.

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