



Walter Spies, tourist art and Balinese art in inter-war colonial Bali

GREEN, Geff <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2482-5256>>

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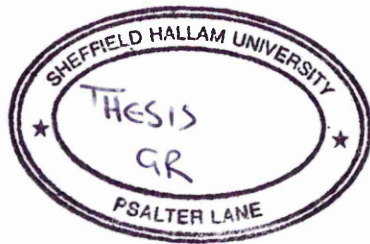
Walter Spies, Tourist Art and Balinese Art in Inter-War Colonial Bali

Geffrey Corbett Green

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Abstract

This is an art historical study informed by post-colonial perspectives which critically examines the discourse concerning the role and the work of the artist Walter Spies in relation to Bali, Balinese art and the Balinese in the inter-war Dutch Colonial period. Drawing from a wide variety of sources, the thesis examines the development and characteristics of a new artistic form in the area of painting, variously described as 'Balinese Modernism', 'New Balinese painting' or 'Tourist art'. I also investigate the origins and the perpetuation of the popular myth regarding the perceived role of Walter Spies as the instigator of this art. Through examining his cultural position in relation to the Balinese, I examine Spies' role as a colonial figure and as a 'servant' of colonial cultural policy. This post-colonial examination takes into account the broader historical, political, cultural and economic realities of colonial Bali at that time.

I deal with theoretical and methodological issues some of which make such a study problematic. In particular, how to deal with the 'subaltern' in historical discourse and the dangers of either essentialising the 'Other' or diminishing hegemonic imperial processes through a cultural relativism which seeks to value the importance of the 'subaltern' voice. In addition to this, the problematic and sometimes misleading use of biography is also investigated. I have synthesised a number of concepts to develop my post-colonial approach, based around the ideas of contact, contact languages and influence. These are used to explain the development of new artistic forms, as well as the discourse and processes which both moulded and reflected them.

The study contributes to knowledge through the fresh analysis of the discourse of 'texts' and parts of 'texts' not previously used or explored in a postcolonial theoretical framework. Interviews with Balinese artists and the correspondence of Spies are deconstructed, as well as the films and paintings of Spies which are analysed as colonial discourse rather than as isolated aesthetic products. This project provides a new critique of the creation and perpetuation of colonial discourse through biography and imagery which I propose has much broader implications in the 'post-colonial' world.

Introduction

Bali has had a disproportionate amount of academic attention over the last 100 years, when analysed in relation to other parts of Indonesia, for instance, and from the 1930s onwards, ethnologists and anthropologists flocked to Bali to study its 'unique' and 'unsullied' culture. As a result of the work of Margaret Mead (Mead, 1935;1950), Gregory Bateson (Bateson, 1973), Jane Belo (Belo, 1970), Colin McPhee (McPhee,1966;1985) and Miguel Covarrubias (Covarrubias, 1937), together with Bali's general fame as a 'paradise', multiple spirals of discourse have grown from, and around, this small island. These have affected the residents of the Island and how they see themselves, as well as generating a multiplicity of perspectives of the island from political, historical, economic and cultural viewpoints. These strands of ideas have developed into a broad platform of research about the island, which in recent times has taken a more revisionist and post-colonial nature. Writers like Nordholt (Nordholt, 1996), Robinson (Robinson, 1995), Vickers (Vickers, 1989) and Picard (Picard 1996) have challenged and debunked the notion, which has tenaciously remained and which has continued to be promoted, of Bali as the *Last Paradise* (Powell, 1930)¹. The nature and importance of 'traditional' culture in Bali has pervaded the discussion of the island in one form or another and the name of Walter Spies often appears as part of that discussion.

This study arises from an interest in the work of Walter Spies that was instigated by a book I bought in Bali in 1992 by Rhodius & Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980) which contained images by Walter Spies which had an instant appeal to me as a Western visitor to Bali. I had never heard of this artist and subsequently realised that his work was not well known in Europe despite his contacts with the German art world during the well-documented post-first World War period in European art history. As with the pictures, the picaresque romance of his story also initially appealed to me as a European traveller to Bali. My subsequent contacts with other visitors to Bali, some of whom had also purchased the same text, indicated a similar response to his paintings and life story. When I re-examined this text in 1996 with the idea of researching Walter Spies further, it became apparent that there were a number of questionable assumptions and omissions in this work, particularly in relation to Spies' portrayed position as a colonial resident and father-figure to the Balinese artists. Further research indicated that this type of view was common to colonial discourse and that Spies' position, work and influence would benefit from being reassessed from a post-colonial

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viewpoint. Such a viewpoint could then challenge what appeared to be the popular Eurocentric view which largely diminished the contribution and capabilities of Balinese artists and Asian perspectives as a whole. It occurred to me that part of this difficulty was based on a Eurocentricity in art historical investigation of this subject, which was based on 'Western' post 'Enlightenment' notions such as genius, individuality and secularism that might not be particularly appropriate in assessing art arising in a different cultural context and non-Western location. Similarly, it appeared that work like that of Spies tended to be ignored in European modernist discourse, at least in part because the work was produced in a geographically remote location from Europe and could not easily be attributed to European artistic 'family trees'. Further investigation indicated that although Spies was mostly documented as a peripheral figure, he largely disappeared from accounts of European modernism after he left Germany in 1923. As well as the questions of Spies' influence that arose from the Rhodius & Darling text, there were also biographical questions which arose particularly in relation to his imprisonment by the Dutch colonial authorities. Not only did I feel that this question needed clarification, but also the wider questions this raised about the impressions which could be created through a biographical approach to an artist and his work.

As the project has progressed, the key questions I defined early in the project have not changed dramatically. What has changed is the emphasis of the thesis, based on my findings in further researching the subject:

- * The question of 'influence' has remained a constant idea which has been developed and refined in relation to ideas of contact languages and 'contact-zones'². This has been an area of contention ever since Spies arrived in Bali and is central to the *baliseering* philosophy taken by the Dutch colonisers (*baliseering* was a Dutch concept referring to the 'Balinisation' of Bali. It is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2). The idea of influence is also discussed as a more politicised concept than the way it might be used in a traditional art-historical account. Although I do use the term in that way in relation to Spies' early involvement with German modernist movements, in this instance, influence is explored as a paternalistic and ideological discourse in defining the cultural production of a colonised Asian 'Other'³. It is also discussed as a process of exchange.
- * My intention to critically review the literature which has dealt with Spies and his work and to understand the range of critical viewpoints these represent, has been a key part of this project. The starting point for this study was the biographical aspects of the work by Rhodius and Darling (1980) and the way that Spies' life is

romanticised and explained in relation to his paintings. I have expanded the concept of reviewing and reading about Spies to a wider range of 'texts' which include film, images, reviews and interviews. My reading has allowed me to explore where Spies is situated within a specific colonial ideology and beyond it.

- * My next question has been an important part of my research. I set out to assess how Walter Spies was positioned artistically and culturally in relation to the Balinese and specifically how he was and is seen by Indonesians. My stylistic and textual analysis of his paintings as well as the records of involvement in various cultural projects, such as the founding of the *Pita Maha* group (an artists group which exhibited and marketed Balinese art) has allowed me to build up an impression and a position in relation to his artistic and cultural relationship to the Balinese. I have examined the philosophical and ethical questions raised by Spies' contact, particularly through the *Pita Maha* group.
- * My next question was about how Spies' sexuality affected his work and his relationship with Bali, and to what extent this was a motivating factor. My discussion of Spies' sexuality, his imprisonment and the way this was seen by him and his associates has meant that my question in relation to this aspect of Spies' relationship with Bali has become an amplified aspect of his biography. It has also become more closely connected with the previous question through my linkage of his sexual relationships with his creative and curatorial relationship to Bali.
- * My next two questions related to Spies' formative influences and focused on: what socio-political and cultural factors were motivating his work at different times in his life - in other words to what extent Spies was a true individual and how much he was a product of his era. This relates to possible tensions between a biographical approach and a more historical materialist approach ⁴. I have examined this question in relation to his early work in Germany and Russia, but also when examining Spies in relation to the social, cultural and political factors at work in Bali during his stay there. Spies' creative development has also been discussed in relation to ideas of modernism and 'primitivism'.
- * My other initial question focused on the influence of Spies on tourism in Bali and that of tourism on Spies. I have posed this question in relation to his painting seen as tourist art, but also regarding his role as a mediator of tourism and critic of Balinese tourist art preceding and following his own intervention in the *Pita Maha*

Group. I have expanded on this question through my examination of the codification of tourist art in Bali and, in particular, through its denial of the modern as a legitimate motif or subject. I have highlighted this particular idea as being emblematic of the cultural manifestations of the Dutch colonial ethos in Bali during this period and Spies' own endorsement of this view.

In addition to these questions I clarified a set of aims which have also largely remained the key factors in the study. My original key aims were:

✱ **To avoid the notions of linear art historical biography and a tidy chain of art historical influence.** This aim still stands, in terms of taking a questioning attitude to traditional approaches to art history, which may not consider wider social, political or ideological factors in considering the significance of art. However, I regard the notion of influence as an important factor in discussing the development and context of work by Spies and Balinese artists, as this is part of the existing debate about Walter Spies and Balinese art. I also seek to examine the influence of music, film and non-European art traditions on Spies' work and the nature of the influence that he is alleged to have had on local artistic development. What might be meant by 'influence' is explored; continuing discourse by Stowell (1992) and Forge (1993), for instance, relating to influence in the case of Spies will be examined. One way in which my approach changed was in my increased focus on the biographical aspects of Walter Spies and this has provided a certain amount of tension in the account. In previous accounts such as Rhodius (1964), and Rhodius & Darling (1980), there are no detailed discussions of Spies' sexuality and the circumstances of his imprisonment by the Dutch. Having found detailed correspondence about this issue, it was then possible to make this a more concrete part of the thesis. This was done for a number of reasons: the discourses around the events were extremely revealing, not only about the events themselves which remained largely unexplained in previous accounts (Niehaus, 1939; 1941, Rhodius, 1964;1980), but also, in the attitudes of Spies' circle of friends and associates towards Bali, the Balinese and the cultural politics of this particular colony. In addition to this, it indicated more clearly, the relationship Spies' work as a painter and curator had, to his own sexual involvement with the Balinese.

✱ **One aim which has altered was the intention to make extensive use of multimedia in presenting the thesis.** Instead, this aspect has developed more importantly as a research tool. In terms of presentation, I have presented images

referred to in the texts as multimedia. These are included in the appendices as an accompanying CD. They are also to be found online at:

<http://homepages.shu.ac.uk/~scsgcg/map.htm>. One reason for scaling down this approach, is the lack of availability of examples of Spies' film material and musical compositions. It also related to the problems associated with reading what was developing into an extensive text, from a computer screen.

- * **The next aim has been particularly difficult to achieve, and that was to be sensitive to how the artwork and the work of Walter Spies can be viewed from a non-Western, and specifically Asian cultural viewpoint.** It was greatly clarified by my visit to Indonesia, where I was able to assess at first hand, through writings and interviews, Indonesian and Balinese perspectives on art, art history and the work of a colonial figure like Spies and to make useful inter-cultural comparisons. A complex and sometimes contradictory set of ideas has emerged as to how Spies is regarded in Bali. An important observation is the limitations of isolating and dissecting art which does not arise from a Western artistic tradition for which academic discursive strategies and ideologies have been developed. This perspective informs my discussions in the later chapters of this thesis.
- * **I also set out to ascertain whether Modernism is a suitable critical category to apply to an artist (in this case Walter Spies) who worked largely beyond Modernism's European geographical frame.** I wanted to tackle any problems inherent in examining the output of a European artist brought up in European artistic traditions but working in a very different cultural situation. This is still an important question which again was helped by my visit to Indonesia, which enabled me to broaden my awareness of ways in which art can be viewed from quite different cultural perspectives.
- * **I wanted to examine whether the cultural voice of the indigenous population has been impoverished or enhanced by influences such as those represented by Spies.** Conversely, I intended to examine how receptive to influence and change Spies was in his own output and to what extent he imposed his own values and perceptions on his Balinese output. This aim has been developed by my Indonesian research trip and particularly interviews with Balinese artists. Some interesting conflicts of perception have arisen in relation to his perceived importance to Balinese art. These divisions are not necessarily along racial and national lines and are complicated by local cultural politics.

* **I wanted to use the discussion of Spies to make broader comments about the cultural influences and relationships between Europe and Indonesia during the colonial era.** This is still a relevant question, but has become more specific, focusing on the potentially exploitative and unequal relationship Spies appears to have had with local artists. There are issues of linguistic imperialism which relate both to visual language and the language of description which has been used in relation to Spies and Balinese artists in the past.

Overall, the aim of this study is to explore and to explain the position and work of Balinese artists and Walter Spies within the framework of these factors as well as from more conventional art-historical viewpoints such as biography and visual analysis. There are also important issues of hegemony and colonial exploitation which are largely invisible through many accounts produced at that time and since. This thesis will attempt to draw these out, both in a visual and a written context. This will be done in order to highlight and validate the elements of resistance and assimilation on the parts of the Balinese artists who, as with the Balinese in general, were often characterised as carefree and unsophisticated 'children' as opposed to their colonial 'parents'. Key to this discussion is the notion of 'influence' which so often is presented as a one-way process involving teacher and pupil. Another problem is the Eurocentric cultural assumptions which are likely to affect an outsider's viewpoint (including my own) which attempt to impose an external explanatory discourse which purveys European cultural and political agendas albeit 'enlightened' or 'liberal' ones. My discussion will illustrate how, then as now, a liberal and understanding viewpoint is still likely to be limited and informed by the selfish and often acquisitive personal agendas which rely on inequitable global power relations to achieve them. This is often despite the declared 'good' intentions and concern towards 'subaltern' groups. Nevertheless, it could be argued that today, such discourse of difference is increasingly difficult to maintain as a result of globalisation, with a more mutual global cultural awareness and coalescence of the cultural sources of self-image. I will also address the possibility that this globalisation was already occurring in Bali in the 1930s and that a characterisation of exploiters and exploited as binary opposites based on skin colour and race only works as a generalisation. This study will explore the mechanics of exploitation in inter-war Bali and inequity on a micro level in terms of records of personal contacts and on a macro level in terms of historical accounts of colonial policy-making. This will be related to the discourse and texts of artistic production by Balinese and Western artists at that time. It will focus on the validity of taking a non-Western approach to examining the work of Balinese artists and artisans. This will be contrasted with the priorities which can be set through taking a Western Modernist art historical approach.

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter will summarise my methodology and review the theoretical literature and other sources used to research and develop the ideas in this study. It will also lay out the theoretical concepts and frameworks which will be used in the rest of the thesis to explore the position of Walter Spies during this period. Concepts such as post-colonial theory, primitivism, linguistic imperialism, and visual language as a form of 'pidgin' will also be discussed. Also important to this discussion will be the idea of a 'contact zone'.

The second chapter will present background information about Balinese painting, looking at its historical precedents and challenging the notion of creative and stylistic stasis sometimes applied to pre-colonial Balinese art, for instance, by Ramseyer (1986). In questioning this idea, I will introduce the notion of the proactive nature of developments in Balinese painting, as having occurred despite foreign interference, rather than specifically because of it. The account will progress to categories of Balinese painting as these have been identified by commentators and the idea of Balinese modernism will be introduced. Although the focus of the thesis is on the period Spies spent in Bali between 1926 and 1939, the discussion will draw on longer-term historical and art historical perspectives in order to properly contextualise the period under discussion.

The third chapter will focus on the conventions which comprised the language of tourist art during the inter war period. This account will analyse one particularly important aspect of painting by Balinese and foreign artists alike: that is the lack of motifs of modernity in much of their work. This will be used as a fulcrum to discuss the nature of Eurocentric obsessions about the 'Orient' and the relationship of Westerners to it. This idea will be related to the political ideology which underpinned the creation of the 'living museum' ⁵ and will demonstrate how the shared visual language of the touristic 'contact-zone' largely dictated the visual agenda adopted by artists and to some extent limited their naturally syncretic artistic inclinations. The discourse of Europeans will be examined and will demonstrate the attitudes that informed the gatekeepers of the *Pita Maha* project and also how this visual imperialism extended to the people and the landscapes themselves.

The fourth chapter will provide a critical biography of Walter Spies in the form of a theoretical exploration of the ways in which Spies' life has been described and constructed through a variety of interconnected accounts. This will be compared with

information from other sources about his life, such as correspondence which sometimes contradicts or moderates the more conventional accounts of his opinions and position in Balinese colonial life. Although details of his early life will be provided, the key focus will be on the time he spent in Bali.

In the fifth chapter, I consider the circumstances of his arrest and details of his sexuality which seems to have related to his art, existence and motivations in Bali. I also examine notions of the exploitation of his colonial status in conjunction with contemporary discourse on Balinese morality. These factors have tended to be glossed over in previous accounts, such as Rhodius and Darling (Rhodius, 1964; Rhodius & Darling, 1980). In particular, this account will focus on the purge which was undertaken by the colonial authorities, of homosexuals in the Indies and Bali in particular in 1938. This represents a key focus in Spies' creative life, as well as indicating more clearly the nature of his sexuality and the effects this might have had on his work and contacts. Through this discussion, Spies' ambivalent relationship with colonial ideology will be examined along with his own discourse and that of his friends and associates on sexuality, Bali and the Balinese.

The sixth chapter examines a selection of paintings by Walter Spies in detail. It questions whether his paintings conform to notions of European modernism in terms of aesthetics and politics. It also examines the fusions and influences which have contributed to his work and the way his work represents the discourses of Dutch colonialism as well as possible influences which might have come from Bali. In relation to this, it will also highlight his work as a particular form of tourist art. This chapter also deals with the film output of Walter Spies and, although these are essentially collaborative projects, the texts of the films will be examined as representative of Spies' viewpoints as colonial discourse. The reception of the films in Europe and America through reviews will also be examined to shed light on the discourse of the films arising from their being viewed in a European context, and their possible influence as a primer for Western visitors to Bali in the 1930s.

A key element in other accounts of the role of Walter Spies in Bali focuses on his 'influence' on Balinese artists. As well as examining the idea of influence in a post-colonial context, Chapter 7 will look specifically at influences upon Balinese artists, taking a wider geographical and temporal framework than is normally used to discuss the new Balinese painting. This thesis does take a position of 'difference' suggestive of a clash of cultures, although this is characterised less as a clash, but as a shared visual-linguistic arena or 'contact zone' when discussing the form and function of tourist art in Bali during the 1930s. The 'creolisation' of the visual forms of the Balinese

painters, through a form of visual-linguistic imperialism exercised by the *Pita Maha* organisation, will be examined in the context of the 'liberal' *baliseering* policy of the Dutch. Parallel to this is the 'pidgin' vocabulary developed more organically by some painters in relation to open market tourist demand. In order to highlight the conventions of these visual-linguistic codes, I will focus on the representation of the modern in visual terms both in artworks and in terms of the discourse of objectification by Westerners of 'traditional' people and landscapes as 'picturesque' and 'unspoiled'. This account will seek to examine the popular discourse concerning the influence of Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet, individually and curatorially, as being focused in the Ubud region, and at a certain time. This linear causality, viewing Spies as a singular monolithic instigator of innovation and creativity amongst Balinese artists, will be balanced by a consideration of the broader geographical, temporal and economic factors which tend to be ignored, at the same time as promoting Western hegemonies. This chapter will question both the degree and nature of Spies' influence on Balinese painting through the *Pita Maha* project and will develop the discussion which explores a variety of Western discourses about Bali and its residents.

Thus, this thesis sets out to examine Walter Spies as a colonial figure, setting him within the social and political background of his residence in Bali. It will examine the discourse and myth surrounding Walter Spies and his alleged impact on Balinese painting, and look at how he has been seen to have influenced Balinese art through his artistic, teaching and curatorial endeavours in Bali. In turn, possible manifestations of dissent and alternative autonomous creative approaches by the Balinese artists will be examined. The discussion will question the popular and critical canons which have grown around Spies' work and will chart the continued interest in this artist and the continued popular image of his importance, despite the fact that this view is increasingly being questioned, by Anthony Forge (1993) and Heidi Hinzler (1986), for instance. By highlighting the contradictions and agreements which arise in the discourse of Spies and Bali, this thesis will attempt to build a clear picture of his role in the cultural and political *baliseering* project instigated by the Dutch Colonial government. The types of often justificatory assumptions regarding the colonial project which pervade much of the literature of that time will be deconstructed from a post-colonial perspective. This will be done in order to highlight the cultural dogma which characterises both accounts of the period and the inverted social engineering which was attempted in Bali during this period. In turn, the imagery and discourse of 'tourist art' produced both by the Balinese and Walter Spies himself will also be examined in terms of the social, political, economic and cultural factors at work during that period. Thus, this thesis aims to represent some of the complexity surrounding a figure such as

Spies in terms of his role and his influence on Balinese painting, but also as a colonial figure in relation to the Balinese through his contradictory discourse and actions.

Notes for Introduction

¹ *The Last Paradise* was the title of a popular book of time by Hickman Powell.

² This is a term coined by Pratt, (1992). I will expand on this in the next chapter.

³ See my discussion of post-colonial theory later in the next chapter.

⁴ David Macey identifies historical materialism as arising from the critical approach of Marx and Engels. "The basic premise of historical materialism is that human life is not determined by consciousness but by its material and social conditions of existence" (Macey, 2000, p. 183)

⁵ The 'living museum' is in the title of the book by Hitchcock and Norris (1995) and is sometimes applied to Bali under Dutch colonial rule with its policy of cultural 'preservation'.

The Theoretical and Methodological Basis of this Thesis

Introduction

A recent publication on sale in the bookshops of Bali entitled *Artists on Bali* (1996) is a good indication of how, in some instances, Eurocentric, neocolonial viewpoints remain in vogue in the consideration and definition of art and artists in Bali. Although this title is clearly aimed at a European audience, it is widely on sale in Bali. *Artists on Bali* does not accurately describe the contents of the book, which focuses on the work of six different European artists who worked in Bali earlier this century, including Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet. The implication of the title is that indigenous artists did not exist before, during or after the arrival of these foreigners in Bali or that those Balinese who produced art were not truly artists worthy of inclusion in the book. As well as being inaccurate, this notion panders to the view that Balinese people are simply incidental, picturesque and dehumanised components of the Balinese landscapes, which the tourists consume. My thesis explores the origins of such touristic viewpoints in Bali in the 1930s and the expression and creation of a variety of overlapping world-views are explored through examining the discourse of a number of texts, which can be described as colonial discourse. Ashcroft et. al. describe the term colonial discourse as being derived directly from Foucault's use of the concept (Ashcroft et al, 1998, p. 70). My usage of this term also derives from the Foucauldian usage which is "a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements in which the world can be known" (Ashcroft et al, 1998, p. 70). In particular, I examine the nature of colonial attitudes through the writings of fiction, travel writers and correspondence from the 1920s and 1930s. I also trace the continuation of such assumptions and attitudes into more recent accounts which unquestioningly seek to reproduce essentialist assertions regarding tradition and authenticity in Balinese art, which underpinned the views of colonial residents of Bali. My post-colonial analysis of discourse through deconstruction¹ of the various texts places my approach as being part of the post-structuralist tradition. That is an approach which examines texts as discourse with variable meanings over time in relation to changing ideologies and therefore without absolute fixed positions in relation to notions of universal reference points. The critical theorist, Homi Bhabha, frames this approach in a postcolonial context:

For poststructuralist discourse, the priority (and play) of the signifier reveals the space of doubling (not depth) that is the very articulatory principle of discourse. It is

through that space of enunciation that problems of meaning and being enter the discourses of poststructuralism, as the problematic of subjection and identification.
(Bhabha, 1994, p. 50)

This thesis draws on a wide range of 'texts' which include interviews, film, photography, paintings and sculpture, as well as text in the form of newspaper articles, works from more specialist journals, works of fiction, correspondence, exhibition catalogues, academic papers and publications. Some of the academic and theoretical works, as well as some of the other articles, are from the inter-war period. The thesis also draws from more recent sources, in particular, from the 1960s until the present. Each text embodies some form of discourse which can sometimes be reinterpreted with a post-colonial examination in the case of the colonial texts. I attempt to interpret these different texts in terms of what they tell us about the cultural activities, particularly painting, which occurred in the inter-war 'contact zone'² of pre-war colonial Bali. The 'contact zone' is the physical and cultural space shared by colonisers and 'natives' within which exchanges of language, culture and commerce were conducted. Some sources deal with empirical record and others deal with subjective responses. The aim of the whole thesis is to build a network of facts, ideas and impressions which throw the cultural climate of inter-war colonial Bali of last century into relief.

The writings being examined, cover a long period, some contemporary with Walter Spies, some from before him, and others dating from much nearer to the present day. There is also a great variety of written genres. The work and opinions of artists, travel writers, journalists, novelists, biographers, autobiographers and academics. Although many of the texts being examined can be characterised under particular categories such as travel writing, art history or anthropology, in truth, there tends to be an interesting overlap between these different genres. For instance, one work which ostensibly appears to be a work of anthropology can have some of the traits of another genre, so that an apparently anthropological work such as Covarrubias' *Island of Bali* (1937) can be seen as a travel book. By the same token, some books which could be characterised as travel books revel in ethnographic observation and so purport to be anthropological. In correspondence, artistic observations and factual record are often conflated with personal comments. Thus, these categories tend to be somewhat artificial. These texts are also selected for their relevance to the subjects under discussion, rather than their conformity to any particular academic category. In fact, all of these works can be said to constitute a discourse.

The majority of sources represent European, rather than indigenous Balinese or Indonesian voices, as there is a paucity of works available which provide significantly

different Asian perspectives. Nevertheless, there are a few of these which are helpful, along with the interview material that I gathered in Bali ³. In fact, it could be argued that it may not be necessary to have an empirically balanced number of sources to value the views of the colonised and post-colonised and that it is the identification of the existence of such views which is important. It also seems worth considering the shades of meaning, ideology and opinion which can be intermingled in the views of those involved from different ethnic groups, so that the opinions of a Balinese should not necessarily be regarded as typical of his/her ethnic group ⁴. Nor do I necessarily assume that all Balinese were routinely oppressed, nor that all individual Europeans can easily be defined as their oppressors under a colonial system. Conversely, this also applies to modern Western opinions, some of which are sympathetic to global difference and to non-European perspectives in particular. Nevertheless, this thesis will use the various types of sources mentioned above to investigate whether so called 'liberals' like Walter Spies were, in fact, cogs in a colonial machine which attempted to recreate and ossify 'traditional' Balinese culture. One important issue is that of shifting values and ideologies over time which inform all our views of the past and this thesis will examine the ways in which discourses have developed over the years in certain ways. I will also look at ways in which views of Walter Spies and Balinese art have remained persistently and tenaciously unchanged despite evidence which challenges such views ⁵. I propose that there is a certain unquestioning perpetuation of myths and attitudes of the time, which have become embedded in the present, particularly the idea of Walter Spies' selfless altruism and towering influence over the 'crumbling' Balinese arts. My examination of visual and written texts of the period and subsequently will allow for a contemporary re-examination of these ideas.

The various discourses of the time, as represented in travel literature, letters and articles of the late 1930s in particular, will be explored in detail, in order to highlight representations of Bali, as well as attitudes of Europeans towards the Balinese, their island, its culture and history. I will draw connections between the views of the time and the local colonial political climate, with information drawn from historical works. I will demonstrate how these local attitudes were, in turn, linked to international attitudes towards colonisation and a general expedient acceptance of colonial systems amongst Europeans. My discussion of the reception of film through reviews of the 'Bali films' will help to inform this discussion. These attitudes will also be examined through correspondence and the written responses of travel writers, drawn from the collection in the Library of Congress held on microfilm by the Walter Spies Foundation in Leiden. I also make use of the collection of letters, largely in German from the collection made by Rhodius (1964)⁶. I will discuss how these same Europeans still maintained what

purported to be 'ethical' and 'liberal' views, which allowed individuals and institutions to portray themselves and to be portrayed by others, as sympathetic friends to Bali's 'native' residents. In my later discussion, many different types of references and quotations are used to support my assertions and also to air a diversity of voices and viewpoints, both theoretical and subjective. In doing this, the account will try to address the complexity of multiple discourses which have arisen around cultural production in Bali in the inter-war period and particularly drawings and paintings by Balinese and European artists like Walter Spies.

In this chapter I will first outline the methodology I have used in approaching this thesis. The following section will discuss the theoretical frameworks I have used and contextualise the key theoretical ideas I have applied to my propositions about Walter Spies and new Balinese art in inter-war Bali. I will also summarise and discuss the key resources I have used in developing the thesis. In doing so, I will also explore specific terms which I use and the ways in which I have chosen to interpret and use them in this account.

Methodology & Sources

My methodology in undertaking this research project has involved qualitative research which has been based around fieldwork and primary and secondary sources. The activities have consisted of interviews, visits to exhibitions, visits to archives, visits to libraries, viewing of film material, and design and maintenance of a website. I began with bibliographical research in order to gain a comprehensive list of material which dealt with Walter Spies, Balinese art and post-colonial theory. This list has continued to grow as the project has continued. It soon became clear that film material would be relevant and informative to my study as well as fiction, travel writing, ethnology, art history and works dealing with colonial history. At the same time, I developed a website which served as a visual and chronological taxonomy of the paintings produced by Spies ⁷. This has now grown into the largest publicly available collection of images of his work. This proved very useful as a reference resource, but also as a focus for discussion with my various contacts with researchers interested in Spies such as Miyuki Soejima (1997;1998)⁸ in Japan, David Sandberg in Germany and Diana Spies Pope in the USA ⁹. I also gained information by e-mail from a number of informants whose comments were very revealing as to the modern popular Western discourse on Spies. It has revealed key attitudes towards Spies, such as the notion being contested in the thesis that Spies single-handedly transformed Balinese art ¹⁰. In addition to this,

opinions were also provided by an Indonesian artistic commentator, Amir Siddhartha ¹¹. As well as collecting texts and creating a website, I embarked on a number of fieldtrips, in order to gather more data and conduct interviews which were constructed to analyse the position of Spies within modern Balinese discourse. I also aimed to gain some primary accounts from some of the few remaining people who might have remembered him in the period being examined. My European fieldtrips were largely in search of archival material, but also involved interviews and discussions with David Sandberg ¹² and Heidi Hinzler ¹³. I also had the rare opportunity to view two of Spies' paintings in storage in Dresden.

A key method which I have undertaken throughout the project is the close reading of texts and the analysis of their discourses particularly in relation to their articulation of colonial attitudes specific to Bali. Several important works include two feature films which Spies worked on; *Island of Demons* (1934)¹⁴ and *Kriss* (1932)¹⁵. It is possible to see the input of Spies in *Island of Demons* and it is useful in discussing sources of influence in Spies' visual style. His visual style can also be discussed in relation to his connections with F. W. Murnau. *Tabu* (1931)¹⁶ is a key film in this genre and its text is discussed in relation to the two 'Bali' films being examined. These films and the review responses to them also provide a view of 1930s colonial and 'paradisaal' discourse in Europe and America, and illustrate popular attitudes towards Bali and the 'South Seas'. A useful documentary, which provides a perspective focusing on Balinese art and belief is *Lempad of Bali* (1980)¹⁷ which explores the life and work of a key figure when discussing the development of Modern Balinese art.

I have also undertaken historical research to allow a parallel and objectifying strand of ideas. Jonathan Harris coins three terms to describe different art historical approaches

I suggest a tripartite structure of sensibilities...there are the *scopocentric* (those who believe they ground their analysis on the act of looking), the *scopophobic* (those determined to avoid looking altogether, or who find reasons endlessly to defer it), and those somewhere in the middle - where I place myself - the *scoposceptic* (those who want to see looking at art as much as an historical as a personal activity).
(Harris, 2001, p. 15)

My approach can be likened most closely to the third of these approaches, the 'scoposceptic'. I have benefited in this respect from the recent attention that Bali has had from historians. The accounts by Nordholt (1996) and Robinson (1995) in particular have provided an unsentimentalised overview of the period I am focusing on, which details broader social processes such as colonial reorganisation of Balinese hierarchies and caste systems, as well as, the impact of taxation and the great

Depression. I have used these histories to complement and contrast accounts from that period of time by travel writers and residents. This has allowed me to highlight their discourses, their specific agendas and attitudes in relation to post-colonial historical processes. My historical enquiry has also helped to contextualise the cultural histories which are dealt with in some writings such as Vickers (1989).

As my research data was gathered, I started to write about the various texts and discourses and to interpret them from a post-colonial perspective. Having assessed and made notes on the majority of material I had gathered, an impression of Spies in his colonial context and the art work produced by Spies and his contemporary Balinese artists, started to emerge. These were evaluated in relation to my initial thesis questions about his influence, position, relationship to Bali and the continuation of myths about Spies created during his lifetime. I also started to focus on the wider colonial history of Bali at this time in order to situate the cultural developments I was scrutinising within a context of a broader, non-biographical framework. Initially, I had sought to minimise the biographical aspect of my approach, but it became clear that it would be necessary to develop a partially biographical approach in order to contextualise the thesis overall. It was also necessary in achieving my stated aim of clarifying the details and issues surrounding Spies' imprisonment which was one of my original thesis questions. The biographical discussion provided an opportunity to explore Spies' artistic and social background in Germany in relation to my questions about the influence of German modernism. From this discussion, a more specific, theoretical framework started to emerge when examining Spies in relation to texts dealing with post-colonial theory¹⁸ and others dealing more directly with Spies¹⁹. My reading of these authors provided some specific concepts which helped to describe and explain the processes of cultural change which were happening in the context of colonialism and tourism in Bali.

The fieldwork I have undertaken has been crucial in assessing, collecting and recording primary data such as photographs, correspondence, interview notes, anecdotes and opinions which have allowed me to gain an overview of Walter Spies and Balinese art from the 1920s and 1930s. The trips have also allowed me to gain more detailed information about these subjects. The fieldwork has involved travel to Holland, Germany, and Indonesia as well as several trips to libraries, museums and archives in London. The Indonesian trip took me to Java and Bali. In Jakarta I visited the *Indonesian National Library*, *The Goethe Institute*, the *Erasmushuis*, and the *Indonesian National Archive*. My stay in Jakarta allowed me to gather some useful documents and Balinese contacts. The most useful document was the catalogue for

the exhibition *1895 –1942: Walter Spies di Indonesia: Beserta Pelukis-Pelukis Indonesia Sejaman*²⁰. This included reproductions of paintings by Walter Spies which I had not previously seen such as *Laterna Magica* of 1926 and included some commentary on his work by A. A. M. Djelantik. I was able to obtain relevant copies of the Dutch colonial magazine *Cultureel Indie* in the *National Library* in Jakarta which contained a number of contemporary articles about Spies. The *National Archive* contained microfiche of old Dutch colonial legal records²¹.

The images which I have used to illustrate the thesis have been derived from a variety of sources. Some are from photographs which I took of paintings, statues and bas-reliefs in Bali. I have also received some photographs from Diana Spies Pope in the USA, who provided me with some translations of Walter Spies' letters from German²². I have constructed a visual chronology of Spies' paintings on the basis of images I have managed to collect, which has helped me to derive an overview of the development of his work over time and to assess the stylistic and formal changes in his work²³. Some of these have been particularly useful in gaining an impression of the popular discourse about Spies. This is to allow better quality and less expensive display of images than is allowed by colour printing²⁴. I have had to rely largely on reproductions of works by Spies, as so many of his paintings are dispersed in private collections. Key texts which provided me with images of paintings by Spies, are Rhodius & Darling (1980), Rhodius (1964), Spruit (1995), Goethe Inst. Jakarta (1995). Other images such as those by Balinese painters come from Rhodius (Rhodius & Darling, 1980) and also from the CD compiled by Haks and Maris for the exhibition of pre-War Balinese 'Modernists' in Rotterdam (1999). Another publication by Haks and Maris (1995) provided some reproductions of works by Spies, and also some other works by Spies' European contemporaries such as Willem Hofker, Rudolf Bonnet and Adrien Jean le Mayeur de Merpres. This book also yielded some useful material advertising Bali as a tourist destination, as did the images used to illustrate *Island of Demons* from the press-book for that film, which I found in the British Film Institute library in London. There are a number of other sources of images which are in the list of figures used in this thesis along with those mentioned above. These include Hinzler (1986), Neka & Kam (1998), Willet (1978), Tropenmuseum (1996), The Agung Rai Museum, Gorer (1936), Zondagskind (1993), Hitchcock (1988), Geertz (1994), Vickers (1989) and Robinson (1995). I have used a number of exhibition catalogues that have provided records of paintings by Spies and Balinese painters to which I have referred or used as illustrations accompanying the thesis. Some of these catalogues relate to exhibitions contemporary with Spies and *Pita Maha*²⁵, such as *Collectie Moderne Balische Kunst en Kunstnijverheid*²⁶. These give an indication of participating artists,

popular styles, prices for works and curatorial choice of the time, although illustrations are limited and in black and white.

One of the key sources in this thesis is the correspondence of Walter Spies, his friends and associates. This is an invaluable source of empirical information on events as well as on the discourse that give a unique view of the attitudes of the colonial residents in relation to colonialism, Bali and the Balinese. The correspondence is mainly sourced from Rhodius (1964) which extensively archives correspondence (largely in German) and reminiscences of those who knew Spies which are largely edited to exclude material which might present a negative view of Spies, but which still yields some empirical detail and discourse on Spies. This is balanced with the more candid collection of correspondence held on microfilm in the *Walter Spies Archive* in Leiden which includes fieldwork notes by Margaret Mead. These are largely in English and cover, in particular, the period which Spies was arrested and imprisoned by the Dutch for being a homosexual. They also include useful perspectives on the attitudes of Spies' circle towards the Balinese and colonial policy, as well as providing details of *Pita Maha*. Spies also discusses his paintings in some of the correspondence. These letters and notes originate from the Museum of Congress in the United States and have been particularly useful in building a more complete biographical profile of Walter Spies. This has informed my characterisation of Spies as an ambiguous and contradictory component part of the cultural colonial system in Bali.

In Bali, my focus was on conducting interviews with Balinese painters and if possible with those who had had contact with Spies. The interviews were carried out in Indonesian and I summarised each interview in writing immediately afterwards. I also interviewed others, such as Agung Rai²⁷, who were associated with the Balinese art-world. Although these interviews yielded less people who had had direct contact with Spies, they were invaluable in gaining an insight into the art world of present day Bali and also the localised mediated discourse relating to Spies and his role in Balinese art. One of the problems was in locating individuals who knew Spies and who were still alive. In one case, in particular, Ida Bagus Madé declined to speak to me²⁸. The interviews I conducted were also affected by the passage of time since the period being examined and the prevalence of the largely European, published discourse on Walter Spies which also tended to mediate the views of the interviewees. However, several reminiscences and viewpoints were useful in informing my final analyses. In particular, my discussion with Professor Kalam provided an alternative insight into the work and outlook of his father, the artist Anak Agung Gede Soberat. The relationship today between Balinese artists and the gallery owners who control production in a way

not entirely dissimilar from the *Pita Maha* group, illustrated some of the tensions and disagreements which can arise. It also suggested a historical continuity in curatorial practices from the 1930s. These interviews also highlighted the Eurocentricity of art historical discourse which focuses more on art which equates with European models of production, execution and sale.

In Bali, I visited the art faculty at Udayana University in Denpasar. I interviewed Ida Madé Yasana²⁹ and Professor Kalam who was a painter and the son of one of Walter Spies' first 'pupils'³⁰. In Denpasar, I visited the Bali Museum³¹ and another government department responsible for documenting Balinese art and culture³². I also visited the library of the *Bali Post* looking for articles on Balinese art. I bought a number of books on Bali and Balinese art, most of which were difficult to acquire in Europe³³. I stayed in Ubud for eight days and as well as collecting further literature and photocopies, I also interviewed seven artists and figures from the art world. The first was Agung Rai, the art collector and proprietor of the Agung Rai museum. He had close links with the Walter Spies Foundation in Bali, owning one work by Spies. I interviewed the son of Gusti Nyoman Lempad; Ida Gusti Made Kerti, two younger generation artists: Wayan Sukada and Nyoman Meja and one *Pita Maha* artist, Ida Bagus Rai. I also met but was unable to interview Suteja Neka and Ida Bagus Madé. In Ubud I visited *The Agung Rai Museum*, *The Puri Lukisan Museum*, Gusti Nyoman Lempad's house (which had a number of works which allegedly had come from Spies' private collection) and the *Neka Museum*, as well as a number of commercial galleries. I took a one day trip to the environs of Singaraja to photograph temple carvings featuring European subjects. I also photographed a number of paintings in various locations to record Balinese paintings of possible relevance to the thesis. What struck me in particular was the sense that Eurocentric post-colonial discourse had influenced the opinions of the respondents. This included Professor Kalam, whose perspective was informed by his family history, as well as by the Westernised discourse about the development of modern Balinese painting. In addition to interviews, I visited the *Bali Museum*, which Spies had been involved with founding. This trip highlighted in particular, the relative rarity of depictions of modernity, particularly in works sanctioned by *Pita Maha*. It became clear that this was a focal point of contention and was emblematic of attitudes of cultural imperialism in Bali in the 1920s and 1930s.

The trip to the *Walter Spies Archive* in Leiden provided the material I needed to gain a view of the discourse of the time through the correspondence of Walter Spies, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Jane Belo and others which allowed a useful counterbalance to the letters included in the Rhodius Compendium of 1964 which represented a different and more edited impression of Spies and his work. In particular,

it yielded answers to key biographical questions regarding Spies' sexual relationships and his arrest ³⁴. The interview I conducted with Dr. Heidi Hinzler highlighted the need to value Balinese creativity and experimentation as well as questioning the status of 'genius' sometimes attributed to Walter Spies. She was also able to provide me with a number of articles from her own archive concerning Spies which had proved to be difficult to acquire elsewhere, such as the work by Chytry (1989). In addition to this, she showed me a rare video copy of *Kriss*, which has allowed me to develop a comparative discussion of Walter Spies' Balinese films in relation to Dutch colonial discourse and the reception of those films in the West. I examined the official Dutch colonial discourse towards Bali and Spies' adherence to its tenets through these film texts. I was able to read Heidi Hinzler's text (1986) on 19th century Balinese paintings from the Van der Tuuk collection, which further confirmed the views she expressed in her interview.

My trip to Germany was intended to establish some details about Walter Spies' life before he left Germany and to view visual material in the Sandberg archive in Munich. Walter Spies' great nephew, David Sandberg in Berlin furnished me with unpublished visual material, details of paintings and papers. This included the unpublished paper by John Stowell, (1992) which I have drawn upon at various points in this thesis, particularly in relation to *Pita Maha*. Sandberg was able to furnish me with useful biographical information about Spies and his extended family, as well as showing me the Spies' family home outside Dresden and Hellerau, where Spies and his sister Daisy resided in the early 1920s. He was able to provide me with more biographical information about Walter Spies and Hans Rhodius ³⁵, which was key to my thesis as I was examining the way that Spies' biography had been constructed. Rhodius was an enthusiast and a biographer of Spies and I wanted to explore his role in the construction of Eurocentric myths about Spies. Sandberg also held visual records of some of Spies' early works, which were unpublished, and which I had not previously seen ³⁶.

In London, I was able to view a rare film copy of *Island of Demons* ³⁷ at the British Film Institute (B.F.I.) archive. The B.F.I. Library held review and promotional material for both films that Spies had participated in when in Bali. In addition to this I was able to view the archive of photographs and film material by Spies and Beryl de Zoete, held in the Horniman Museum in South London. I later attended a conference at the Horniman Museum on the subject of tourist art ³⁸. This allowed me to assess modern anthropological perspectives on art work produced in different parts of the world for the tourist market. Although the focus was largely on recent developments, key issues like the notion of the 'primitive', 'authenticity' and 'authorship' were highlighted in the

discussions. Also in London, I was able to read various rare texts such as the work by Goris and Spies³⁹ in the British library and found information and texts in the Courtauld Institute Library⁴⁰ and the National Art Library⁴¹.

Translation was another aspect of this project which was a source of difficulty. As well as visiting Holland, Germany, and Indonesia, I also had to deal with material and communication in those languages. In Indonesia, all my interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesian⁴². I also read a certain amount of material in Indonesian although it was not necessary to translate any of this. Although I was able, through my knowledge of German, to get a sense of Dutch material, I ultimately had to have some help with its translation in the case of the Niehaus articles⁴³. In the case of the German source material, the majority which was used in this thesis I translated myself⁴⁴.

Theoretical Approaches and Sources

My theoretical approach has developed in parallel with my understanding of the specific data and writings which relate to Walter Spies and Balinese art. My theoretical approach is a multidisciplinary one, but I will define it as an art historical investigation which is informed by post-colonial theory, which has traditionally been directed more towards literature and the written word. I draw upon more traditional art historical methods such as biography and analysis of images, but this approach is informed by a view of the art in a social, historical and post-colonial context. This context is defined through analysis of written discourses within correspondence, travel writing and fiction. I also draw upon historical and ethnographic accounts about colonial Bali. Thus, although the study ultimately uses a single individual artist as its focus, this is not the sole purpose of this account. I seek to examine contact and interaction in a specific colonial context. Walter Spies' interaction with Bali and Balinese art is examined as being illustrative of a socially defined process, rather than isolating Spies as a 'genius' detached from the society he was born into, and the very different colonial society into which he settled. An examination of colonial discourse and the way such discourse can be perpetuated after its political, social and ideological basis has changed, is key to this account.

The way I am using the term 'post-colonial' needs to be qualified, as its application is not always straightforward. In particular, this term has been used to describe the critical analysis of post independence literature, but it has also been used to describe the analysis of texts from the colonial era. Ashcroft et al argue that:

'Post-Colonial' as we define it does not mean 'post-independence', or 'after colonialism', for this would be to falsely ascribe an end to the colonial process. Post-Colonialism, rather, begins from the very first moment of colonial contact.
(Ashcroft et al, 1995, p.117)

This is how I use this term, but this explanation does not address when colonial contact can be said to begin and what constitutes colonial contact, as opposed to trading relations for instance. In the case of Bali, I define the beginning of colonial contact by the advent of Dutch military occupation and administrative control.

Gayatri Spivak (Spivak, 1999, p. 1) suggests that one particular danger of examination and critique of colonial discourse is that it becomes lodged in the past and is thus regarded as being at a 'comfortable' distance from today, implying a discontinuity of those discourses in a post-colonial world and diminishing the importance of modern-day neo-colonial discourse. Although, my focus is largely on colonial era 'texts', a key imperative for this thesis is the way that the colonially defined discourse surrounding the work and influence of Walter Spies has become perpetuated and amplified in modern popular discourse on Bali. This thesis seeks to define the roots of this hagiographic trend in biographies of Spies. It also seeks to assess the degree to which individuals in relation to social and cultural process were responsible for changes in Balinese art production. I am focusing on colonial texts, but this is contextualised through an examination of subsequent writings and interviews which reflect the development and continuation of neo-colonial discourse concerning Spies and his influence. I subscribe to this view of colonialism as a process which is far from over. Thus post-colonialism as with postmodernism is a misleading term in its implication that we live in a more sophisticated and equitable 'post' world in terms of politics, economics and ideology, than in previous eras.

Several accounts have helped to clarify the recent debates and focus of post-colonial approaches to discourse. Robert Young's account has been very useful in clarifying the debates which have arisen between post-colonialism's 'holy trinity' (Young, 1995 p. 163) of Said, Spivak and Bhabha ⁴⁵. After effectively defining the ground for post-colonial theory from its precursor of Commonwealth Studies, 'Orientalism' is a term which needs to be examined, as it is one I use in my discussion. The term derives from Edward Said's work. Said broadened and popularised the notions of Orientalism as an attitude and as a tool of colonial domination and European self-identification in relation to a foreign and exotic Other. The relationships between discourse, knowledge and power as applied to European history have been taken by Said and developed into a

framework examining colonialism and Orientalism (Said, 1978, p. 3). This framework has sought to explain colonial relations and structures through the power of discourse, which has been developed both independently, and as an instrument of, colonial and neo-colonial domination and hegemony. Said developed the term 'Orientalism' from its traditionally narrow scientific and ethnographic context to encompass wider imperialist discourses, which both defined the Orient to the Western world, and helped to define a Western sense of itself through the creation of oriental Others.

...the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.
(Said, 1978, pp. 1-2)

Said demonstrated that the 'Orient' is a kind of Western fiction at worst and a generalisation at best. Bhabha focused on Orientalism as fantasy in relation to Orientalism as study and the innate frictions of 'scientific' findings with desires and complex exchanges. He points out:

Said's inadequate attention to representation as a concept that articulates the historical and fantasy (as the scene of desire) in the production of the 'political' effects of discourse.
(Bhabha, 1994, pp. 72)

Writers such as Robert Young have built on this idea (Young, 1995). Young explores the relationships between colonial desire, hybridity and the colonial construction of race, suggesting that the drive behind European colonial expansion was driven by an inseparable combination of sexual desire and commerce. Walter Spies could be characterised as an Orientalist who ethnographically studied the Balinese, at the same time as living an Orientalist sexual fantasy amongst them. I seek to demonstrate how, paradoxically, his own desire eventually conflicted with the formalised separatism he clearly espoused in relation to the outcomes of trans-cultural influence in the case of 'traditional' Balinese art and society. In the same way that Bhabha's approach to post-colonialism relies on psychoanalysis, my account also implicitly touches on this area through the writings of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson whose thinking was clearly influenced by psychoanalysis in their descriptions of Spies' sexuality and artistic motivations. However, this account does not claim to be rigorously psychoanalytical as this is not the chosen methodological or theoretical focus of my thesis. Thus the ideas of Mead and Bateson are examined in their own discursive right.

The idea, derived from Spivak (1988) of invisible discourses of subalternity is important to this thesis, as well as being one of the more problematic aspects of addressing a European subject in an Asian context. According to Ashcroft, subalternity refers to those of 'inferior rank' and derives originally from the work of Gramsci in a Marxist context, examining the power relations between the subaltern and the ruling classes (Ashcroft et al, 1998, p. 215). From the beginning of this project, it has been apparent that there is a built-in paradox whereby, to examine the work of Walter Spies as a focus of a study, immediately promotes his work over and above the work of other artists. Discussing his work from the point of view of Western art historical criteria tends to ignore other Balinese artists who worked at the same time as Spies in Bali. Because Spies did not work in Europe and chose to work amongst a different cultural group, the cultural exclusions of a non-global approach to art history is brought into focus. In the case of Balinese art, it is relatively easy to diminish the significance of temporally parallel, yet geographically remote, artistic practices which have different cultural and philosophical roots from European Modernist practices. By attempting to equalise the indigenous voice, I take a cultural relativist approach in order not to elevate one artistic culture above another and to question the imposition of the criteria of one culture upon another.

My account is written to be read by European or Europeanised readers, as the whole endeavour of a thesis like this, written in English ostensibly as a piece of art-historical research belongs to Enlightenment epistemological traditions which value a particular kind of reflexive and analytical approach. Those Balinese who have examined Balinese paintings such as Djelantik (1990) are also educated in these European traditions. This conforms to the hierarchy of post-colonial informants listed by Spivak (1988, p. 284). Spivak proposes (in an Indian context) that the subaltern is not simply composed of people with dark skin as opposed to their Occidental colonisers, but that there is a hierarchy amongst which there are 'natives' who cannot easily be described as subaltern.

- {1. Dominant foreign groups
- Elite {2. Dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level
- {3. Dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels.
- 4. The terms "people" and "subaltern classes" have been used as synonymous through this note. The social groups and elements included in this category represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the "elite"
- (Spivak, 1988, p. 284)

A particular problem is the invisibility of the subaltern voice. Spivak identifies this problem, which also characterises my account, in that my Balinese sources are limited. Accounts of specific resistance and individuality amongst Balinese painters, as well as the wider Balinese population of the time have sometimes had to be secondary rather than primary. This is because of the passage of time since the 1930s and also the rarity of such accounts. It is also because Western academic discourse on cultural imperialism is of little relevance or interest to most of the Balinese I spoke to. This thesis also does not deal with the second layer of subalternity identified by Spivak, which is the role and voice of women. Thus, when this account refers to the Balinese, in most cases, with one or two exceptions, it refers to Balinese men who comprised the majority of artists or activists amongst the Balinese who are discussed. Gayatri Spivak's 'caste system' of historical informants is very useful in assessing the methodology of this study, as it highlights the problematic nature of some of my own data. My discussion of the subaltern is informed in part by data gathered in relation to an institution which is Eurocentrically conceived; the *Pita Maha* group which was dominated by Europeans, the native colonial elite and other high caste Balinese. The lesser visibility of the lower castes and the virtual invisibility of women in records and accounts illustrates clearly the problems of subalternity highlighted by Spivak.

Within a post-colonial critical framework such as the one I am adopting, there are also inbuilt tensions which arise in relation to its focus on art and aspects of cultural imperialism. Spivak has herself been attacked by Terry Eagleton for attaching too much importance to cultural imperialism at the expense of factors such as economics. Eagleton argues:

Spivak rightly sets her face against the left philistines for whom any idea which will not instantly topple the bosses is about as politically useful as algebraic topology. But she is far more reluctant to recognise the seed of truth in their point of view: that radical theory tends to grow unpleasantly narcissistic when deprived of a political outlet. As the semioticians might put it, the theory then comes to stand in metaphorically for what it signifies. Political revolution may have many perils, but failing to concentrate the mind wonderfully is not among them.⁴⁶

Spivak adopts the term 'epistemic violence', adopted from Said, to describe the construction of bodies of knowledge that justify colonial activities and attitudes: "The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other." (Spivak, 1988, pp. 280-281) The use of this term could itself be questioned as an oxymoron and unnecessary

reification of theory. Although actions and ideas are inextricably linked, it may not be helpful to confuse them by using such terminology. Knowledge and ideas may lead to violent acts, but it is questionable whether theory and epistemology itself can be seen as violent. Her later use of 'epistemic overhaul', might be a better term to use. In contrast to such highly theorised approaches, Young points out that more recent theorists such as Benita Parry have "criticized a certain textualism and idealism in colonial discourse analysis which they allege, occurs at the expense of materialist historical enquiry" (Young, 1995, p. 163). Another aspect of post-colonial theory is provided by Laura Chrisman (1994) with the notion, also supported by Young, that more attention should be paid to imperial discourse instead of post-independence literature. This is an approach I have followed. I suggest that both textual and historical materialist approaches are helpful and revealing in exploring different dimensions to the same questions. In the case of my thesis, these approaches are focused upon collisions of individual and institutional approaches in Bali and their effect on the output of Balinese and European artists.

Because of the development of post-colonial studies around the discipline of literature, the study of the work of indigenous artists seems, in the past, to have been more the preserve of ethnographers and anthropologists. It is also clear that there has tended to be a confusion about what should be considered to be the concern of art history or anthropology which highlights the line which this thesis treads at times in evaluating artistic production in a non-Western context. Harris uses the term 'meaning translation':

The problem of 'meaning translation' between *different* societies or continents - one of the central concerns of anthropology - is equally present, then, *within* a single society or continent. Indeed it is also always present in the interpretations of *all* artworks and art-historical texts. 'Translation' always involves issues relating to the interests and values of those producing the artefacts, those producing the interpretations and those, in turn, who come to interpret the interpretations.
(Harris, 2001, p. 276)

From the world of anthropology, Benetta Jules-Rosette (1994) has explored images of technology in African tourist art, and the work of Paula Ben-Amos (1978) has been particularly useful to me in testing and providing the metaphor of pidginisation to describe the process of the development of tourist art. The work of these two researchers has concerned the more recent tourist art of Africa. This in turn highlights a problem with the application of theory to this subject. That is the direction of the majority of post-colonial discussion to Africa and India in particular. Indonesia and Bali, although the focus of numerous anthropological studies, has not been given the same kind of attention in North America and Britain in terms of overtly post-colonial critical

frameworks. One fairly isolated exception is Stoler who examines interracial relationships and marriages in the colonial Dutch East Indies. In doing so she examines:

...the relationship among the discourses of inclusion, humanitarianism, and equality that informed liberal policy at the turn of the century in colonial Southeast Asia and the exclusionary, discriminatory practices that were reactive to, coexistent with, and perhaps inherent in liberalism itself. (Stoler, 1997, p. 198)

These 'discriminatory practices' relating to Dutch 'Liberal Policy' are relevant to this study in the way they provided the basis for the 'Balinisation' of Bali which will be discussed in the next chapter. An example of the partial invisibility of South East Asia in post-colonial discourse is when Robert Young neglects to include the Dutch East Indies in his list of colonies, even though he makes the point that the focus on the various colonies is unbalanced (Young, 1995, p. 164). 'Colonialism' as a specific term, is also problematic when examined beyond the commonality it suggests. Specific differences occur as a result of the culture and ideology of a specific colonising nation when confronted with the beliefs and culture of those being colonised. Chrisman suggests that:

If critical attention might profitably be devoted to the uses of imperial differentiation strategies, the same goes for analyses of imperial discourse itself. It is just as important to observe differences between imperial practices whether it be geographical / national...or historical... (Chrisman, 1994, p. 500)

Aspects of linguistic theory have proved useful in informing my post-colonial approach. The idea of tourist art as a language brings it closer to ideas of 'contact languages' and makes some of the ideas which relate to pidginisation applicable to understanding the processes involved in visual art. I have applied ideas about language-spread deriving from notions of linguistic imperialism posited by Philipson (1992) and Lewis (1982)⁴⁷. Visual-linguistic imperialism is an expression I use to describe a paternalistic attempt to control forms and styles of visual representation. It involves considering art as language, not in a strictly semiological sense, but rather through the idea of language spread through imposition and adoption. However, in doing so, I identify specific visual taboos, such as motifs of modernity, as emblematic of visual linguistic codes adopted in new Balinese painting of the 1930s. In this account I apply this idea to the situation of the *Pita Maha* group of artists. In some ways, this idea of visual-linguistic imperialism conflicts with the idea of pidginisation in a similar way that the idea of colonial hegemony conflicts with a relativist consideration of colonial contact and exchange.

'Pidginisation' arises through a process of contact, and 'contact-zone' is a term which also arises from the idea of contact languages and the cultural exchanges that this implies. Romaine stresses the fact that a homogenous definition of a pidgin language is difficult to sustain and she says that: "A pidgin represents a language which has been stripped of everything but the bare essentials necessary for communication." (Romaine, 1988, p. 24) Nevertheless, the notion of pidginisation has its limitations when applied to tourist art. According to Romaine (Romaine, 1988, p. 24), pidginisation results from the mixing of more than two languages. This is not the case with Balinese tourist art which I propose as the inter-mixing of two visual linguistic cultures. Nevertheless, the omission of certain visual aspects of new Balinese painting, such as motifs of modernity, can be correlated with the simplification of language to fulfil a particular communicative purpose (Romaine, 1988, p. 24).

I use 'creolisation' as a differentiated category from pidginisation. Romaine states that: "The development from pidgin into creole involves an expansion of expressive forces in response to communicative needs." (Romaine, 1988, p. 38) It is clear that creolisation and creolised languages can be taken as having a slightly different connotation. Creolisation is the racial and cultural intermingling which often results in the creolisation of language (Romaine, 1988, p. 24). It is this more formalised contact I am using as analogous to the *Pita Maha* project. Pidgin is seen as a more pragmatic product of the 'contact zone' which although a product of contact cannot yet be described as creolised. In the case of Spies, it is the formalised contact of *Pita Maha* as opposed to the informal contact moulding tourist art, which has caused me to differentiate this work with the term 'creolised'. These ideas derive from the work of Paula Ben Amos (1978) which Wollen has developed further. It is clear that even from these definitions, they should be used as analogous structures rather than being regarded as entirely synonymous, and the purpose of this thesis is not to extensively investigate the finite applicability of linguistic concepts. Nevertheless, the formal adoption of a language denoted by 'creolisation' is useful to differentiate paternalistic practices in relation to Balinese art from the products of 'free market' tourist art, and can be considered a 'second generation' art form, as Creole can be considered a 'second generation' language. The consensual aspect of language adoption and spread is also encapsulated in these terms, but imperialist control is less clear, and that is why I also use the term 'para-tourist art' within a 'contact zone' to further refine and clarify this analogy. In relation to cultural exchange, the term 'contact zone' was coined by Mary Louise Pratt (Pratt, 1992, p. 7) and has proved to be a tenacious metaphor in describing and discussing the development of new art in Bali

during the inter-war period in the way it addresses hegemony and exchange. She suggests that:

'Contact zone' is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historic disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect...A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travellers and 'travelees,' not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.
(Pratt, 1992, p. 7)

Pratt's emphasis on the contacts of early European travellers is probably more applicable at certain phases in the colonial process than others. In particular, it describes the moments of early contact between different groups before colonial bureaucracies and hegemonic practices were formally developed, adding a layer of domination to what were previously more equal exchanges of cultural ideas and practices. However, her idea also addresses inequitable relations of power. Through its origins, the concept of the 'contact-zone' has commonality with ideas of contact-languages and pidginisation, which I also use as a theoretical framework in relation to tourist art in Bali. Influence is inevitably a product of contact and as discussed previously, has a complex dynamic which is not simply a one-way transmission of ideas.

Said identifies the discourse of colonialism seen in literature as providing justification and support for various colonial ventures. As a generalised idea, this is important. However, it tends to assume similar historical, political and ideological factors influencing colonising nations and implies that colonialism is a unified project. Said has been criticised (Bhabha, 1994, p. 72) for a kind of universalism which ultimately mimics the post-Enlightenment dichotomy between East and West which it seeks to question: the dichotomy which tries to define the Occidental world as superior and dominant in relation to an Oriental Other. Said's universalism is a politicised viewpoint which can be seen to diminish the strengths of the colonised peoples and, like Fanon (1952), clearly divides them into two groups, the oppressed and the oppressors. Nevertheless, the critique of Said as a universalist, is a form of cultural relativism which could be described as post-modern; such relativism can disproportionately deny hegemony, hierarchy and exploitation through a focus on colonialism as a shared arena, which implies a form of equality. Linda Hutcheon suggests that:

A related problem is that post-modern notions of difference and positively valued marginality can themselves be used to repeat (in a more covert way) colonising strategies of domination when used by First World critics dealing with the Third World.

(Linda Hutcheon, in Ashcroft et al, 1995, pp.132-133)

Peter Wollen takes this further claiming that: "...the discourse of postmodernism, even more than that of modernism, has been stiflingly Eurocentric" (Wollen, 1993, p. 205). This notion of Eurocentricity is important to my own assessment of accounts dealing with Walter Spies and Balinese art. Notions of exploitation and resistance are important to this thesis and there is, at times, an uncomfortable dissonance between the idea of colonial domination as a one-way process, and an arena of cultural exchanges denied through colonial discourse. Contradicting his assertion about the Eurocentricity of post-modern discourse, Wollen presents the idea of 'para-tourist art'.

...some of the artists were then able to use the *animateurs* as resources to expand the ambition, complexity and scope of their work. The makers of this new para-tourist art themselves have to find a new institutional support system, which will be ambiguously enabling and exploiting. The balance between exploitation and enablement will depend on the political and economic dynamics of each specific situation. In many ways this development of para-tourist art from tourist art can be compared to the development of expanded pidgin or creole languages. (Wollen, 1993, p. 196)

This idea helpfully avoids crude notions of imposed cultural imperialism, on the other hand, it side-steps moral questions about the nature of Western cultural imperialism, as well as colonialism and modern-day neo-colonialism. This avoidance is through the emphasis of this idea on European *animateurs* like Spies to achieve the new forms of art he describes. At the same time as validating input from the 'oppressed', it also diminishes the apparent degrees of political oppression. This seems to be where the relativity of post-modernism clashes with the ideological aspect of post-colonial theory. However, I propose that when looking at Walter Spies, both of these aspects exist together and are not contradictory, as suggested by the concept of the 'contact zone', which acknowledges cultural exchange while still addressing hegemonic colonial relations. This is the strength of Pratt's concept. This thesis uses as its basis a more ideological post-colonialism in critiquing the attitudes and discourses of colonial Bali and the apparent continuance of these discourses. I also look at strategies and manifestations of resistance through codes of representation in new Balinese art. Through the use of ideas like the 'contact zone' and 'para-tourist art' I also extend this

thinking in a more relativist direction which examines the exchanges and influences in art which occurred through inter-racial colonial contact.

One particular term I use on a regular basis is the 'West' or Western. I could also have used a term preferred by Nelson Graburn: 'Euro-American' (Graburn, 1976). The West is a large geographical region encompassing Europe and America, but more than this 'Western' could be seen to describe a post-enlightenment Anglo-Saxon culture. However, 'Western' is a generic term which carries assumptions about an internal homogeneity within Western culture and perspectives, which ignores national racial, ethnic, religious and class differences. The homogeneity implied by this term is a result of the contrast created by the construct of the Oriental. Thus, a relationship of difference is created between the Occident and the Orient whereby two entirely different groupings with implied internal cohesions exist and which can be used to contrast cultural observations. It is clearly a contestable term, but one which I have chosen to use despite its inexact connotations. In one sense by using the term, I am participating in the Orientalist project to some extent. Nevertheless, at certain times, I will address differences in the colonial processes of various different European nations and also, the artistic culture of Germany for instance, or the differences in the reception of film in America and Britain. It could be argued that by using this generalisation at times I am subverting the colonial discourse which generalises the Orient as a homogenous entity by focusing in detail upon Bali in relation to a generalised West.

In recent years, there has been a growing unease about the tendency of anti-eurocentric writing to homogenize, not just the 'Third World' but also the category of 'the West' as such - by writers who are, of course, very often the product of that same 'West'. But in the face of such objections we need to remind ourselves that these increasingly troublesome general categories, such as 'the West', or 'colonialism' or 'neocolonialism' - and even 'colonial discourse' - are themselves in their current usage often the creation of Third World theorists such as Fanon, Nkrumah or Said, who needed to invent such categories precisely as general categories in order to constitute an object both for analysis and for resistance.

(Young, 1995, p. 165)

In relation to these terms, 'West' and 'Western', is another term, which is 'Eurocentric' which I have preferred to the dictionary term 'Europocentric'. This term Eurocentric is the term used by Said (1978) and is synonymous with Orientalism. It describes a Western approach or view which addresses a Europeanised or Western agenda. It embodies similar problems to 'the West' in that it assumes an internal homogeneity. It therefore is used to make a general point of the imposition of difference between Bali and the West rather than to specifically examine the diversity of Western cultures which

is beyond the scope of this study. For instance, the *Pita Maha* group is discussed in Chapter 7 as an exploration of the idea of this group being imposed as a European (and therefore Eurocentric) institutional model for organising and marketing artistic production.

It is clear that Foucault's concept of discourse, developed from the strands of poststructuralist theory, have informed post-colonial theoretical thinking (1995). Sara Mills states that:

Within the theoretical range of meanings, it is difficult to know where or how to track down the meaning of discourse. Glossaries of theoretical terms are sometimes of help, but very often the disciplinary context in which the term occurs is more important in trying to determine which of these meanings is being brought into play.
(Mills, 1997, p. 3)

In the case of this thesis, it is the relationship between the discourse of the texts being examined and their ideological messages which are being explored. More specifically it is the localised ideology represented in a colonial context by the manifestation in Bali of Dutch 'Liberal' Policy. Mills describes the Foucauldian approach to discourse: "...he is interested less in the actual utterances/ texts that are produced than in the rules and structures which produce particular utterances and texts." (Mills, 1997, p. 7). She also makes the point that discourse defines and is defined by exclusion saying that:

A further aspect which all these views of discourse have in common is that they consider discourses to be principally organised around practices of exclusion. Whilst what is possible to say seems self-evident and natural, this naturalness is a result of what has been excluded, that which is almost unsayable.
(Mills, 1997, p. 12)

This idea of exclusion is of particular importance in the discourses of colonialism. As I mention in my introduction, I seek to examine these texts through a process of deconstruction. It seems that the discourses under examination in this study, do not necessarily have a fixed meaning when being interpreted, and this idea is explored in particular, in relation to the two main film texts I examine. Christopher Norris suggests that:

Deconstruction is avowedly 'post-structuralist' in its refusal to accept the idea of structure as in any sense given or objectively 'there' in a text. Above all, it questions the assumption...that structures of meaning correspond to some

deep-laid mental 'set' or pattern of mind which determines
the limits of intelligibility.
(Norris, 1996, p. 3)

It is evident that high levels of commonality exist in the interpretations of texts, but there are also differences. A deconstructive reading of the texts is likely to read them in a way which questions their own ideological viewpoint. This is characteristic of the reading I make of the various texts after a passage of time of nearly seventy years and the ideological changes which have also enabled these texts to be 'deconstructed' outside the timeframe of their origins. As Macey argues:

In his critique of the sign, Derrida introduces the crucial notion of *différance* (meaning both 'difference' and 'deferral') to demonstrate that language and meaning have no point of origin and no end: the meaning is always the product of the difference between signs, and it is always deferred by a temporal structure which never comes to an end.
(Macey, 2000, p. 86)

For instance, the European consumers of film and paintings of the time would be much more closely implicated in the texts themselves. In this sense, shared values and ideologies were, in a sense, part of the texts.

Travel literature of the period in question is a rich source of colonial discourse, and such literature about Bali has provided both information and discourse on Bali in the 1930s. As Bali became a fashionable destination for travellers in the 1930s, most accounts of travel in Asia included Bali on their itinerary. These include Gorer (1936), Powell (1930), Seton (1938), Wadia (1936), Poortenaar (1928), Clifton (1927), and Yates (1933). Some works focused on Bali alone, but many included Bali as part of a longer Asian 'grand tour'. Some of these accounts (Chaplin, 1934) include mention of the longer term residents of Bali such as Walter Spies and there are certain familiar themes which recur throughout this genre. There is a tendency selectively to idealise the Balinese, landscape, people, culture and traditions. A symptom of this is comparatively to aestheticise Bali in relation to the modern world as represented by the 'West'. The semi-nakedness of the Balinese, particularly the women, looms large in the discourse of these works (Wadia, 1936)⁴⁸, which often included photographs. In fact, these genres tended to merge into other types of writing such as anthropology, with some accounts sliding into pseudo-ethnographic treatises which eventually return to female nakedness. Many of these authors were women and intrepid female travellers⁴⁹ such as Helena Eva Yates and Violet Clifton were also not averse to commenting on Balinese nudity. In the 1930s as with today, images which might be associated with sex in the Western mind were used as a marketing tool. The first book and the most influential in drawing attention to this factor is the work by Gregor Krause (1920) which

consisted largely of photographs and attracted some of the earlier visitors like Walter Spies. These sorts of images would also have appealed to modernist aesthetes with an interest in 'primitivism'. Some of these works are larger scale travelogues like those by Seton (1938) and Gorer (1936), which cover the 1930s 'Grand Tours' of rich Europeans and often include areas like Vietnam and Cambodia, with the inevitable visit to places like the temple complex of *Angkor Wat*. Although these travel books tend to overlap greatly, it is not beneficial to generalise, as each account tends to have its own individual character and observations. Reading the various accounts does help to provide a useful picture of the impressions and preconceptions of the traveller of the period. It also shows how those preconceptions were fed through the travel itineraries and tourist products on offer to the visitors through the official tour companies who were linked with the shipping companies and official licensed accommodation like the *Bali Hotel*. In addition, there was the non-official accommodation offered by people like Walter Spies, Louise and Robert Koke, and Ketut Tantri. Works like the one by Helena Eva Yates (1933) was commissioned by the K.P.M. ; the Dutch shipping company. This is interesting in itself, as it indicates that they saw the market for tourism as being an English speaking one. This is certainly borne-out by the number of Americans in particular, who were amongst Bali's longer stay white visitors. Walter Spies also provided the photographs for another commission by the K. P. M. (Goris & Spies, 193?)⁵⁰ Others like A. F. Wadia (1936) begins a book with a dedication to the 'P & O line' (Wadia, 1936, p. 6). These accounts also have some useful descriptions which help to present the view of a transitory visitor which, although sharing certain values with the longer term residents, also differ from theirs. Some of the accounts of the nature of the artefacts on sale are very interesting and informative such as those by Yates (1933) and Wadia (1936) and I draw on these in my later discussion ⁵¹.

Travel writing about Asia in the 1930s often shares its discursive themes with fiction. Fiction has been a useful resource in writing this thesis, partly as a background source, in building up a sense of the romance linked with the Indies through story-telling. This becomes a focus in relation to Walter Spies' friend Vicki Baum's *A Tale from Bali* (1937), which I examine in Chapter 2 in relation to its discourse on the *puputan*⁵² and their results. Timothy Lindsey (Lindsey, 1997, p. 94) suggests that in Baum's novel, the character of Doctor Fabius is based on Walter Spies. I would suggest that it is actually an amalgam of Spies and Gregor Krause who was a doctor in Bali closer to the period being described (Krause, 1920). Novels by other Europeans, including *Twin Flower* (Collins, 1934) and *Outcast of the Islands* (Conrad 1896), reveal various contemporary European perspectives. Both texts gratuitously deal with inter-racial desire and then ultimately condemn it. Also by Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900), whose narrative is a

possible metaphor for, and even an influence on the way Walter Spies has been regarded as a white leader and *animateur* of the 'Indies natives'. Many of these fictional accounts are summarised in their colonial context in *Asia in Western Fiction* (Winks & Rush, 1990). I have not drawn extensively on fiction in this thesis, however, specific texts have helped to inform my overall approach in useful ways. For instance, there are some sources which articulate anti-colonial views from an Indonesian perspective in a very sophisticated way. *The Buru Quartet* (Pramoedya, 1990), *The Fugitive* (Pramoedya, 1975), and *A Road with No End* (Lubis, 1952). These illuminate an idealistic Indonesian voice fictionally contextualised in the history of Indonesia's struggle for independence. These have provided me with some extra Indonesian voices (although Javanese or Sumatran rather than Balinese), focusing on the iniquities and ambiguities of the colonial system. These texts have been useful as an alternative to Western discourse on the Dutch colonies. Not only is the colonialist and foreigner presented as a largely distant Other, reversing Western literary practices, but a discriminating acknowledgement of the uses of some Western knowledge to Indonesians is present, showing a lack of essentialisation in definitions of difference. The films Walter Spies was involved with⁵³ also provide 'fictional' narratives, the texts and discourses of which are examined. They have provided a particularly useful source, combined with their reviews, to examine the reception of these films and of Bali itself by Westerners. Examining this medium also allows the examination of shared and different narrative conventions used in visual and literary discourse on the colonies, with the incorporation of imperialist moral messages within the texts of all of the media examined in the thesis. These narrative discourses are also related to the travel literature.

Spies can be seen as a product of German modernist thinking, as well as being a product of imperialist Czarist Russia. I will attempt to demonstrate that his admiration for aspects of the Balinese culture and his interventions in that culture made him an effective part of the colonial system which attempted to re-invent traditional Balinese culture.

This thesis draws on a small, but important body of historical works dealing with Bali and the Indies. These accounts provide information which is used to help to map out the broader social and political forces at work in Bali during the inter-war period. Some of these works question the validity of idealised views of Bali and remove the romantic focus taken by so many writings. Works by Nordholt (1996) and Robinson (1995) provide material which reveals the workings and motivations of the colonial machinery which seems to highlight the social and political framework within which even the more

'bohemian' colonial residents operated. These accounts also highlight the selective awareness that the colonial residents had of issues like poverty. It helps to position the colonial residents as being very much a part of a foreign imposed colonial process, despite their attempts to see themselves as being outside it. There are other works such as *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300* (Ricklefs, 1991), which provide a broader Indonesian historical context and useful general historical background of the archipelago, tracing the development of colonial contacts with the Dutch. This perspective is brought into clearer focus by *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Vickers, 1989) This is a historical study, focusing on the social, cultural and political development of Bali over several hundred years and is supported by wide historical and cultural research. It also takes a more balanced approach than many accounts of the island. It also includes a discussion of the role of Spies in Bali's cultural development.

My approach seeks to use biography. This is to allow an examination of Walter Spies' role in relation to Bali and the Balinese and provides the background to later discussion in Chapters 6 and 7 of Spies' own discourse upon Bali and his interventions in Balinese art. I have already mentioned that this account is not intended to employ rigorous psychoanalytical analysis, however, I do examine sexual motivations in relation to colonial desire as part of contextualising the work, 'contacts' and 'influence' of Walter Spies. This approach also allows the emphases of previous biographical accounts to be questioned. I draw upon several biographical texts to provide information and to reassess aspects of the biographical construction of Spies. Overall, these works, apart from those which deal with Spies directly, provide views and impressions of Bali and the Indies from people of different backgrounds who were Spies' contemporaries and who lived for longer periods in Bali. The monopoly of biographies of Spies is largely held by Rhodius (1964) through his compendium of letters mainly from Spies and reminiscences from friends and acquaintances of Spies. This is a useful source which, although selective and biased, contains some useful primary material. There are other biographies of Spies: one is by Rhodius (Rhodius & Darling, 1980) and the other is from Spies' own time, by Kaspar Niehaus (1939 & 1941), recounting Spies' own reminiscences of his life. The work by Rhodius and Darling is a key text in informing this thesis as it is the first piece which I read about Spies and it provides useful biographical material where little published detail exists. It has also been an invaluable and rare source of reproductions of Spies' paintings. Such reproductions are almost as difficult to locate and view as the paintings themselves⁵⁴. However, despite providing some well researched information, overall, it presents a rather misleading and romanticised view of Spies. Other minor biographical accounts have also been useful, such as Carnegy (1971) and Soejima (1997) although these have largely drawn from

Rhodium (1964). Vickers (1989) and Lindsey (1997) are not primarily biographies of Spies, however, these works include useful revisionist views on the work of Spies and along with Hitchcock & Norris (1995) supply more recent accounts which provide a more emphatically post-colonial view of Walter Spies, which has helped to inform the position of this thesis.

Works of autobiography by colonial residents of Bali such as Koke⁵⁵, Tantri⁵⁶ and McPhee⁵⁷ provide a different picture of the Island which is much less superficial, effusive and romanticised than the travel accounts, for instance. However, they tend to romanticise different aspects of Bali from the travel accounts and still, to some extent, reflect the fundamental beliefs which underpinned the privileged existence of foreigners. Timothy Lindsey⁵⁸ interestingly examines and deconstructs the writings of Ketut Tantri⁵⁹ who sometimes portrays herself as more Balinese than the Balinese. This is a case of an autobiography and a biography which paint quite different pictures of the same person and period in time. Lindsey provides some alternative perspectives on Walter Spies and his colonial existence in Bali at that time. The two accounts are also useful as is the account by Louise Koke (1987)⁶⁰ in providing an impression of the inter-War period in Bali. The intertextuality of these works provides an indication of attitudes and confirms aspects of colonial life in Bali. Walter Spies receives passing reference in both accounts and is characterised quite differently in each. Spies himself only appears to have commented on Tantri in his correspondence. A sense of being a native of the Indies under colonial rule can be gained from Pramoedya's autobiographical account *The Mute's Soliloquy* (1999). Although this describes the Javanese experience rather than that in Bali, this account is also drawn upon to illustrate a largely silent 'subaltern' voice in the discourse of the Indies.

My research draws on a large number of texts which can be described as art historical but this term is rather general and needs qualification. I have already defined my own approach to this study as being post-colonial, but the majority of the art-historical texts I deal with are not strictly post-colonial in their emphasis and, in fact, some could be described as oblivious to post-colonial issues. Nevertheless, there are several which are helpful and which also take a social view of art history, expounding a historical materialist view of art in a Balinese context. Some of the works I will use⁶¹ could be described as using a 'traditional' approach to the discipline of art history by providing biographical explanations for the art of Walter Spies. Harris suggests that 'institutionally dominant art history' relies on: "...ideas and values, selective traditions and historical narratives, that is, based on monographs of mostly 'great' male artists, along with the 'dreary professional literature of formal analysis and symbol

hunting identified by Clark' (Harris, 2001, p. 9). But there are several works which are particularly helpful in providing alternative views of the work of Walter Spies, which are also not monographic in nature. The article by Anthony Forge (1993), questions the critical canon which he feels is too polarised towards Spies as *animateur*. He also highlights the Batuan school as not being part of the Ubud art scene. He acknowledges the importance of economic factors in the more organic growth of Balinese painting and this provides a helpful alternative which I use to support similar assertions which I make in discussing the notion of influence. The scope of my study, although focusing on the period which Spies spent in Indonesia, also addresses Spies' formative years and his early influences, firstly in Russia and then in Weimar Germany. This encompasses critical literature on figures like F.W. Murnau (Elsaesser, 1988) and Oskar Kokoschka (Kokoschka & Marnau [eds], 1992). Murnau was Spies' companion at the time he made *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), and Kokoschka was Spies' teacher for a while. In relation to this period, I also examine German Modernism through the writings of Frans Roh (1968), Colin Rhodes (1994) and Josef Chytrý (1989) providing insights into 'magic realism', stylistic primitivism and German Romanticism. In relation to this period I have also referred to *The New Sobriety* (Willet, 1978), *The Divided Heritage* (Rogoff [ed], 1991) and *The End of Expressionism* (Weinstein, 1990). *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (Lloyd, 1991) provides a critical account of the artist Emil Nolde, examining his motivations and thinking in relation to primitivism and exotic Pacific travel in the wake of painters like Paul Gauguin. In relation to Spies' paintings and his position as a Modernist, an account which I critically draw on is the chapter by Josef Chytrý (Chytrý, 1989) which specifically examines Walter Spies as an apotheosis of modern German thought. Although some of Chytrý's assumptions are based on flawed sources, and also he succumbs to some extent to the romanticism he is examining, there are also some very intriguing postulations about Spies' fusion of Balinese cosmology and Modernist practice into some of Spies' 'Balinese' paintings.

In terms of Balinese painting, I have used sources such as the book by A. A. M. Djelantik (1990) which provides a limited introduction to this area. However, it does not provide a balanced view of *Balinese* art, but rather leans towards the *Pita Maha* mythology and avoids the categorisation of tourist art. It seems likely that his taxonomy of Balinese paintings is based on the essay by Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980). Darling's discussion provides a better assessment of Balinese works of the 1930s and draws from some primary sources for the images it uses. These images illustrate quite effectively the transition from more traditional styles to new approaches in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The account also raises some questions about Walter Spies and the notion of influence, but without always answering them. Hinzler's survey of the

paintings from the Van der Tuuk collection (Hinzler, 1986), is particularly useful in recording and interpreting nineteenth century innovations and tendencies in Balinese paintings in a way which provides alternatives to the myth of Spies as the prime instigator of new Balinese painting. In fact, like Forge, she directly challenges some of the popular notions about Spies which have been put forward by Rhodius (Rhodius & Darling, 1980). In particular, she questions the idea that foreign influence on Balinese painting came solely and primarily from Walter Spies, but also she implies that Balinese painting was never developmentally static and that innovation was part of the artistic culture of Bali (Hinzler, 1986, p. 35, 37). This is an approach which I have attempted to follow in this thesis when looking at Balinese painting. John Stowell's paper (Stowell, 1992) does not set out to do what Forge suggests, which is effectively to take a more historical-materialist view to contextualise new Balinese art and Spies role in relation to its advent, nonetheless, he presents detailed research into the foundation of *Pita Maha*. This has been an insight which has informed some of my biographical discussion and my examination of the *Pita Maha* group.

Art historical publications concerning Spies have varied greatly from the unquestioning to more critical accounts which supply a greater acknowledgement of the role of the Balinese themselves in the cultural processes at work in Bali. Vickers' account, although a popularised history of Bali, provides some interesting revisionist perspectives on Walter Spies and other European figures who have become part of the popular history of Bali (Vickers, 1989). Other art historical studies challenging received colonial era viewpoints about Balinese painting have come from works whose focus is on Balinese art rather on Walter Spies. These accounts address the perspective put forward by Forge. These works are very informative, because of their primary sources and sympathetic attitude to Balinese cultural traditions. They are: *Reflections of Faith* (Höhn, 1997), *Images of Power* (Geertz, 1994), and *Perceptions of Paradise* (Kam, 1993). These works have largely furthered the revision of the myth of the benefits of neo-colonial paternalism symbolised and provided by Walter Spies. Astri Wright (Wright, 1994) has provided useful ideas regarding 'influence' which have also proved helpful. Her criteria for discussing influence in an Indonesian context are quoted and discussed in Chapter 7. She has challenged the idea of influence as a one-way impositional process and has addressed the notion of exchanges of ideas. She also addresses parallel developments resulting from wider social forces. There are also older accounts from Spies' era which can provide comparisons in attitudes with more modern accounts of Indonesian art and culture such as *Vries* (1939), *Kats* (1939), *Stutterheim* (1932), *Niehaus* (1939 & 1941). These comparisons can be used to illustrate elements of Eurocentric, colonial era bias and highlight mythologies which remain extant.

'Modernism' is a term which is used in a number of ways in this thesis and in particular the way that it has increasingly been linked with 'primitivism'. Graburn, an anthropologist, discusses primitive art and modern Western art thus:

They ['primitive' arts] were first seriously and widely appreciated by disaffected Western artists, who took them as a form of innovative inspiration without realizing their inherent conservatism. This is the first point where one might say that (segments of) Western society "needed" primitive arts. Perhaps this need coincided with the bankruptcy of the academic art world, and more importantly, with the increasing secularization, standardization, and industrialization of Euro-America.
(Graburn, 1976 [my brackets])

The inherent conservatism which Graburn notes is important when thinking about the way that the term Modernism has been applied to the 'para-tourist arts' (Wollen, 1993)⁶². A sentimentalised and misunderstood Eurocentric view of folk arts and primitive arts is characteristic of the Modernism which incorporates the 'primitive' in its style or content. A term like 'primitive art' is also problematic through the implication that 'primitive art' lacks cultural or indeed intellectual sophistication and engagement. Johannes Fabian states that:

When it is said that primitives are *stolid* this translates as "I never got close enough to see them excited, enthusiastic, or perturbed." When we say that "they are born with rhythm" we mean "we never saw them grow, practice, learn".
(Fabian, 1983, p. 91)

When I use the term 'Modernism', it is without this intended implication. In fact an important goal of this thesis is to acknowledge and explore 'primitive art' in Bali as a sophisticated manifestation of intellectual, social and cultural engagement, rather than as some form of atavistic self-expression which bypasses the intellect. In some cases, this engagement also takes the form of colonial resistance; In Chapters 3 and 7, I suggest that this is the case with a number of the visual examples of Balinese art. Rhodes (1994) has provided me with a source of ideas and explanations for 'primitivism' in European modernism. Drawing widely from Orientalist painters to modern primitivists, his account explores the historical precedents for primitivism including the effects of European colonial expansion. Although the focus is largely on European production it also examines the travels and motivations of some of Walter Spies' contemporaries, such as Max Pechstein. In particular, in bringing together the perspectives of writers like Linda Nochlin and Edward Said, he illustrates the illusionism of the Orientalists as opposed to the stylistic imitations of the primitivists. He

clarifies this perspective with categories like 'stylistic primitivism' and 'institutional primitivism' which have been useful in examining the contradictory position of the paintings of Walter Spies which were motivated by primitivist ideals and yet increasingly adopted the illusionism of the Orientalists, apparently in the name of a form of institutional primitivism. This is applicable to Spies as a European modernist figure with a reflexive awareness of art history. In terms of categories of art, his attraction to folk art and his imitation of it in his own work parallels the preoccupations of some of his contemporaries such as Marc Chagall. However, terms like modernism are tested when applied to new Balinese art and to an artist like Spies whose visual style can be attributed partially to being a product of imperial Europe as well as his contact with Bali and the Balinese. In Chapters 6 and 7, I explore local influences and suggest an increased conservatism and traditionalism when Spies went to the Dutch East Indies. On the one hand, he was leaving European modernism behind him, but on the other was adhering to popular modernist discourse which caused numerous artists of Spies' era to visit the various European colonies in the last days of empire and to find ways of bringing the 'primitive' into their work. In the case of the Balinese, the retrospective description of their work as modernist' implies an adoption of certain Western visual codes and this is explored in Chapters 3 and 7. *The New Art History* by Jonathan Harris (2001). questions the notion of art history as a discipline and suggests that it is actually an 'area of knowledge' and highlights greater levels of reflexivity in recent manifestations of the theoretical examination of art. In addition to this he highlights multidisciplinary as a key aspect of new art history and differentiates new art historical studies from the older traditions which he describes as the 'heroic phase' of art history. He questions the idea of the "undoubted universality of Great Art" (Harris, 2001, p. 12) and therefore also the idea of ultimate truths in art historical enquiry. In relation to this perspective, my approach addresses elements of traditional art history in analysing previous discourse promoting Spies as a 'genius' by commentators such as Rhodius (Rhodius & Darling, 1980), employing textual analysis. However, another important part of my approach is a historical materialist viewpoint, which sees the art in Bali at that time as part of a social process. By exploring and directly challenging the monographic discourse combined with a wider social and textual approach, which addresses colonial history and ideology, it is possible to refute previous impressions and to promote new ones.

My theoretical approach for this thesis derives from a sense that the way that modern or 'modernist' Balinese painting and the ways in which it has come into being, has been presented and interpreted as coming from the actions and creativity of Europeans rather than from the Balinese themselves. I explore the possibility that the quality and

integrity of much of the work is in spite of, rather than because of, the paternalistic intentions of Europeans like Walter Spies.

This account conforms to Western academic approaches, as well as ostensibly addressing a European readership, albeit one acquainted with the diversity of post-colonial theoretical debate. Therefore, although within an academic genre, it is important to regard this thesis as an account by a white middle class European male who has sought to understand, discuss and explain the meeting of visual cultures in colonial Bali between the wars. I seek to deconstruct the discourse addressed to Westerners which has tended to obscure the true nature of power, ideology, relationships, privilege and creativity which have resulted in New Balinese painting. This study has been undertaken in the hope that continuation of such deconstruction of neo-colonial discourse will enter the realms of popular culture in the same way that I propose the traditional canon of romantic colonial discourse has perpetuated the myth of Walter Spies in popular discourse. This study is best categorised as art history, dealing primarily with paintings and painters, but is multidisciplinary in terms of the sources I use and the approaches I undertake in this investigation. Certainly, my view of the texts and contexts being examined can be described as post-colonial in the ways mentioned above. Those texts range from the analytical to the descriptive, the contemporary to the modern, and the visual to the written. The analysis and the deconstruction of those texts in relation to other data I have gathered from interviews, historical accounts and correspondence, will be used to explore colonial influences and exchanges through the work and activities of artists in the inter-war Balinese contact zone.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined my methodology, theoretical approach and have summarised the key sources, both primary and secondary, which have informed this study. I have outlined the multidisciplinary of my approach which takes a post-colonial approach to art history, but also combines aspects of traditional art historical investigation with more contemporary theoretical approaches. These validate a social art history which examines the work of Walter Spies and Balinese art within a wider historical materialist framework and address ideology, power and discourse, as well as looking at monographic construction of Walter Spies' life. I have introduced some key concepts for examining the questions defined in my Introduction. I have also explored

the contestations and limitations which are inherent in the terms and concepts I have used and have clarified the ways in which terms such as 'contact zone' and 'Western' can be understood in the following chapters. The next chapter will outline and contextualise the development of Balinese painting in the context of the history of Bali with a particular focus on the colonial era. It will focus, in particular, upon types of painting, Bali's particular brand of 'cultural' colonialism, the arrival of tourism and the discourses concerning Bali which started to emerge through tourist literature which had a bearing on the way Bali, its people and art began to be viewed.

¹ In this case I use this term to refer to the close reading of texts to identify colonial and neocolonial attitudes which constitute the colonial discourse of a particular time and place. David Macey suggests the deconstruction is "...an extreme form of immanent critique." (Macey, 2001, p. 86). He suggests that deriving from Adorno "...an immanent critique uses a theory's internal contradictions to criticize it in its own terms" (Macey, 2001, p. 76)

² 'Contact zone' is a term coined by Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.

³ Details of the 10 interviews conducted in Indonesia, Germany and Holland can be found in my list of research sources in the bibliography.

⁴ I will discuss this idea later in this chapter in relation to the ideas of Gayatri Spivak.

⁵ In particular, evidence comes from interviews with Agung Rai and Ida Bagus Rai as well as the work of Forge (1993), Hinzler (1986), Geertz (1994) and Höhn (1997).

⁶ Many items used in this thesis have been translated or partially translated from Dutch, German or in some cases Indonesian. I will indicate where this has been done in the footnotes. Some of the translation work has been done by myself, but I have also enlisted the help of assistants; Joyce Middelbosch and Margot van Soest and Margaret Green, who have helped with more specific translation of the Dutch texts in particular.

⁷ The website address can be found in the appendices. This site is also on the CD accompanying this thesis.

⁸ Miyuki Soejima provided me with some of her journal articles on Walter Spies which included material from Rhodius (1964). These are largely biographical accounts of parts of Spies' life.

⁹ Diana Spies Pope supplied me with translations of correspondence, photographic prints and negatives, originating from Walter Spies' nephew Conrad.

¹⁰ Email, Stephane Husain to Geff Green, Wed 9th May 2001, "... for your info, I was in Bali recently and Spies appears to have been the one man responsible for Bali's artistic renaissance, reviving a host of balinese traditions."

¹¹ Amir Sidhartha contacted me by email on 16/07/2001 and 08/08/2001 and provided an Indonesian insight into questions relating to the influence of Walter Spies which acknowledged influence, but from Bonnet more than Spies. He also adopted the possibly Eurocentric notion of the importance of individual influence adopted by Professor Kalam which will be discussed later.

¹² David Sandberg is a great nephew of Walter Spies.

¹³ Dr Heidi Hinzler is curator of the Walter Spies archive at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

¹⁴ Plessen, Dalsheim & Spies, 1934

¹⁵ Roosevelt & Spies, 1932

¹⁶ Flaherty & Murnau, 1931

¹⁷ I was able to view a video of this documentary (Darling, 1980) at the national library of Singapore.

¹⁸ This includes writers such as Spivak, 1999; Young, 1995; Bhabha, 1994; and Pratt, 1992

¹⁹ Specifically Chytry, 1989; and Boon, 1986

²⁰ This translates as: *Walter Spies in Indonesia: along with Indonesian painters of that era* (Goethe Institute, Jakarta, 1995)

²¹ In particular, I searched for records of Spies' trial, but unfortunately ran out of time. I only found one reference to a Walter R. Spies and that was with reference to an application for Dutch naturalisation at the time of the outbreak of war.

²² This includes the letter describing the shark attack on Spies' nephew Conrad which provides an insight into the spiritual views and lifestyle of Spies and Conrad. The photographs include unpublished images of Balinese rituals and the filming of *Island of Demons*.

²³ This website has clearly been popular, as shown by the many appreciative email respondents to the site. There are copyright issues in relation to the site which I hope to resolve in the future as well as developing the site.

²⁴ This is a reduction on the original multimedia aims of the thesis, but I will seek to develop this aspect of the project as a follow-up research project possibly working with the Walter Spies archive in Leiden and their own visual database material.

²⁵ *Pita Maha* is the organisation founded to market the works of a select group of artists. It will be discussed at greater length in later chapters.

²⁶ Bandoengsche Kunstkring, 1936. The title translates as: *Collection of Modern Balinese Art and Crafts*

²⁷ An art dealer and curator of the Agung Rai museum.

- ²⁸ This artist, as well as having a reputation for being eccentric, had recently had a number of paintings stolen. It also appears that he disliked the person who took me to his house.
- ²⁹ He is a lecturer and artist at Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali.
- ³⁰ Professor Kalam's father was Soberat. Soberat has been portrayed as a key Balinese painter in accounts of Spies' influence on Balinese art. He will be discussed in Chapter 7.
- ³¹ This museum was founded with the help of Walter Spies in 1932 (Picard, 1996, p. 85)
- ³² The *Pusat Dokumentasi Kebudayaan* Bali, Denpasar (The centre for Balinese cultural documentation in Denpasar)
- ³³ These were texts such as Spruit (1995), Clifton (1991), Djelantik (1990) and Powell (1991).
- ³⁴ These questions will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
- ³⁵ Hans Rhodius is Spies' biographer, whose perspectives on Walter Spies are being challenged in this thesis.
- ³⁶ I also visited Nürnberg, Dresden, and Hellerau. In Dresden I was able to view two paintings by Spies which were held in storage. In Munich I arranged to meet a researcher who was studying Heinrich Hauser. Heinrich Hauser was a German writer who travelled with Spies to the Indies. In Nürnberg, I hoped to view the Franz Roh archive, but unfortunately the material had been bought by the Getty Foundation and had been moved to the United States.
- ³⁷ Plessen, Dahlsheim.& Spies, 1934
- ³⁸ The conference was entitled *Souvenirs, the Material Culture of Tourism* and took place at the Horniman Museum in London, 24-25 March, 1998.
- ³⁹ Goris & Spies, (this work is undated, but was certainly published in the mid to late 1930s)
- ⁴⁰ Carnegie (1971) was a conventional art historical article in 'Apollo' about the paintings and life of Spies.
- ⁴¹ Haks & Maris, 1995. This was a work which provided reproductions of a wealth of Indonesian visual material from the colonial era including some reproductions of paintings by Spies.
- ⁴² I learned to speak Indonesian when living and working in Indonesia and Malaysia in the early 1990s
- ⁴³ Niehaus, 1931 & 1941. My Dutch translators were Joyce Middelbosch and Margot van Soest.
- ⁴⁴ I also relied on some translation by Miyuki Soejima and Margaret Green (who was also my research assistant for my trip to Germany).
- ⁴⁵ Said, 1978, 1973; Spivak, 1999; Bhabha, 1990, 1994
- ⁴⁶ Eagleton, 1998, a review of Spivak's *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* by Harvard, posted on the post-colonial studies listserve
- ⁴⁷ Lewis, E. G. in Cooper, 1982, pp. 217-259
- ⁴⁸ *The Belle of Bali* (Wadia, 1936) was described by Lindsey (1997, p. 95) as an 'extraordinary nudist fantasia'.
- ⁴⁹ Yates, 1933, p. 32 ; Clifton, 1927, p. 132
- ⁵⁰ Goris & Spies, 193? (The date of publication is not included with this book)
- ⁵¹ See Chapter 2.
- ⁵² *Puputan* is the ritual mass suicide traditionally practiced by Balinese Kings, their families and retinue in the face of military defeat.
- ⁵³ *Island of Demons* of 1934 and *Kriss* of 1932
- ⁵⁴ The vast majority of Spies' paintings are individually held in private collections.
- ⁵⁵ Koke, 1987
- ⁵⁶ Tantri, 1960
- ⁵⁷ McPhee, 1985
- ⁵⁸ Lindsey, 1997
- ⁵⁹ Ketut Tantri was also known as Vaneen Walker, Surabaya Sue and Manx. She was an American citizen who was born in the Isle of Man. She ran a hotel in Bali in the 1930s, adopted a Balinese name (Ketut Tantri), survived the Japanese occupation of Indonesia and her imprisonment by the Japanese. She then broadcast for the anti-colonial forces during the Indonesian War of Independence in the 1940s as 'Surabaya Sue'. Although her life was certainly an interesting and eventful one, aspects of her extraordinarily autobiography (Tantri, 1960) have been questioned by Timothy Lindsey (1997).
- ⁶⁰ This account was actually written in 1942, but only published in 1987
- ⁶¹ Spruit, 1995 , Niehaus, 1939; 1941, Rhodius, 1964;1980
- ⁶² 'para-tourist arts' is a term coined by Wollen (1993) and discussed above. It will be explored further in Chapter 7.

The development of painting in Bali in a historical context

Introduction

The development of painting in Bali is linked with the history of the Island, as its role has changed over time with changes in political, social and religious practices. The imposition of Dutch colonialism between 1846 and 1908 has been particularly influential both directly and indirectly. New contacts have affected the varieties of work produced and the way that work has been consumed. This contact has also affected the way painting had been regarded both by those who produced it and those who bought or commissioned it. It is probably fair to say that, rather than a linear development of evolving art-forms, what occurred was a diversification of styles and media which then existed in parallel. These have catered to different 'markets' and served different purposes, but are sometimes produced by the same artists. However, during the 20th century a clearer division of labour seems to have emerged, much more similar to Western artistic practices. Thus, today, although the most visible forms of painting can be identified as 'tourist', and 'modernist' art, the more traditional forms continue to exist in a less visible form to outside visitors as part of religious ceremonies such as cremations. This division was also the case during the expansion of tourism in the period leading up to the Second World War.

A key focus of this thesis is the inter-war period and the developments in Balinese painting which occurred at this time, but these works can only properly be understood within a broader historical and cultural context. This chapter will attempt to examine the styles of Balinese painting and their development over a longer period of contact with outside influences. In doing this, the colonial policy and concept of '*baliseering*' will be introduced as a key philosophy in the development of 'Balinese Modernism'. This chapter will also introduce the alleged role of Walter Spies and the *Pita Maha* Group in creating these new forms in painting. In doing so, the importance of religion and secularisation as factors in the development and definition of Balinese painting will be discussed along with notions of the individual in this particular context. This chapter will also introduce my later debate about how certain Western viewpoints have ignored the value and values of Balinese cultural contexts. The chapter will finish by considering the characteristics of 'traditional' and 'modern' Balinese painting.

The 'Traditions' of Balinese Painting

It is often asserted ¹ that overall within Balinese culture, painting has been less valued as an art form than other forms such as sculpture, ritual structures and offerings, and dance. However, it is always difficult to accurately gauge how important any particular form is. Should it be measured through its apparent popularity at any particular time, or perhaps the frequency and scale of production, or perhaps in the way that it effectively communicates a particular, belief, idea, ideology or doctrine? Anthony Forge is clear on how he feels its value has been measured in actuality with apparent royal patronage as its measure.

When the Dutch came to look at painting, their love of aristocracy and reliance on courts had a considerable influence. In Javanese literature, painting was spoken of as an accomplishment of the learned, mainly *brahmana* priests, although an amorous ksatria (warrior) might paint his beloved. In fact in early twentieth-century Bali, painting was not practised at the courts which used paintings for rituals and to a lesser extent for decoration. Paintings were actually made by lower class - *jaba* - groups outside the palace. Painting was thus both technically and socially inferior and, with one or two notable exceptions, the Dutch completely ignored Balinese painting.
(Forge, 1993, p. 19)

This situation might suggest that the arrival of tourism could have allowed such artisans who were effectively institutionally marginalised to see new markets which were offered by tourism as a new opportunity to diversify their output and to earn cash. This in turn might have created a democratisation of the arts, through the creation of a 'revolutionary' new industry of tourist art. The later involvement of Walter Spies and Ubud's royalty to try and control the production of paintings could be seen as a way of stifling this new form and bringing it back into the model of Royal patronage ². In research relying strongly on an examination of Balinese literature, Garret Kam indicates that painting has played a part in Balinese mythology and folk tales from as long ago as the 11th century and there are many stories in which paintings play a part (Kam, 1993, p. 26). It is important to remember that the traditional supports for painting of cloth, bark and sometimes on leather tend to decay with time in the tropical conditions in a way that much of the carving and statuary does not. Thus, the lack of many examples pre-dating the 19th century can misleadingly suggest that perhaps painting did not have an important role previous to this. It is also perhaps important not to generalise too much about art forms in Bali, as there have tended to be quite marked geographical differences in cultural activities and specialisations in artistic production in

different parts of the island. It seems likely that certain areas have apparently valued and employed paintings more enthusiastically than others. The fluidity and transitions which have occurred in the Balinese political and religious structures over the centuries may well result in regions or villages which once specialised in painting, no longer doing so.

The fact that some paintings, like dance performances, are often treated as transitory evocations rather than material objects, contradicts Western ideas of paintings as artefacts with monetary investment and sometimes historical value. For instance, a painting produced for a cremation is likely to be burnt soon after its production³. In fact its destruction as part of one of the most important Balinese cultural events is actually a measure of its importance. The producer of something religious was less important than what he or she produced⁴. The humility and anonymity associated with this traditional position of the artist is in direct contrast to the 'named' artists characteristic of 'Balinese modernism'. Nevertheless, it could be argued that pictures can have a historical value in Balinese cultures in the case of *lontars*⁵, for instance, which often carry religious, mythological and literary narratives; some of these could be described as historical, although they could equally be described as mythological. However, *lontar* is a uniquely Balinese medium. Its small-scale graphical style, does not have the same visual impact of large-scale history paintings in the European tradition, for instance.

Before the arrival of the Dutch as visitors and gradual colonisers, there were many other visitors and contacts with the outside world. Garret Kam (Kam, 1993, p. 35) points out that Balinese painting has always been open to outside influence and at different times, Indian, Chinese and Javanese influence affected changes in the style. When the Dutch arrived, further new developments in painting started. It is useful to consider whether changes were due to a naïve native culture being corrupted by outside influences, or whether astute and discriminating aesthetic responses to new stimuli came from the Balinese. Perhaps it was a combination of these effects and it could well have been a series of pro-active acts by the Balinese, rather than a situation of being culturally overwhelmed by some kind of 'superior', scientifically informed and more secular artistic visual culture⁶.

A crude representation of the development of painting in Bali until the early 1940s might see it as being divided into the categories of pre-colonial, colonial and colonial-touristic eras. In each case, there were changes which prompted divergences from the previous styles and purpose to which pictures were put. During the 19th century

colonial era of Bali, there appear to have been some changes in the artistic production which was characterised by the inclusion of new visual elements in artworks, such as the representation of foreign clothes and foreigners, as well as some departures from religious themes. New materials were used, in particular paper, which started to become available to some artists. Although 'artificially' generated, as with the pictures commissioned by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson ⁷ in Batuan between 1936 and 1938, the pictures gathered by Herman Neubronner Van der Tuuk ⁸ in the late 19th century are a particularly important collection of works ⁹. These indicate the beginnings of divergences from what might be described as the more orthodox '*wayang*'¹⁰ approach to painting as represented by the *Kamasan* style ¹¹. Balinese orthodoxy in painting seems to be usually characterised by the *Kamasan* style (Djelantik, 1986, p. 11) ¹² which in turn is strongly influenced stylistically by the *Wayang Kulit* shadow puppets used in the shadow puppet performances. In her analysis of nineteenth century works produced for Van der Tuuk ¹³, Hinzler (Hinzler, 1986, p. 10) identifies distinctive stylistic differences between the *wayang* styles of north and south Bali. Like the *wayang*, the paintings in the *Kamasan* style often depicted narratives of the Hindu classics such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. What this study also does is to cast doubt on identifying a traditional *wayang* style through a geographical identifier like *Kamasan*.

An important misapprehension when discussing painting and its apparent relative unimportance in Bali is the connotations which 'painting' has had for Western consumers during the 20th century. Perhaps because 'traditional' Balinese painting did not serve a secularised Western-style art market as such, it has not been regarded as important or relevant in global art terms. Conversely, although music and dance also do not traditionally have a commercial role, music and dance have an immediacy which can capture the attention and imagination of outside observers due to their scale and visual impact which static images may not have. More financial and material resources are also invested in these art-forms. Certainly today the importance of painting could be reassessed from a Western point of view, particularly when visiting a village like Ubud where paintings dominate much of the commerce of the town.

The importance of the individual is a factor in this process, which may be very significant. This might be a ruler or perhaps a talented artisan who triggers or encourages a certain kind of activity. The idea of individuality amongst Balinese is particularly important in the misrepresentation of Balinese art as a whole ¹⁴. Although anonymity was a characteristic of much Balinese art such as the *lontars* for instance, it is important not to confuse anonymity with a lack of stylistic individuality. Hinzler has

succeeded in differentiating works by individual artists from the Van der Tuuk archive and even the names of some of these artists. There are clearly identifiable individual and stylistic regional differences between different artists in terms of their use of colour, line and iconology as well as clearly identified evidence of influence which predate the arrival of Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet many years later ¹⁵. Thus, individuality seems often to be portrayed as a marginal factor in Balinese art in the Western discourse of Bali. However, during the 1930s there also seemed to be a desire amongst tourists to find individuality as well as anonymity in items of art or craft in order to validate their own choice in buying them. This seems to relate to the idea of the hand-made craft object as the antithesis of mass-produced identical items, which are the result of Western industrial processes. So, at the same time as not wanting to elevate the individual as a creator of 'art' or the artist with an individual identity, individuality is sought from the object despite the artists themselves being expected to be anonymous.

There are seldom two of these images alike or, for that matter, of any hand-made thing found in Bali. Everything is originally designed, and as the workmen make up their ideas as they go along, each object made is a definite expression of the individual.
(Yates, 1933, p. 39)

This is clearly a case of a travel writer projecting her own preconceived desires onto her experience of tourist production, which she later admits is the result of mass production. Her discourse seems to arise from the received 'Orientalist' views commonly held about Bali in the 1930s by outsiders. ¹⁶

Balinese art has always had rules, conventions and formalities. Many of these may not seem to have changed much for hundreds of years. In fact, there have always been changes, even if these cannot be regarded as revolutions in a Western modernist sense ¹⁷. During the 20th century these changes were accelerated and did become something of a revolution, partly due to the widening of the parameters of what could be considered as 'painting' amongst the Balinese themselves. Linked to this, is the changing concept of the artist as a named individual who is not merely an anonymous spiritual extension of what he or she produced. However, as is clearly indicated in Hinzler's research, this 'revolution' had already started in the 19th century. The revolution also did not result in fundamental changes in traditional practices, which were maintained in parallel with the new forms.

The first arrival of the colonialists

Dutch colonialism of Bali was imposed in a number of waves and, in terms of conquest, began in the 19th century with the occupation of the northern part of the Island by the Dutch between 1846 and 1849¹⁸. For over fifty years the rest of the island was largely left alone by the Dutch.

One particularly important figure in recording and perhaps stimulating the two-dimensional art of the 19th century is Herman Neubronner Van der Tuuk lived in Bali between 1870 and 1894. He was involved in intense academic study compiling a Dutch to Balinese and *Kawi*¹⁹ dictionary. The dictionary was not finished but is still highly regarded as a fastidiously accurate and carefully researched record of the Balinese language²⁰. He is an example of a member of the colonial establishment 'going native' while still successfully working under the Dutch colonial system²¹. He worked for the Netherlands Bible Society on the translation of Bible texts into native languages, but it appears that this was ostensibly a way of being funded to pursue his own interests; ironically, he was vehemently anti-Christian²². During his time in Bali, towards the end of the 19th century and probably 30 years before Walter Spies arrived there, he made a collection of pictures, which he commissioned various artists to produce. These artists came from all over Bali and their paintings are an invaluable record of the styles and subject matter of various artists. They reveal a variety of quite distinctive styles and visual approaches as well as sometimes taking note and commenting on the elements of the modern as they occur (**fig. 1**)²³. The artistic output represented by this collection also contradicts the somewhat narrow idea, which is sometimes propagated in relation to Walter Spies, that painting was stagnating, directionless and in a state of crisis²⁴ when he arrived in Bali in 1927. The collection also forms the basis of Heidi Hinzler's previously mentioned discussion of style, innovation and influence in the context of earlier Balinese culture and visual practices²⁵.

In subject matter, the works in the collection vary from mythological representations to images recording everyday activities. It is also possible that the act of producing work for Van der Tuuk could have suggested new ways of working to these artists. A superficial Western view without knowledge of Balinese iconography and mythology might regard the works as being very similar in style and content. But this is an incorrect view, as Hinzler (1986) indicates from her identification of different artists through style and content as well as through records of some of the artists. Difficulties which Westerners, in general, have must be due to a set of visual and iconographic

reference points familiar to practitioners and consumers in one culture, but not to the other. Western viewers often do not have the specific reference points to judge what the works indicate about individual artistic style and innovation. This lack of discrimination on the part of foreigners is probably one of the reasons that specifically new styles and approaches in art developed to appeal to the Western tourist market during the 1920s and 1930s ²⁶.

When comparing the works in the Van der Tuuk collection, the differences in individual style is quite marked. Perhaps to the 'uneducated' Western eye, such pictures seem similar or even the same and that is because the individuality is expressed within certain boundaries, rules and conventions. This makes the small changes even more subversive, creating an impact that is not simply based on a culture which celebrates and dictates change ²⁷ or the commercial mechanics of fashion which might exist in a Western oeuvre. The Western critical eye is a modernist one which, when assessing change, often looks for newness rather than nuance; that is, newness in conception or form, rather than newness through nuance. By contrast, when regarding 'traditional' works, the Western view tends to essentialise artefacts, assuming stylistic and temporal stasis.

The colonisation of southern Bali and the mythologising of conquest

It was not until the early part of the 20th century that the Dutch took the opportunity to take control of the southern states of Bali. An important reason for their occupation was that the Balinese trade in opium was unwelcome competition to their own lucrative opium trade based in Java at that time ²⁸. However, it appears that the Dutch felt they needed a pretext to take possession of these regions. Finally, an opportunity for occupation was presented to them in 1904, when a Chinese ship the *Sri Kumala* was shipwrecked off the shore at Sanur in south Bali. It was then looted by the local people, as was the custom, because its cargo was regarded as a gift from the gods ²⁹. This resulted in the Dutch invading the south, which ultimately led to three *puputan*, a royal suicide in response to military defeat. According to tradition, when faced with imminent defeat and occupation of their nations, the royal family would engage in *puputan*. The result of this is a combination of suicide and massacre. This would also include the deaths of their entire extended families, which included retainers, servants and slaves. This was undertaken dressed in their finest clothes and in confrontation with the opposing armed forces. The first two *puputan* were at Denpasar and at Pamecutan in 1906. The other came two years later in 1908 at Klungkung. Not every royal family engaged in *puputan*, although it was a predictable outcome based on what had

happened several years earlier in Lombok. The King there was defeated after the Dutch invaded Lombok in 1894³⁰ and also conducted a *puputan*.

These suicidal massacres had enormous attention paid to them as an important historical turning point in the recent history of Bali and a whole system of discourse surrounds this event which is often used to contextualise Dutch colonial position and policy subsequent to this. There are fictional accounts and so-called eye-witness accounts³¹, and they vary quite dramatically in their emphasis, viewpoint and ideology. This event has come to luridly represent the clash of cultures and apparent exotic backwardness of a culture, which through the lens of Western paternalism, seemingly had to change in the 20th century and yet paradoxically also be preserved. It helps to characterise the Balinese as irrational and therefore childlike in engaging in apparently futile and even petulant self-destructive acts.

For a thousand years the history of the island is a series of wars and heroic episodes that reached a dramatic climax only thirty years ago when the Balinese made a desperate but futile last stand against a modern army.

(Covarrubias, 1937, p.26)

Accounts of the *puputan* vary and often contain their own in-built ambivalence, on the one hand, rebuking the Dutch conduct in precipitating such a massacre and looting, but on the other, romanticising the event as an inevitable clash of cultures and a necessary act of spiritual cleansing.

Did I not see the cross-road where, in 1908, Dewa-Agong and his wives with their children, thirty or forty people, came out before the Dutch soldiers. They were defeated, they could fight no more; their lovely hand-wrought swords were powerless against guns, so they stood in the road, and they cast in front of the blue-eyed soldiers jewels and silks. "Take these but shoot us first," they cried. The men of Holland could not do that, so, amid the jewels and silks in the dust of the road, the royal men and women killed their children and then they stabbed themselves.

(Clifton, 1927, p. 132)

In her *Tale of Bali*, Vicki Baum, the popular pre-war novelist, Hollywood screenwriter and friend of Walter Spies, portrayed the *puputan* as being a necessary spiritual purge, which was a tragic but inevitable and cathartic act of fate, which therefore needed to be accepted fatalistically by both the Dutch and the Balinese.

"They don't utter a sound," the General said thoughtfully, without taking the glasses from his eyes. Van Tilema was on a chair behind him, smoking hard and looking very white. "They have a sort of bravery and pride we shall never be able to understand," he said wearily.

"No pleasure to us to have to fire on such fellows," the General said, "but if we hadn't they'd have made short work of our men. They were mad."

"The holy madness," Visser said from behind. He had been promised the post of Assistant resident of Bali for his services and because his native spies had done such good work. He felt sick at heart.

"Do you remember taking me to that kris dance, Visser?" Van Tilema asked. "I believe they were in a trance to-day, too, to behave as they did. I even believe they were glad to die."

"Let's hope so," Visser said curtly. Boomsmer, who was near the General, cleared his throat. "I shall never be able to understand it," he said, "women and children-and old men, it's too horrible to be believed."

Van Tilema turned to him. "It's a lesson to us all, Resident, how we ought to treat the Balinese. Hats off to such a death as theirs."

(Baum, 1937, pp. 453-454)

...He was glad to beat the gong in the gamelan and to discuss the weighty village affairs with the other men, and to thatch his walls with fresh straw; and he was glad to rest and glad that the war was over. His children were dead and his father had been killed; but his heart was filled with a contentment the white man does not know.

(Baum, 1937, p.458)

These romanticised and ideologically distorted accounts of events ten and twenty years earlier contrast with that of the artist W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp. He was in South Bali at the time and speculated correctly, as evidenced by the two writings above, that the Dutch would try to turn it into a "heroic defeat" ³². It appears that this was the case, with Dutch officials characterising the military action as necessary to restore order and to remove tyrannical despots for the good of their people ³³. The fact that these people were subsequently taxed and forced to work for the Dutch on road building and other projects shows enormous hypocrisy in these various degrees of literary justifications. It appears that the corpses and palaces of the dead were looted by the Dutch soldiers as well ³⁴, and this version of events contrasts somewhat with Baum and Clifton's views quoted above. It is clear that Baum and Clifton and others were reaffirming the status quo of their own time when colonialism 'for the good of the natives' was an accepted norm.

In Bali, after the *puputan* were over, those rajas and princes who had already signed treaties or who had made other pragmatic decisions to survive and manoeuvre a position for themselves under the Dutch, remained, although within a much changed power structure.

They were made puppet regents, responsible to the government for the behaviour of their subjects and for the payment of taxes, which they collect through relatives whom they appoint as chiefs, *pungawa*, of the districts under their control. Each regent is, however, supervised by a Dutch controller, who is supposed to act as his 'elder brother' and whose orders are called recommendations.

(Covarrubias, 1937, p.26)

The Dutch decided to allow the co-operative princes and kings a degree of autonomy and even allowed a symbolic restoration of their titles in 1938, although this was very much part of a controlled restructuring of Balinese society with the colonists in control

35.

The *puputan* also prompted a backlash amongst European and colonial liberals³⁶ and part of the Dutch reaction to this was to create policies which apparently granted these states partial independence and attempted to fossilise an idea of the culture of Bali through their *baliseering* policy, or Balinization of Bali.

Thus not content to merely shelter the Balinese from outside contacts, the orientalist and colonial officials undertook to teach them how to be authentically Balinese. This was the objective proclaimed in the policy effected in the 1920s known as "the Balinization of Bali" (*Baliseering*). Specifically, its aim was to make Balinese youth conscious of the richness of their cultural heritage through an education that emphasised the study of their language, literature and traditional arts, all the while discouraging any improper expressions of modernism. (Picard, 1996, p. 20)

This issue of the impropriety of modernism and the modern in a so-called traditional society is a key discussion in this thesis³⁷. In fact, Walter Spies actively supported the introduction of the *baliseering* policy by the Dutch in the 1920s³⁸. This policy which grew from the well-established 'Liberal' policies which arose in the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries³⁹ sought to preserve Bali as a kind of living museum. As Robinson argues:

As cultural policy, Baliseering entailed the reintroduction of "traditional" styles of dress, architectural forms, dance, and rules of speech. According to the Dutch authorities, Balinese ought to wear "Balinese" clothes; modern construction techniques, no matter how practical or desirable to those who used them, were determined to be aesthetically "bad," and therefore to be avoided; Balinese (not Malay) language was to be encouraged and the strict observance of its status marking code enforced as adat law. In the context of this state-sponsored "renaissance" of Balinese culture, the wearing of pants by men or the kebaya (Javanese blouse) by women became a subversive act. The use of the inappropriate level of Balinese language or the use of Malay was seen by government authorities as a brazen act of resistance and was punishable in the Raad van Kerta.

(Robinson, 1995, p. 49)

As a by-product of this policy, tourism was targeted, through the creation of a preservation zone or regulated human 'safari park'. This tourist development can be seen to have started with the establishment of an official tourist bureau in 1914⁴⁰. It is probably worth noting that, although a sense of guilt and international pressure might have been partially responsible for the Dutch decision to market the island for tourism, the decision was also fundamentally commercially driven. This economic imperative follows the pattern of all colonial expansion and this manifestation of the Dutch 'ethical' policy was, to some extent, a way of assuaging liberal guilt and outrage at the same time as dressing economic policy up as being in the best interest of the natives. The existence of a traditional caste system and its streamlining by the Dutch was a key tool in this largely disingenuous experiment in social engineering to re-create an unthreatening version of the 'traditional', as they saw it.

This Dutch idea of 'preservation' and 'protection' by separating the different groups in society in a hierarchical manner has the same roots as the apartheid of modern South Africa.

(Vickers, 1989, p. 93)

Baliseering involved the enforcement of a policy designed to preserve traditional Balinese society, but in fact remodelled the political, social, religious and cultural practices of the Balinese based on the ideas of Dutch ethnographic scholars like Roelof Goris and Frederick Albert Liefdrick⁴¹. The policy needed to expedite Dutch control and, ironically, it accelerated cultural and social change in Balinese society to a degree not previously seen on the Island. It also laid the foundations of the social structures which characterise modern Bali. Before occupation, the caste systems and hierarchies,

as well as the way particular religious practices were followed, varied throughout the island and tended to develop and change organically with political change. This all changed as the Dutch introduced standardised traditions and roles for the castes based on a rigid colonial interpretation of *Triwangsa* and *Sudra* ⁴² as a division between rulers and ruled amongst the Balinese themselves. Many who had had status previously lost it and some, who had little status gained more ⁴³. The majority of poor farmers, however, remained poor and the despotism of their rulers, which had been used as one of the excuses for occupying Bali, was replaced by new obligations. Under these, the poor had to pay land taxes and work on the road network which was then built on Bali.

The royal families benefited, accumulating great amounts of land during the 1930s in particular ⁴⁴. This was due partly to the inability of the Balinese to pay taxes during the depression when they could no longer fetch a good price in Dutch currency for selling their goods such as pigs and copra. This need for money often resulted in the selling of land. This poverty can also be linked directly to the increase in activity creating artworks for the tourist market during the 1930s.

Although some writers crudely cited the Dutch invasion of south Bali and the *puputan* as one of the direct causes of new developments in art ⁴⁵, some sought to diminish its overall cultural importance. This might relate to a romanticised appeasement of Dutch policy rather than an objective assessment of what was happening in terms of Balinese culture and society. This seems to be the case with de Zoete's assertion.

The Dutch occupation of Bali, only completed in 1906, in a tragic episode known as poepoetan, 'the End' has made culturally even less impression...
(de Zoete & Spies, 1938, p.2)

In some ways, de Zoete is right. It is the political and ideological fallout from that event in the context of Dutch colonial administrative philosophy, which created the possibilities for changes. In fact, even without *puputan*, the other Dutch imperatives and expediciencies seem likely to have yielded similar cultural results. Therefore, the *puputan* can be seen as a symbolic focal event, something rather more identifiable than the more nebulous causal effects of Dutch colonialism on the development of tourist art in Bali. Also, as the literature indicates, the *puputan* story, however it was portrayed, added an exotic pathos to the appeal of the island to tourists. It provided a focus to the way Bali itself was portrayed to the outside world, therefore priming the

cultural expectations of visitors to an exciting and irreconcilable contact with the exotic Other.

Babi Expres: Baliseering and the Arrival of the Tourists

The creation of the *baliseering* policy resulted in the notion of Bali as a living museum. The subsequent arrival of the visitors to that museum - the tourists of the 1920s and 1930s - can largely be seen as the results of colonial policy-making. This policy-making was based on economic calculations. It is notable that Bali was not particularly suited to the kind of factory farming which was undertaken on Java and Sumatra and so tourism seemed a viable economic alternative. It is interesting that the first tourists arrived on a regular ship collecting pigs and other goods bound for Singapore known as the *Babi Expres* or *Pig Express* ⁴⁶.

Tourists started to arrive in around 1914 and the numbers steadily increased from this date until the outbreak of World War II. The island's adoption by bohemians like Walter Spies occurred from the 1920s, particularly in the wake of the photo-book by Gregor Krause (1920). The number of tourists was relatively modest compared to today's numbers, although numbers increased dramatically during the 1930s. In 1930 there were an estimated 100 tourists per month, whereas by 1940 there were 250 ⁴⁷. Walter Spies arrived in 1927 and like other artists he stayed for longer than the short tourist visit envisaged by the architects of *baliseering*. Indeed, Spies went on to become something of a tourist attraction himself, despite not being Balinese.

Bali's new road network which the Balinese peasants were forced to work on would have been created ostensibly for the purpose of Dutch mobility and military control, but it also served the tourist industry very well.

We made good time over the excellent Dutch roads, craning our necks to see the beauty on all sides. The roads are a surprise to travellers; they are well built and hard surfaced - no wonder the Dutch are proud of the five hundred miles of roadway they have built in Bali. In the old days, one could travel only on a slow jogging pony over the hills. This might be sport for a day or so, but hardly good going for several weeks. So we appreciated those good roads.
(Yates, 1933 , pp. 30-31)

With the arrival of tourists, first in Singaraja in the north, later in increasing numbers in areas of South Bali such as Sanur and the official Dutch Bali Hotel in Denpasar, came

the demand for souvenirs. It was to satisfy this tourist market, as well as to fuel another product of colonialism, taxation, which created a new demand for cash. This, in turn, led to the production of artworks for sale. It seems, at first, that this market was dominated by three-dimensional artefacts such as silver-work and wood-carvings, with the Balinese quickly identifying what was popular with tourists and starting to produce on an industrial scale.

Patimah started life again, married a thrifty Arab, and learned the business of buying and selling. At first, she happened to sell a few of her own silver trinkets when visiting travellers offered her enormous prices for them. Realizing that tourists were a ready market for Balinese handwork, she gathered young men and women craftsmen around her, and developed the silver industry in Singaradja. To-day, it is a thriving business and Patimah employs hundreds of workers. As the industry grew, she opened shops and working quarters in different sections of the island. And all her craftsmen were encouraged to use the original designs of their own district.

(Yates, 1933, p. 25)

This trade seems to have been co-ordinated by entrepreneurial individuals both Balinese and foreign. Patimah is described as being married to a "thrifty" Arab, the questionable implication of this account being that her entrepreneurial skills could not have come from her traditional Balinese background and that Arabs are by nature 'thrifty'. In the south of Bali, paintings were sold by the Neuhaus brothers ⁴⁸ and J. A. Houbolt ⁴⁹ and possibly others. This commerce seems very much at odds with the type of cultural activity supposedly imposed by the policy of *Balinisation*. Indeed, a text by Roelof Goris and Walter Spies aimed at tourists and sponsored by the K. P. M. ⁵⁰ is sharply critical of this output.

Unfortunately during recent years, silver trinkets are offered to the tourists, such as silver corks, powder boxes, sweet dishes etc. But these have no actual artistic value. Everyone is of course free to buy what he wants, but we feel it our duty to warn people not to buy these objects, for two reasons, which are closely connected. Firstly in the interest of the tourist himself, who probably thinks, that he is buying real specimen of Balinese handicraft, whereas he actually receives an article of mass production and of little value.

Secondly, in the interest of Balinese art it is obvious, that in order to meet the demand for these trinkets, the silver-smith has to neglect his real handiwork. Furthermore, the original Balinese products are no longer made or only on a much smaller scale,

which in fact is against the interest of the purchasing tourist.

(Goris & Spies, 1930s, undated and unnumbered)

At first glance, this idea might seem quite laudable, but this statement is couched in terms of the benefit to the tourists rather than to the Balinese. It also makes assumptions about what is 'real' in this context and what has 'artistic value' and to whom this is supposed to have artistic value. It is also worth noting that the trinkets are mentioned before paintings in this account. This indicates their relatively greater importance in the market for tourist artefacts. These paintings are characterised as canvases with 'traditional' subjects.

The painted canvases are also worthy of mention. They can be divided into two groups. The first group included the colourful scenes from the great epics namely the *Wiwaha*, the *Bhoma* or the *Rama* story. The second group included astrological calendars (*palalintagan*) on which the week days are shown in seven rows of five with corresponding constellations, birds and sacred trees.

(Goris & Spies, 1930s, undated and unnumbered)

This description of canvases is curious, as it clearly excludes the work on paper which characterises new Balinese painting under discussion in this thesis. This could be because Spies and Goris saw the new art as non-traditional and not as a tourist product. It might also be because this book was produced in the early 1930s before the existence of the Bali museum or before *Pita Maha* was founded. It certainly clearly characterises the discourse which informed the founding of *Pita Maha* which could be seen as a way of formally separating the new art from the traditional ⁵¹. Yates, whose account was also produced for the K. P. M., seems aware of Dutch policy or at least is employing the romantic and 'liberal' discourse it is based on. She is at pains to stress the notion of the maintenance of localised vernacular design traditions. In fact, it is questionable whether this travel writer knows enough about Balinese artefacts to make such an assessment, which, in terms of its focus on mass-produced goods, is certainly at odds with Goris' perceptions of tourist artefacts, as needing to be hand-crafted ⁵².

As the 1920s proceeded, it is clear that paintings started to be produced along similarly industrial lines. These paintings, for the first time, were designed to address a remote and very different cultural group; the Western visitors. Consequently, new developments and innovations in Balinese paintings appear to have been instigated to satisfy this market. However John Stowell (Stowell, 1992, p. 20) maintains that Roelof Goris denied there was a link to tourism. It was this mass production and the perceived

lack of quality which caused Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet, Gusti Nyoman Lempad and Cokorda Raka Sukawati to intervene, through the instigation of the *Pita Maha* group ⁵³. The Foundation of *Pita Maha* was based on an opinion amongst expatriate residents like Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet that unfettered and unmediated development was a threat to traditional art-forms and that some measure of 'quality control' should be introduced. This brief introduction in the mid-to-late 1930s of a regulated, organised and documented structure has come to be synonymous in modern popular Balinese tourist discourse with the development and influence of Balinese art ⁵⁴. It tends to ignore other less well recorded aspects of the art market in Bali. For instance, the fact that the Neuhaus brothers had a disagreement with *Pita Maha* ⁵⁵ and continued to sell works directly themselves without the endorsement of the *Pita Maha*. This was also the case with J. A. Houbolt who seems not to have subscribed to *Pita Maha's* approach or philosophy ⁵⁶. There were probably also numerous other less official outlets for artworks, as there are today with individual artists and peddlers selling works on the street in places where tourists can be found. After all, poverty was widespread during the Depression and artists who were not of the 'calibre' of those adopted by Bonnet and Spies also had to make a living.

In terms of *baliseering*, the development of these new styles is paradoxical, because the new Balinese visual and cultural manifestations often were seen not to conform to many of the characteristics of Balinese 'traditions', which might have been desirable under the new administrative philosophy. More specifically, the new artistic developments which arose in the arts and crafts in Bali, also clearly run counter to the idea of a cultural fossilisation implied by the 'ethical' policy of *baliseering*. They tend to reflect 'modern' influences in terms of visual characteristics and commercial intent. The 'contact-zone' occupied and mapped through new visual styles can be seen as a Balinese artistic construction designed to reflect the cultural dissonance sought by tourists and symbolised by the *puputan*. Interestingly, the potentially subversive literal depiction of the *puputan* themselves only surfaced as subject matter for Balinese painters long after Indonesia's independence (fig. 2). ⁵⁷

Another possibly significant new issue raised by the development of these new forms in painting is one of the new functional divisions between commerce and tradition. Nordholt makes an interesting point about how the imposition of *balinisation* upon the Balinese created a new distinction for the Balinese between the secular and the religious in the way their lives were organised.

A distinction, that was completely new for Bali, between 'religious' (or 'adat') and 'secular' (or administrative) authority now made its appearance, never more to be dispelled.
(Nordholt, 1986, p. 32)

This appears to be important from the point of view of painting, as this new imported concept is key to the acceptability of the production of works of art outside the religious and ritual contexts they had until the era of colonisation. Art was no longer 'life' and began to have a commercial acceptability. Nordholt (Nordholt, 1986, p. 37) later extends this idea to assert that religion and ritual, were always linked to hierarchy and political power. Thus, by decoupling art from religion, art could also be released from hierarchy and political power, allowing a new freedom of expression for a more commercial market. A new, more 'modern' Balinese artist was born who was no longer 'anonymous' and was no longer simply a spiritual conduit for religious art. However, commercialism has its own hierarchies, which will be demonstrated in my later discussion of *Pita Maha* ⁵⁸. However, Djelantik (Djelantik, 1986, p. 2) suggests that, to these artists, everything had a religious or ritual purpose, even apparently secular and mundane subjects such as 'everyday life' ⁵⁹. When viewed in this way, clear divisions between secular and religious are perhaps not so easy to make. Nevertheless, the argument for a new role for the 'named' artist in a more democratised, less hierarchical context is a compelling one and will be discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to the attempted imposition of new hierarchies by the *Pita Maha* group.

The characteristics of 'traditional' and 'modern' Balinese painting

There are a number of genres which emerged in the 20th century in Balinese paintings which can be added to the more traditional approaches which existed before. The addition of new styles through more international artistic influences, along with the intermixing of older ones means that the categories of Balinese art have continued to diversify throughout the century. The categorisation of Balinese painting has tended to be associated with geographical areas like Batuan and Kamasan ⁶⁰. This seems to be a reflection of the relative isolation of different communities from one another in the early part of the 20th century, which meant that rather different parallel and sometimes divergent developments occurred. However, as the 20th century progressed this isolation largely vanished and therefore such geographical distinctions can only be used as general guidelines to style. The connecting factor of all these styles is their demand by a tourist market. However, not all output was designed for tourists and some paintings were produced for ritual or religious consumption only. These have

always tended to be less visible to the outsider, as they are by nature temporary, especially those used in cremation ceremonies.

The styles in the 1920s and 1930s varied and it is sometimes difficult for Westerners to categorise particular works as shades of variation existed between what might have been regarded as archetypes of 'modern' Balinese painting. This is complicated by the fact that different markets existed. What was apparently 'traditional' art could be in demand from certain groups of tourists, just as work which was apparently tailored to the marketplace was influenced stylistically by 'traditional' aesthetic ideas and reflexes. It is fair to say, however, that a dominant theme in relation to this artistic output is a sentimentalised, stylised and idealised representation of idyllic rural and ritual life on a tropical island. Much of the work lacks motifs of modernity, which were already present in Bali in the inter-war period ⁶¹.

Djelantik (1986) identifies four main styles. Djelantik's taxonomy comprises: the classical Wayang style, the *Pita Maha* painters of Ubud, the *Pita Maha* painters of Batuan, the young artists of Penestanan. This categorisation is rather limited in scope and exemplifies the common limitation of projecting modern trends backwards in time and focusing on the geographical region of south Bali. This makes it rather too tidy to properly encapsulate the diversity of modern Balinese painting, nor does it tell the whole picture about art during the 1920s and 1930s. The focus on the *Pita Maha* increases the distortion by implying, quite directly, that Walter Spies had a decisive influence on all the work produced in Bali. This is symptomatic of the causal and, at times, almost Eurocentric approach taken by Djelantik. This is somewhat ironic, as Djelantik is himself Balinese. This illustrates the theoretical problems in taking an essentialist and 'Othered' view of Balinese opinions. This is particularly the case in the modern Balinese artistic context where colonial, anti-colonial and postcolonial discourses have become mixed and have cross-fertilised or even nullified one another with the passage of time and commerce. One result of this is the commonly perceived view of the importance of Walter Spies which appears in a number of accounts and will be explored more fully in Chapter 4.

Although Djelantik's taxonomy represents a useful starting point, what is notable about these categories is the geographical proximity of these locations. They represent a very small area in central southern Bali and thus are not necessarily representative of the whole of Bali as is suggested by this list. Interestingly, these regions are within the areas which encounter the greatest concentration of tourists. Before tourism, only the *wayang* or *Kamasan* style supposedly existed and therefore if this taxonomy is correct,

a direct correlation can be drawn from the emergence of the new styles and the rise in tourism in this particular area. What is also notable is that the last three styles represented here are all attributed directly (and sometimes questionably) to the influence of European *animateurs*. This represents the orthodox view on the development of Balinese painting and the presence of foreign influence.

The *Kamasan* or *wayang* style of painting (**fig. 3**) can be seen as representing the foremost traditional style of painting in Balinese art. This style is highly formalised and it is very difficult for Western viewers to identify the individual artist who has produced the work. This is due to what might appear to be a very clear standardisation of visual language, which dictates the form it takes. These works have a limited palette of traditional colours and tend to depict subjects from Balinese myth, religion or history. This style is largely figurative and is sometimes described as the *wayang* style which refers to the visual similarities between the style of depiction of the figures in the paintings with the leather shadow puppets of the *wayang kulit* ⁶² theatre performances. The figures are normally depicted in three-quarter view. There is a strongly graphic quality to the works which are drawings as much as they are paintings, with figures mapped out in outline, sometimes intertwined and interrelated in quite complex ways. Elements of nature are dealt with in even more formally symbolic ways than the figures. Spatially, there is no real use of perspective, with a flattening of the picture plane very much like the *wayang* theatre. Various shorthand symbols are used to depict elements like clouds and air, making these even less naturalistic than the human figures and making them something of a decorative (in a western sense) as well as symbolic element in the overall composition.

It is noteworthy that this style itself, although often taken as archetypal, is characteristic of the style of a locality. Therefore, it can only be regarded as an approximate measure of a traditional orthodoxy. Hinzler (Hinzler, 1986, p. 10) points out that the *wayang* style in the nineteenth century varied between north and south Bali. This problem is at the heart of the idea of a preserved culture in the context of the *baliseering* viewpoint, as it is only a superficial view that can successfully homogenise a particular style as having fixed visual and thematic characteristics. The geographical factors as well as those deriving from individual styles which are easily identified by various artists themselves, are actually important moderating factors, when examining the idea of development or change in an art-form over time. The examples from the Van der Tuuk collection are useful in illustrating this ⁶³. Nevertheless, even with such a generalised approach, particular trends do become apparent and they appear to be a product of the contact

and 'influence'. Arguments about influence⁶⁴ have often focused on the so-called *Pita Maha* painters of Ubud.

Pita Maha entered into mythology as 'the time between the wars', giving its name to the whole style of painting and carving which had come into being during 1931, and which still persists and is recognised as the specifically 'Balinese' modern style, as distinct from 'international' or 'academic' painting. (Stowell, 1992, p. 50)

These artists followed a style which supposedly resembled the work of Walter Spies and later Rudolf Bonnet. The works of the painter Anak Agung Gede Meregeg (**fig. 4**) provide an example of this rather broad style. The works produced in this style are said to follow the theme of 'everyday life' and can be seen as epitomising the conventions of tourist art as seen in Bali. Although this style has clearly departed from the 'traditional' styles of depiction, there are still traditional elements in the work: for instance, the figurative and narrative nature of the work and the way that the entire composition is treated with a decorative graphical intensity. The figures are rather more naturalistic than the *wayang* style with a certain amount of modelling. There is also some use of perspective landscape albeit somewhat distorted. This style also appears to have dispensed with some of the more symbolic visual language used in traditional works. This shows a more 'modern' and perhaps more literal mind at work, or at least one mindful of 'visual language' comprehensible to European tourists. The nature of this visual - linguistic adaptation and the degree to which it is attributable to the work of European interpreters or *animateurs* is questionable and will be discussed at greater length later ⁶⁵.

The style of the so-called *Pita Maha* painters of Batuan is distinctively different (**fig. 5**). The *Batuan* style is characterised by a dark brooding quality with strong decorative patterning and the use of contrast of dark and light. This is even stronger in terms of graphical intensity than the works by *Pita Maha* artists. The early paintings were almost always monochrome and subjects varied from mythological themes to scenes of 'everyday life'. Such scenes usually focused on ritual. These works can be seen as being closer to the traditional in this sense and this might be because of the types of outside contacts, in terms of artists and tourist buyers, which these artists had. They were in a more remote area than Ubud artists, for instance. One notable contact was Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson who stayed in the village and commissioned works from these artists. These paintings constitute a significant body of what are seen as the defining works by this group of artists. The group includes artists like I Ketut

Ngendon, and Ida Bagus Madé Togog. It is worth noting that not all Batuan artists can be easily connected with *Pita Maha* and so this is an unnecessarily exclusive and somewhat misleading name for this category. However, as the 1930s proceeded, quite a large number exhibited as members of *Pita Maha* ⁶⁶.

It is also useful to identify more recent developments in Balinese paintings, although they will not be the focus of this study. Perhaps the most identifiable of these are the *young artists* of Penestanan which is just outside Ubud. They represent a more recent post-war development which could be described as a kind of European fauvist primitivism which is attributed to the artist Arie Smit, who has lived in Penestanan for many years. It is an unashamedly conscious effort on the part of this artist in a post-war post independence environment to directly influence and tutor local painters in a modernist style after his own. It is unclear whether he felt he was modelling himself on Rudolf Bonnet and Walter Spies, but the results of his protégés provide an interesting measure in highlighting the degrees of influence which can be imposed through specific schooling. On this comparison, Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet would appear to have had quite a limited influence on the style and approach of local artists ⁶⁷.

Djelantik's categories are neat, but to some extent deny the syncretism and individuality of many artists; they focus on *Pita Maha* and conform to the European idea of modernist 'schools' of painting. This is perhaps not surprising as the *Pita Maha* operated a Europeanised gallery system. In fact, there are stylistic shades which exist between these categories of painting. There are also individual artists who cannot be seen to closely conform to these categories either, such as the *Sanur* painters. In addition to Djelantik's taxonomy, there are other categories which are sometimes used and these further address the cosmopolitan nature of art produced in Bali this century. Some of these are also associated with particular areas. The *Keliki* school can be seen as a subset of the *Kamasan* school. The style follows the older *Wayang* style and differs only in small ways, such as the size and shape of the pictures. The *Sanur school* is a style of painting which developed at the same time as the *Batuan* style and is often characterised by an almost repeating design of similar elements. The picture plane is flattened and the figures are usually particularly 'naïve' in style. Artists like Ida Bagus Soenia and I Poegeg (**fig. 6**) worked in the Sanur area. These artists seem to have been more likely to sell their work through dealers like Rolf and Hans Neuhaus.

During the inter war period, there were still also a great number of non-Balinese artists like Walter Spies (**fig. 7**), Rudolf Bonnet (**fig. 8**), Adrien Le Mayeur de Merpres (**fig. 9**) and Willem Hofker (**fig. 10**) who lived and worked in Bali. There were also numerous

less well known amateurs such as Ketut Tantri and Louise Koke. Within this grouping, there is a wide variety of styles although largely and in varying degrees, they all tended to create a romantic, sentimental, exotic, 'Europeanised' fantasy view of Bali with a particularly figurative focus on a selective and 'othered' view of Balinese landscapes and the Balinese.

Summary

This chapter has sought to contextualise my overall discussion, through introducing the history and types of Balinese painting in relation to the colonial history of Bali; in particular, the significance of the *puputan* as a symbolic event has been discussed. Also, the subsequent 'balinisation' of Bali has been explained in terms of colonial attitudes and events. In particular, this account has focused on the inter-war period with the arrival of tourism and the economic imperatives which appeared as a result of taxation and the subsequent expansion of a Balinese cash-dependent economy. I have introduced ideas about individuality, the individual artist, and anonymity as aspects of Balinese art and craft. This is clearly a key question in examining the reception of native artworks and artefacts by Westerners and the clear contradictions which existed have been examined. Issues of authenticity and attitudes to the 'real' have been raised and these will be explored in Chapter 6. In addition, I have also examined the notion of religion and secularism as a new and important conceptual divide in Balinese art and society at that time. My account has discussed the nature of the discourse which informed tourism and also the ideologies and events which helped to create Bali as a tourist destination. The development of reactionary discourse in relation to perceived mass production of tourist artefacts has also been explored and I have explained how this triggered the inception of the *Pita Maha* group. In addition to this, the chapter has provided an outline of the styles of new art which arose. I have questioned the degree and nature of influence upon Balinese painting which came from Walter Spies and this discussion will be developed in greater detail in Chapter 7. The specific nature of the paintings categorised here will also be discussed in terms of their conventions of codification and their development in the next chapter. Most of these questions will be revisited in greater detail in later chapters and questions regarding the specific nature of influence and exploitation in this colonial context will be explored as well as the nature, basis and results of the European aesthetic and primitivist discourse. Walter Spies' own life, work and position in his colonial context will also be examined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in order to clarify his relationship to the Balinese, Balinese art and to look at his role as a 'displaced' modernist.

¹ Picard, 1996, p. 84; Forge, 1993, p.19, Djelantik, 1986, p. 7

² This will be more fully discussed in Chapter 7.

³ Interview, Ida bagus Rai, August, 1998

⁴ Interview, Ida bagus Rai, August, 1998

⁵ A *lontar* is a palm leaf manuscript where Balinese text and illustrations are etched onto the leaves and bound together.

⁶ This idea will be developed in the next chapter.

⁷ Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson were two anthropologists who made extended studies in Bali. They were husband and wife.

⁸ Van der Tuuk was born in Malacca and was half Dutch and half Malay. He was a very gifted scholar and linguist. He had a reputation for being eccentric and temperamental.

⁹ These works are extensively described, illustrated and discussed by Hinzler (Hinzler, 1986)

¹⁰ 'Wayang' refers to the 'traditional' style of painting whose representations of characters resembled the leather 'wayang kulit' puppets used in the Balinese and Javanese shadow theatre performances.

¹¹ Kamasan is a small town in South Bali which also gives its name to the 'traditional' style of painting which was associated with that village.

¹² Kamasan is the village which has been geographically and historically located as a centre of production for paintings in this *wayang* style.

¹³ Van der Tuuk was an unorthodox scholar who worked for the Netherlands bible society in the late 19th century. Amongst other things he commissioned and collected paintings by Balinese artists. This will be discussed in greater detail shortly.

¹⁴ Hinzler, 1986, p. 34

¹⁵ Hinzler, 1986, p. 37

¹⁶ These views will be more closely examined in later Chapters 3, 6 and 7.

¹⁷ The notion of modernism in relation to Balinese paintings will be discussed in Chapters 6 & 7

¹⁸ Ricklefs, 1991, p. 134

¹⁹ Kawi is the traditional script used to write the Balinese language

²⁰ Beekman, 1988

²¹ As Van der Tuuk was born in Malacca and was half Dutch and half Malay, the idea of his 'going native' in this instance can be seen as a figurative notion of cultural transformation rather than as related to ethnicity.

²² Vickers, 1989, p. 85

²³ This issue of modernity in Balinese art will be discussed in the next chapter.

²⁴ Ramseyer, 1986, p. 240

²⁵ Hinzler, 1986

²⁶ This will be explored further in chapter 7.

²⁷ See the discussion on 'modernism' in chapter 6

²⁸ Ricklefs, 1991, p. 135

²⁹ Picard, 1996, p. 19

³⁰ Ricklefs 1991, p. 135

³¹ Covarrubias, 1937; Clifton, 1927; Baum, 1937; Nieuwenkamp, 1906

³² Nieuwenkamp quoted in Spruit, 1995, p. 17

³³ Robinson, 1995, p. 25

³⁴ Spruit, 1995, p. 16 ;Picard, 1996, p. 19

³⁵ Nordholt, 1986, p. 40

³⁶ Hitchcock, 1995, p. 22

³⁷ This will be explored at greater length in chapters 3, 6 and 7

³⁸ Robinson, 1995, p. 48

³⁹ Ricklefs, 1993 , pp. 24-25

⁴⁰ Picard, 1996, p. 23

⁴¹ Vickers, 1989, p. 93 ; Nordholt, 1996, p. 280

⁴² *Sudra* were the lowest 'farming' caste who formed the majority and the *Triwangsa* were the three upper castes of *Brahmin*, *Satria* and *Wesia*.

⁴³ Nordholt, 1996, pp. 234-238

⁴⁴ Nordholt, 1986, p. 43

⁴⁵ Taylor, 1991, p. 21

⁴⁶ Vickers, 1989, p. 91

⁴⁷ Vickers, 1989, p. 97

⁴⁸ Hans and Rolf Neuhaus were German entrepreneurs who had an aquarium and shop in Sanur and sold Balinese art and artefacts to tourists.

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- ⁴⁹ Stowell, 1992, p. 41. Houbolt was a Dutch art dealer who sold artworks to European and American tourists. He was often at odds with Spies. "...according to Spies, he went around protesting loudly about his tireless efforts in selflessly promoting Balinese art while at the same time exporting rubbish, and even hiring craftsmen to modify works to accommodate his idea of what the tourists wanted."
- ⁵⁰ the KPM were the *Royal Dutch Steam Packet Company*
- ⁵¹ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.
- ⁵² Goris & Spies, 1930s, undated and unnumbered
- ⁵³ *Pita Maha* and 'Balinese modernism' will be discussed more fully in chapter 7.
- ⁵⁴ Reader & Ridout, 1996, p. 136
- ⁵⁵ Stowell, 1992, p. 44
- ⁵⁶ Stowell, 1992, p. 41
- ⁵⁷ This kind of exclusion of particular types of subjects or motifs and their cultural and political significance will be discussed in the next chapter.
- ⁵⁸ See Chapter 7
- ⁵⁹ 'everyday life' will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.
- ⁶⁰ See map (fig. 69)
- ⁶¹ See the next Chapter
- ⁶² *Wayang kulit* is the Javanese and Balinese shadow theatre using puppets made from leather.
- ⁶³ Hinzler, 1986, p. 10
- ⁶⁴ See chapter 7
- ⁶⁵ See chapter 7
- ⁶⁶ Pita Maha, exhibition catalogue, 1936
- ⁶⁷ This will be explored more fully later in Chapter 7.

The Modern in Balinese Art

Introduction

In the 1980s, some Balinese painters such as Wayan Bendi and I Madé Budi started to make apparently new departures in their approach to the representation of Bali.

Although stylistically these paintings did not differ greatly from works in the *Batuan* style which had preceded them, they did represent an important change from the norm¹. These artists had started to represent elements of the modern in 'paradise' and they were breaking unspoken 'rules' which had yoked the output of many painters for a great number of years. This chapter will examine the way in which the creolisation of the language of tourist art tried to exclude references to the modern and how the 'pidgin' of Balinese tourist painting is sometimes defined by what is excluded as well as that which is included.

Despite their occasional occurrence in carvings and puppets for instance, motifs of the modern are very seldom seen in Balinese or Europeans' paintings from the time Walter Spies spent in Bali, right through to the present day. This convention also characterises the work of Walter Spies himself. This omission seems strange and is worth examining as a palpable symptom of European attitudes towards the Balinese. A great proportion of those pictures depict Balinese landscapes populated with Balinese people. These figures always appear to wear traditional Balinese clothes; they shun the use of motor vehicles or mechanical agricultural tools; they always appear to be happy in their work and there is no sign of any foreigners².

This chapter discusses why this should be, through examining the art works themselves in relation to Western discourse on the modern in this Balinese colonial context. The discussion examines the objectification of people and landscapes as remote visual representations and examines the irony of the use of a greater realism of visual style in a Western sense while at the same time, being less realistic in what it actually observes. It investigates whether this representational convention has always been in the ascendancy, or if in fact there are factors at work which define this apparent selectivity. I examine whether this is a product of the way that the Balinese have seen themselves and if this is so, whether this view derived and was 'learned' from Westerners. Conversely, I also discuss whether this view represents the inverse of the Balinese view and is in fact a purely, commercial approach which is designed to create a product catering for the expectations of an external audience. I will consider

whether it might even be regarded as subversive in its apparent ignoring of the presence of colonialism and tourism and has thus come to represent to the Balinese a wish to be rid of foreign interference.

In examining the conventions which often dictated the themes and styles of new Balinese painting in the 1920s and 1930s, this chapter will examine in particular some of the other works which break these 'rules'. Although these art works could be regarded as minor aberrations and of no real significance, this chapter will demonstrate that in fact these 'aberrations' are significant in clarifying the way in which Balinese artists have, from an early stage, assimilated new visual stimuli into their work. This has often been done without the limitations of Western notions of codification of landscape as 'traditional' for instance. By looking at motifs of the modern, the 'rules' which deny the modern in the majority of paintings produced in Bali this century will be highlighted. This discussion continues and develops the themes which were discussed in the previous chapter.

This is not an exhaustive account of occurrences of motifs of modernity in Balinese art, but it represents a survey which demonstrates a geographical span which covers a much wider area than that focused on in most studies of Balinese art, and painting in particular. The works have also been produced over a long time span stretching from the mid 19th century to the Second World War. These representations record aspects of the long history of contact between the Balinese and Europeans and show in particular, an interest in technology used by the visitors and an aestheticisation of that technology which involves the incorporation of such motifs into more traditional visual codes.

The conventions for Balinese paintings

Aside from the debate about who or what might have been the catalyst for the various changes in styles of painting in Bali, what has remained constant in this artistic output is the presence of a set of conventions which appear to govern the different genres of artistic production. It is probably inadvisable to try and define immutable rules to describe Balinese art, especially as this would indicate a fixity which negates the possibility of flexibility and development which has undoubtedly been a part of Balinese art over time. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the scope of the paintings in terms of style and subject matter increased dramatically in the 20th century with a great deal of this change coming in the first 40 years. This period has often been characterised as a

rebirth of artistic activity after a long period of stagnation³. The notion of stagnation is a questionable idea which depends on how Balinese artistic activity is framed. Even when focusing only on painting, stagnation is a debatable notion, which depends on the imposition of European models of artistic production and consumption. Change did in fact occur, but its beginnings appear to have preceded the arrival of Walter Spies and other cultural *animateurs*⁴.

To talk about absolute rules which have been formally inscribed, seems inaccurate, but it is worth examining what these unwritten 'rules' are and what they might represent in terms of the production and consumption of Balinese art. A key element is the exclusion of items of the modern world of the colonisers. Geertz suggests that:

One of the defining requirements of tourist art, which all the Batuan picture makers followed faithfully, is that it show only a traditional world. Ngendon's and Tombelos' pictures, like all the paintings from Bali of this period, and indeed like tourist art around the world, strikingly avoid western objects such as cigarettes, Western shirts, and automobiles, which were in fact, even then, seen everywhere in Bali. A strong taboo against any sign of modernisation is evident in these pictures, a taboo which held until the late 1980s.

(Geertz, 1994, p. 17)

Geertz goes on to suggest that there is a:

...widespread but unstated taboo in tourist art against non-traditional subjects. The Balinese recognised that the outsiders didn't want to see themselves or the modern things they were bringing to Bali in the pictures they bought.

(Geertz, 1994, p. 99)

Hildred Geertz is unusual in pointing this fact out and this is an indication of how deeply entrenched this visual code has been, both in the minds of foreign visitors and the artists who have created works for them. This chapter focuses on the rarity of modern motif as an exemplification of the codes being employed by the Balinese in these new forms of painting. As part of this discussion, other distinctive and definitive aspects of this artwork will be discussed. Thus, it is useful first to examine specifically what the rules of style and representation are in order to map out the discursive parameters and structures of this type of art. They could be defined as follows:

- The works can be described as 'naïve' or 'primitive' in style and subject matter.

- They are designed to appear to be 'traditional' in style. The appearance of 'authenticity' is required.
- Authorship is not particularly important and anonymity is often preferred.
- Erotic fantasy features as an element or subject of some works; there is a strong focus on female nudity.
- Scenes of 'everyday life' are depicted. However, this is a mythologised life which does not pay attention to any notion of contemporaneity or social realism.
- Mythical scenes are often depicted.
- The time frame of the works appears to be a pre-modern one which does not include technology or products of the modern age.
- There is a strongly detailed decorative quality to the works which often focus on costume, flora and fauna.
- Perspective tends to be flattened.
- There is an equal intensity of detail applied to every part of the picture plane.
- Many of the works are small and therefore portable.

Some of these rules such as the depiction of nudity, can be regarded as aspects of content, while others are aspects of style, such as the intensity of detail. Some of them can be attributed more directly to the traditional styles of artistic production in Bali such as the 'decorative' component, lack of perspective and equal intensity of detail. It is also important to note that it is unlikely that all of these elements occur in every picture, but most occur in most pictures. The picture by Ida Bagus Kembang (**fig. 11**) could be described as naïve' or 'primitive' in a Western sense and this is partly due to the lack of perspective and the 'decorative' quality with the semi-abstract depiction of flora. The decorative quality has an equal intensity throughout the picture without any particular focus or compositional artifice in a Western sense. The 'primitive' or non-naturalistic quality to this work provides the suggestion of the 'authentic traditional' art desired by Western consumers. The subject could be described as 'everyday life', but with a particular focus on the nudity associated with the bathers. This everyday life is selectively narrow excluding Western clothing or other products of contact which existed in Bali at this time.

The view of a tourist consumer of this art which conforms to the rules above, is well represented by Harold Forster from his account of his visit to Bali in the 1950s:

Personally, I preferred the simpler, decorative scenes of Bali life or legend, which would remind me of the sunlit dream-world without the disturbing mysteries beneath the surface.
(Forster, 1958, p. 158)

Forster alludes to the fact that there might be a darker side to paradise, but he is intent on ignoring this for the sake of satisfying his chosen perception of Bali as a 'dream-world'. The 'rules' of Balinese tourist art are designed to help him with this.

It is notable that the more secular output of Balinese artists also has a long tradition of reportage and direct, unselfconscious observation of new visual stimuli. It is interesting that this unmediated observation appears to have largely vanished between the early part of the 20th century until the 1980s and this disappearance coincides with the reconstruction of Balinese identity and self image, which was originally instigated through the introduction of *baliseering*. However, as with many other curatorial exercises, it involved articulating the concepts of the constructors and their desire to impose a rational set of rules, rather than accepting the contradictions and inconsistencies which developed in a more organic way and which characterise real life in a society. Robinson argues that:

The 'traditional' Bali so admired by travellers and scholars alike is a historical fiction, a product of political calculation and conservative political objectives. The popular image of 'traditional' Bali as a 'last paradise' has been perpetuated and exploited by a series of governments, both Dutch and Indonesian, and by political parties and leaders with an interest in preserving the status quo, or in creating an entirely new 'tradition' more suitable to their personal, political, or class interests.
(Robinson, 1995, p. 304)

Thus, there is a political dimension to this approach to painting. As well as being seen as a response to tourist demand, these rules are intertwined with an expression of the political orthodoxy of constructed 'traditionalism' which was introduced through *baliseering*. This has, to some extent, been perpetuated by post-colonial governments in Bali during the 20th century. Connected to this formalised orthodoxy of the pre-modern, is the Balinese' own attitude towards the modern which might result in a more inward looking view on life and culture ⁵. It is easy to assimilate foreign ideas and motifs when these are sporadic curiosities of visual interest. However, when these elements start to proliferate, they might then be seen as a threat to cultural identity even if no exact self-awareness of cultural identity exists. This adherence to these 'rules' can therefore also be seen as reactive and even reactionary on the part of the artists and could be seen to satisfy a need on their part, as well as those of an external consumer. Margaret Mead suggests that such an orthodoxy was imposed by the Balinese themselves and while 'experimenting', clear rules were being followed.

There is no heavy taboo in Bali against a woman if she wishes, or a man if he wishes, practising the special arts of the other sex. But painting in Bali has been a male art. When a gifted little adolescent girl in the village of Batoean, where there were already some sixty young men experimenting with the modern innovation of painting on paper, tried a new way of painting - by setting down what she saw rather than painting conventional stylized representations of the world - the boy artists derided and discouraged her until she gave up and made poor imitations of their style. (Mead, 1950, p. 336)

What is less clear is how much their visual parameters were a response to the market, to a natural progression from the 'traditional', or to the traditionality suggested by Spies, Bonnet or Mead. It needs to be remembered that such conventions of tourist art, do not represent traditional practices and are, in fact, a product of hybridity. Bhabha associates this cultural or aesthetic hybridity with what he calls mimicry and suggests that hybridity is an inevitable product of contact which represent a complex exchange of ideas and results from the ultimate ambivalence of colonial authority.

Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114)

These discursive produced 'rules' did not apply only to paintings, but also to the way that Balinese landscapes themselves were visually consumed. Disappointment is evident from foreign visitors when tin roofing and European clothing are encountered in these landscapes. Conversely, there is often an expression of delight when the modern appears to be absent which in itself is an indication of the prevalence of the modern in Bali. In the limited palette of accepted motifs of tourist art therefore, is the implicit suggestion that a particular way of life is desirable. As well as reflecting tourist tastes and preoccupations, these 'rules' constitute a discourse which exerts pressure: a model of expectation for the Balinese themselves to conduct picturesque lives. This can be seen as a neo-colonial discursive continuation of the subjection of the Balinese through the *baliseering* policy of the 1930s. It could also be seen as a manifestation of the 'epistemological violence' ⁶ discussed in Chapter 1.

The discourse concerning motifs of modernity in Balinese art

Motifs of modernity are a repeating theme in Balinese art over a long period of time and these can be seen as part of the modern tradition of representational art in Bali.

Despite their relative rarity, they are significant in revealing the limitations represented by the codes commonly adopted by the new painters in Bali such as Ida Bagus Kembang (**fig. 11**). These codes cater to the art consumers' love of Western-mediated fantasy over reality. The Balinese were clearly less interested in this type of fantasy and if unconstrained by an awareness of Western tastes, would often incorporate the modern along with the 'traditional'. Hinzler describes a nineteenth century North Balinese image from the Van der Tuuk collection.

A group of musicians and onlookers is depicted. The former are members of a club as can be seen from their uniforms. All except one man wear the same type of European jackets and hats. They do not look Balinese. It is possible that the artist wanted to make a joke and depicted an orchestra consisting of foreigners and, at the bottom side, even a foreigner in a trance stabbing himself.
(Hinzler, 1986, p. 191)

Almost as interesting as the motifs of modernity themselves is the way that over the years foreign visitors have chosen to draw attention to these apparent aberrations from the 'traditional' norms of Balinese art. W. O. J. Nieuwenkamp (in Spruit, 1995), Geoffrey Gorer (1936), Miguel Covarrubias (1937) and Beryl de Zoete (De Zoete & Spies, 1938) have all mentioned or recorded these sights. They are noticeable as they do not conform to a set of similarly held preconceptions about Bali which relate to its own modern mythology as the 'last paradise' ⁷ with all the connotations of Arcadia ⁸ this notion held. Such comments can be seen as part of the overall thinking which regards the people themselves and their landscape as picturesque. The rules of the picturesque in this instance can be traced back to the original coinage of the term in relation to the works of artists like Claude or Poussin whose works sought to depict historically removed, 'classical' and pre-modern landscapes ⁹. Elizabeth Bohls mentions:

...three founding assumptions of modern European aesthetics: the generic perceiver, disinterested contemplation, and the autonomous aesthetic domain. Canonical eighteenth century aestheticians like Hume, Burke and Kant were heavily invested in the possibility of one generalizable model of aesthetic reception. They tried to standardize taste by constructing an unmarked position - a subject whose aesthetic judgements would

count as universal, who would have the authority to judge for everyone. But their own texts reveal the subject in question as actually quite specific in his social location, as we saw, for example, with Hume. Implicitly or explicitly, theorists set stringent qualifications of gender, rank, and ethnicity for the "man of a polite imagination," the "true judge of taste."

(Bohls, 1995, p. 204)

Djelantik does not deal with the curious lack of the modern or the 'real' as motifs in any of the new styles, but he does offer an idea which provides one explanation of the apparent Balinese acceptance of the convention of ignoring the modern at this time. He draws a link with the *wayang* style which the Batuan painters had originally adhered to.

What they as dancers performed or as spectators perceived in dance and drama was for them much more 'real' than what they saw in daily life, because of the intensity of the experience. It is therefore not surprising that in Batuan many still adhered to the traditional *wayang* style and took subjects from *wayang* stories and Hindu mythology or from medieval drama, while those who wanted to paint people in worldly surroundings resorted to themes from popular folk tales and fables.

(Djelantik, 1986, pp. 36-37)

Although this is a valid and astute observation about Balinese views of realism, this notion is problematic, as it has the disadvantage of appearing to try and characterise this artistic output as something which these artists are creating for the consumption of the Balinese community alone. Although it could serve as a partial explanation for the subject matter of these works, it does not consider the outside demand of the tourist market for these subjects.

Hildred Geertz (Geertz, 1994, p. 18) agrees that many of the works of the Batuan artists express very much an internal world. Therefore, in that context, the apparently anachronistic resorting to myth and mythologising, which does not include overt reference to the modern, would not be surprising. However, in these works there is the implicit suggestion that through the powerlessness that these artists felt in a colonial situation, they were commenting on the experience of modernity under a colonial regime by invoking the spirit of the past when kings were spiritually powerful and physically invincible. In other words, this can be seen as a way of psychologically dealing with the colonial situation and therefore not just the empty repetition of traditional motifs and myths for the tourist audience.

To illustrate the ready adoption of new themes and subjects in Balinese art it is useful to look beyond painting and to examine other areas of the plastic arts. One of the earliest examples of the representation of outsiders in southern Bali is the statue of the Dutch sailor in Klungkung at the law courts, which was recorded by Geoffrey Gorer in a rather poor photograph (**fig. 12**). This is probably one of the earliest examples of this type of representation. It looks from the dress of the sailor to have been made some time in the 19th century, at a time before this region was colonised by the Dutch. The law courts provide a relatively secular setting for this non-religious depiction of a foreign subject. Gorer is clearly interested in this exception from the 'normal' subjects of Balinese stone masons and, despite his overall sentimentalisation of Balinese spirituality in his writing, he appears to show an awareness of the validity and reality of the syncretic in Balinese art and life. For instance, Gorer comments on a film he saw about the Khmers of Cambodia which shows quite a cynical and yet perceptive view of the 'rules' about viewing non-Western peoples.

My chief curiosity in watching the film was as to how the photographers had avoided taking pictures of tourists, cars and motor roads.
(Gorer, 1986[f.pub.1936], p.173)

He has clearly identified a Europeanised artistic code at work, which also parallels that in the films I will discuss in Chapter 6. This way of looking is important when examining the adoption of this code by Balinese artists.

W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp is often regarded as the first foreign artist to record Bali. He did so on a number of trips, the first of which was in 1903. On his last trip in 1937, he recorded (**fig. 13**) a frieze on a wall of the *Meduwe Karang* temple near Singaraja, which was supposedly a Balinese depiction of himself on a bicycle on one of his earlier trips. It is described by H. Paulides as "the remarkable carving of the old Dutchman on a bicycle in relief." (Paulides, 1940, p.175). Paulides mentions this in the context of discussing the incorporation of foreign influences by the Balinese into their art. He goes on to say that the Indonesians are born artists for the creation of ornamental decoration, and although the intention of this comment is probably to compliment and ennoble the Indonesians, it casts them within stereotypical boundaries of the objectified noble savage ¹⁰. To say that art is in their blood, even if characterised as simply a turn of phrase, is a condescending generalisation. The way that this carving is represented as remarkable and different also fits into the discourse of aberration which is constantly applied to works falling outside Western ideas of the 'traditional'.

The cyclist is an interesting work, as earlier pictures differ significantly from Nieuwenkamp's own drawing which matches with the way the picture looks now (**fig. 14**). The image now looks much more like an Asian figure on the bicycle, there has also been an introduction of more decorative elements such as the lotus flower for the back wheel. It appears that the original was partly destroyed in the earthquake of 1917 and later restored before Nieuwenkamp revisited Bali in 1937. Earlier photographs (**fig. 15**) show the cyclist as being much more clearly European and overall, the depiction is much more descriptive. It is interesting to speculate why this work was restored and why these changes were made to the original design. The changes could indicate an agenda of *baliseering* through the semi-disguising of the specific characteristics of the bicycle as a foreign mechanical object and also the loss of the European features. This *baliseering* could be seen as a way of concealing the European-ness of the figure and the bicycle in order to exoticise the image and to make it conform to the Europeanised visual-linguistic code which ignores and conceals the penetration of Bali by the outside world. It is likely that this was already something of a tourist attraction when it was damaged and that is why it was restored. It is therefore possible that, in fact, contradictory factors were at work at the same time and that its novelty-appeal for tourists was the combination of the 'traditional' combined with the modern, while the artist in renovating the work, was trying to partially conceal the modern, in accordance with the orthodoxy of tourist art and *baliseering* traditionalism.

On the same trip, Nieuwenkamp also recorded a structure (**fig. 16**) which was a replica of a K.L.M. aeroplane. It appears to be outside a temple, but it is unclear what its exact purpose was. As with the depiction of the cyclist, it combines objective formal observation with traditional decorative motifs and, in each case, there appears to be an aesthetic appropriation of a borrowed form which is incorporated into a traditional setting. There is clearly a fascination with the technology of flight and the proportions and shape of the biplane seem to be carefully observed. It is debatable whether the incorporation of Balinese motifs is provided to make the image acceptable within Balinese visual tradition or whether it constitutes the partial adoption of foreign visual expectations of the traditional. As this is a temporary structure, the former is more likely. It is possible that this aircraft image is included for fun, but it seems that most humour in Bali has a critical dimension ¹¹. However, what is most notable is the incorporation of this foreign machine into what appears to be the context of a traditional ritual. Unfortunately, there appears to be no record of the artist or architect in either the case of the cyclist or the biplane. However, there is an account of a paper funeral

structure which sheds a little more light on the possible origins of this picture and the date correlates with that of Nieuwenkamp's drawing as well.

...We went to Tabanan, a town north-west of Denpasar, for one of Bali's famous cremations. This one was for the wife and daughter of the Raja of Tabanan, who had died some months before.

When we arrived, two huge white towers taller than the highest coconut palms stood side by side on the town green. Each had eleven tiers - the maximum possible - denoting the high caste of the dead, and each was encrusted with paper and cloth trimmings, artificial flowers, masks and mirrors. On top of one was impaled a large, clumsy aeroplane made of white paper - one of those rare and fleeting foreign touches.

(Koke, 1987, p. 63)

Nevertheless, this account is not entirely congruent with Nieuwenkamp's picture and so suggests that this was not an exceptional case, but one which was copied more than once. Other aircraft images which suggest more decorative functions exist as well.

Hitchcock ¹² illustrates an example of a house on the Island of Sumbawa, decorated like the fuselage of a plane, supposedly influenced by a flying boat which visited regularly in the 1930s (**fig. 17**). There is clearly a fascination with Western technology and this probably, in turn, equates with power and an evocation of that power.

Artistic anonymity also characterises the nearby *Pura Dalem* temple at Jagaraga (**figs. 18, 19, 20**) which has a profusion of modern references to aspects of colonial occupation. This is the nearest any of these works come to providing a historical record, as it has much more of the narrative character associated with older Balinese Hindu visual traditions. This is the piece of work ¹³ mentioned by Beryl de Zoete in her introduction to *Dance and Drama in Bali* (de Zoete & Spies, 1938).

The Dutch occupation of Bali, only completed in 1906, in a tragic episode known as poepoetan, 'the End' has made culturally even less impression, though a sculptured divinity rides a stone bicycle on one temple frieze, while on another a gaping peasant watches an aeroplane hurtling from the sky, and an old-fashioned car-load of *rakshasa*, (hindu demons) dressed as Europeans, spread death along the road. We owe it to the tact and intelligence of a handful of Dutch officials devoted to Bali that the impact of a civilisation far more alien than any she had yet assimilated had been so light.

(de Zoete & Spies, 1938, p.2)

As well as applauding cultural separatism, she appears to infer that these motifs of modernity represent an amusing aberration and have no serious place in Balinese art. Although she is clearly fascinated by these representations, they paradoxically challenge her value system and she expresses her disapproval through her apparent relief that somehow representatives of the colonial regime are working hard to discourage and suppress the introduction of such visual and cultural 'impurities'. She makes the mistake, highlighted by Geoffrey Robinson, of diminishing the psychological effects of the colonial occupation, by implying that these are the only manifestations of what had sometimes been a brutal encounter between the Dutch and the various Balinese kingdoms.

The image of a harmonious, exotic, and apolitical Bali gained wide acceptance in the late 1920s, when Dutch colonial power in Bali was at its height and the restoration of Balinese 'tradition' had become a central feature of a conservative Dutch colonial strategy of indirect rule. By the 1930s, the bureaucratic memoranda of Dutch colonial officials had, with a tedious uniformity, begun to describe the people of Bali as more interested by nature, in art, culture, and religion - dance, music, painting, carving, ceremonies, festivals, and so on - than in 'politics'. (Robinson, 1995, p. 6)

De Zoete also implies that there is a connection between the *puputan* and these works, as though the *puputan* was the only notable conflict between the Balinese and their colonisers. This is immediately belied by the geographical dimension to this equation. These carvings are in the north of Bali, while the *puputan* were in the south. It is much more likely that the visual stimulus came from more local observations and concerns.

Expressions of the oppression and brutality which occurred during colonialism were often hidden. This is exemplified by one solitary doodle on the back of another work by Dewa Ketut Baroe (**fig. 21**) which depicts a Dutch soldier beheading a Balinese holy man. It appears not to be intended for public consumption, as it was found on the back of another more 'conventional' image. Thus, it clearly must fulfil some other purpose. Perhaps it records the artist's own visual experience or possibly something related to him by someone who witnessed such an event. Even if it does neither of these things it seems to articulate an interesting symbolic representation of an attempt at empowerment in the face of the colonisers, where violence and conflict is exemplified. The work was highlighted by Hildred Geertz who points out that one can only speculate as to the purpose of this work.

We cannot really know what psychological processes may have been at work, or what personal associations have been drawn together into each of these pictures and stories.

(Geertz, 1994, p. 99)

Nevertheless, the significance of this work cannot be discounted or ignored, particularly when viewed in combination with other depictions of conflict and the modern. Geertz (Geertz, 1994, p. 99) points out the interesting possibility that the normal ignoring of foreigners in Balinese paintings could express a denial of their existence or relevance. Although Geertz does not see this idea as proven, she does clearly believe it to be likely.

The idea that this violent scene (and the pictures that do not explicitly show westerners) could be covertly expressing wishes for eviction of the foreigners is, to me entertainable but in the end cannot be substantiated.

(Geertz, 1994, p. 99)

Hitchcock ¹⁴ has commented that the Balinese were better treated than the Javanese, for instance, as a result of the policy of *baliseering*. He relates Duff Cooper's opinion that it was royalty rather than the *jaba* ¹⁵, who felt the impact of colonialism. He also rightly points out that many, from the time of Stamford Raffles (in the early 19th century) onwards, expressed admiration for the Balinese and their culture. However, this is only a relative situation, when one considers factors like corvée labour and taxation which was imposed on the Balinese and the resultant economic pressures which arose in the 1930s. ¹⁶

Case Study: The Temple at Jagaraga

The profusion of carvings mentioned earlier depicting the modern at Jagaraga, is a key piece of Balinese visualisation which is worth more extensive discussion and description. Miguel Covarrubias describes the carvings quite differently from Beryl de Zoete and his prose is characteristic of the sweeping generalisations he often makes, based on individual observations.

The north Balinese take their temples lightly and often use the wall spaces as a sort of comic strip, covering them with openly humorous subjects: a motor car held up by a two gun bandit, seen undoubtedly in some American Western in the movie house of Buleleng; a mechanic trying to repair the breakdown of a car full of long-

bearded Arabs; two fat Hollanders drinking beer; a soldier raping a girl; or a man on a bicycle with two great flowers for wheels.
(Covarrubias, 1937, pp. 185-186)

Although he does not resort to the romanticised prose of de Zoete, this superficial view of the work continues the dismissal of the modern as inferior and insignificant in this particular context. The notion that any group of Balinese take their temples lightly is symptomatic of the notion of the simple and happy native and is questionable, to say the least. The metaphor of the comic strip is also inappropriate, without a better understanding of the particular context and spirit in which the Balinese created and perceived the work. It is unlikely, for instance, that a scene of rape is intended to have a comic purpose. Even if that is the case, that is unlikely to be the *only* intention. There is likely to be a more serious underlying statement or meaning as is often the case with humour.

The carvings cover two long stretches of the outer temple wall on either side of temple gateway which faces West onto the main road into the village. There are interesting combinations of mundane scenes of everyday life and the dramatic. They could even represent traditional stories through the use of new motifs. Another possibility is that the bas relief was created purely to attract tourists and therefore their money to the village after the interest in the cyclist in the nearby temple of Meduwe Karang. However, it would be careless to assume the content of these friezes to have no intended narrative or symbolic meaning. Unfortunately, the carvings are damaged, through a combination of weathering and vandalism, and some parts are quite difficult to decipher. They were probably created between around 1905 and 1925. This is clear from the technology which was being depicted. The aeroplanes are biplanes and the cars are from 1920 at the latest. It is likely that all these carvings were created by the same artist as they are quite similar in style and execution. Although they appear quite crude compared to other carvings, certain aspects, such as the car and the bicycle, are well observed. This indicates that any apparent crudity is not due to a lack of facility by the artist, but rather constitutes a deliberate attempt to lampoon various colonial figures. The clumsy depiction of the foreign figures with enormous noses (**fig. 22**) could also be a way of showing a lack of respect, by not treating them with meticulous detail. It is important to consider the possibility that these works, in their comments on aspects of colonial occupation, articulate a subversive statement. Although they could be regarded as comical in their apparent caricaturing of Dutch and other foreign figures, there could be a more serious intent on the part of the artist. The foreigners are depicted as enormous, ungainly and outsized with large ugly noses. Some of them are Dutch, but others could be Arabs, suggests Covarrubias (Covarrubias, 1937, pp. 185-

186). His contention that the hold-up is taken from films is a possibility, but it is equally likely that they are a response to things seen and experienced on Bali by the artist. The reliefs are given a low relative importance, compared to more serious subjects. Vickers (Vickers, 1989, p. 84-85) makes an interesting observation about an image of a rapacious Dutch soldier carrying off a Balinese woman ¹⁷ (**fig. 23**). He points out that the proximity of her revealed sexual organs to the soldier's head indicate the Balinese' perception of the low status of Europeans. Duff-Cooper (Duff-Cooper, 1984, p. 28) suggests also that 'low-ness' and 'coarseness' are associated with Caucasians and that this equation is a factor in the way ugliness is incorporated into some traditional masks. It has also been suggested that this caricaturing also extends into the *Wayang Kulit* performances. This painting, like the *Jagaraga* temple was produced in north Bali, where it has to be remembered that a bloody colonial war was fought. Thus, the temple reliefs can be seen as part of a north Balinese genre of pejorative parody, rather than simply an amusing comic strip. However, this element of criticism is a possibility which would be far too uncomfortable for colonial residents to countenance, however 'liberal' they might have been.

What is often neglected when examining painting, as with other aspects of Bali's culture, is the regional differences which occur ¹⁸. The history of Bali is one of different warring kingdoms and princedoms, often with quite different political and cultural regimes. The physical geography, plus the different racial groups which have inhabited Bali, have the effect of creating diversity in approaches to life, ritual and art. The north of Bali was colonised by the Dutch much earlier than the central and southern areas and was originally the first port-of-call for tourists. This means that this region had a much longer history of international contact long before the notion of *baliseering* was imposed. This all means that at the same time as looking at these examples as representing general trends and preoccupations in Balinese visualisation, its discourse had longer to develop than in southern Bali, which through the later capitulation of *puputan* ¹⁹ ironically had less time to develop an aesthetic which encompassed the changes, before it was designated as a 'living museum'.

In contrast to the apparent clumsiness of execution of the Dutch figures at Jagaraga, vehicles and technological items are depicted in much more accurate detail (**figs. 19 & 20**). This contrast indicates an admiration by the Balinese, of the machines, more than the people who brought them. The Balinese rightly identify the technology of the colonisers as being what gives the Dutch the ascendancy over the Balinese, rather than any innate racial or cultural superiority which would have been assumed by the

Dutch. The Balinese would have considered themselves to be of higher status than the foreigners and this is certainly indicated by the depictions mentioned above.

Charlie Chaplin mentioned the interest the Balinese had in cars and describes how they were to be found everywhere. This indicates the perceived importance of the car as a symbol of power to many of the Balinese.

During my tour through the different villages I was surprised to see a large number of automobiles lying idle in many of the natives' back yards, most of them recent models rusting from exposure. A few were polished and had lace curtains and were used for living quarters. The explanation is interesting. A number of natives had purchased these cars. The initial cost, however, exhausted their life savings, but they were happy to ride around in them until they discovered to their bewilderment that the cost of gasoline to run a car for a day was as much as they earned in a month. So they were left discarded in the back yards of the villages.

(Chaplin, 1934, pp. 22-23)

This is an interesting observation which indicates the presence of the modern throughout the Balinese landscape in contradiction to the output of painters at the time. Chaplin's explanation of the abandonment of these cars is anecdotal to say the least and unfairly characterises the Balinese as simple and unsophisticated. More importantly it serves the purpose of presenting an agenda of characterising the Balinese as incompatible with modernity. As a visitor to Bali for only three weeks, largely as a guest of Walter Spies²⁰, this explanation is unlikely to be the creation of Chaplin and more likely to originate from a resident of Bali like Spies himself. This is an indication of Spies' thinking and mediation of the views of other European visitors and residents of Bali.

Timothy Lindsay highlights this attitude of characterisation in his critique of K'tut Tantri's 'autobiography' *Revolt in Paradise* (Tantri, 1960).

The Raja in *Revolt in Paradise*, while kind and generous to K'tut Tantri is essentially a doddering and irrelevant traditionalist, who 'sulks' and 'collapses with rage' when traditions are not adhered to. Incapable of understanding the ways of the West, he is naïve and amusing, when confronted with modernity. (Lindsay, 1997, p. 28)

Tantri expanded the account in her book along similar lines to Chaplin recounting how the Raja used a fridge, given to him by an American naval officer, as a wardrobe as he did not have electricity. These accounts are not necessarily untrue, but they are told to articulate a particular agenda of difference which attempts to create justification, through ridicule, for purging the modern from Balinese life and thus, artistic depictions of the modern as well.

Many Balinese were quite capable of a great deal of discrimination and awareness in relation to the arrival of modern Western technology in Bali. The reliefs at Jagaraga illustrate this. The fact that they are on the outside of the temple is significant. These pictures are of no obvious religious or cosmological relevance and are perhaps even profane. However, the incorporation of Balinese figures (**fig. 24**), some of which could relate to traditional Balinese narrative, bring the imagery into the realms of more conventional work. The mixture with the more traditional motifs could be seen simply as adherence to certain visual conventions which would coincide with ideas of *baliseering*, but it could also be a statement about the clash and intermixing of two cultures. The shock and surprise of the Balinese at the aeroplanes above and the contrasting of fishing methods seem to be expressions and criticisms of this culture shock. It is interesting that the majority of the modern items depicted other than clothing can be perceived as symbols of male power. There are two cars, two aeroplanes, a gun and also two fishing rods which appear to be contrasted in the same frieze with a traditional outrigger canoe. It is interesting to speculate about why this comparison is being made. Is it possible that the Dutch are being lampooned or perhaps criticised for fishing for sport? Perhaps they are seen as stealing the livelihood of the fishermen in the background; (they certainly seem to have caught the largest fish). This representation might relate to a fascination of subjects for their novelty, but this appropriation of the fruits of the ocean could also be a symbolic metaphor for the Dutch occupation of Bali.

Each section is quite ambiguous in its meaning, but it is quite possible that there are in fact stories connected with each set of images, as that conforms to the visual tradition of such work in Bali, which tends to have a narrative function. Covarrubias' notion that the hold-up is derived from a 'western' film seems strange, as 'westerns' tended not to feature cars. However, this could represent a synthesis of various ideas from film with observed reality. It is strange to assume that the only visual knowledge of guns the Balinese might have had would have been from film. Nevertheless, many Balinese would certainly have had access to cinema as testified by Charlie Chaplin (Chaplin, 1934, pp. 22-23) who was surprised that he was not a stranger to many of the Balinese whom he met.

The Western objectification of the Balinese and their environment as 'picturesque'

The visual codes of the picturesque extend beyond image making and have often been applied to people and the landscapes themselves which are objectified in similar ways to pictures and about whom similar objections are raised. Beryl de Zoete has more to say about the presence of the modern and the Western:

...there is more than a sprinkling, alas, of dirty European shirts and tin roofs. But the interest of the men of Bali in their own life is too great to be diverted by the sea-drift of tourism, which is, by the way, responsible neither for shirts, nor missions nor tin roofs.

(de Zoete & Spies, 1938, p.2)

Tin roofs appear to be a common complaint of colonial visitors and tourists. Many accounts make mention of this particular piece of modern technology. It shows the priorities of the visitors and their preoccupation with the aesthetic over and above the practical needs and aspirations of the natives. It is another manifestation of the kind of apartheid philosophy being imposed and adopted by the 'sympathetic' and 'liberal' visitors as well as the colonial authorities. André Roosevelt discusses the tin roof issue in his introduction to Hickman Powell's work.

We saw with terror that the imports were increasing. We noticed that galvanised iron had crept in and that the natives, finding it convenient, used it for their roofing material instead of the thatch with which their houses were covered. We tried to show them that it was hideous. They did not understand so we had to change our tactics.

(Roosevelt in Powell, 1930, p. xiv)

Not only does this patronising statement reveal the outsiders' attitude to the modernity which they themselves had brought, it also illustrates well the paternalistic attitude towards the indigenous people. It is a clear example of an attempt to impose Western aesthetic values on an indigenous group, who were much more concerned with practical solutions to their daily problems. Roosevelt's use of language is interesting: he says that they did not understand, when in fact they were probably simply not concerned with his preoccupations. It is a prime example of visual - cultural imperialism as a reflection of more official colonial policy. Miguel Covarrubias has similar sentiments. "Leaving the town, the car passes miserable villages and occasional gingerbread temples with tin roofs..." (Covarrubias, 1937, p.

xix). He later states that Bali is "doomed to disappear under the merciless onslaught of modern commercialism and standardisation" (Covarrubias, 1937, p. xxv). There is a fear which is almost a phobia which these European residents held about what they saw as the pernicious influence of the modern. This goes some way towards explaining the dislike and dismissal of motifs of modernity in Balinese art. Such representations provide a symbolic depiction and a recognition of what was already happening on the ground. In addition to this, it is ironic that Covarrubias and people like him do not appear to see themselves as part of the process which they condemn.

Apparently Rudolf Bonnet thought that Walter Spies' "assistance should be enlisted in attempts to limit the use of cement and corrugated iron in government buildings in the villages" (Stowell, 1992, p. 29). Stowell goes on to describe how Bonnet felt that Walter Spies had provided a good model for buildings with his own dwellings. These were outwardly sympathetic to Balinese architectural styles and Bonnet bemoans the institutional style of public buildings and homes used by the Balinese officials (*ambtenaaren*) who were working for the colonial regime in the villages²¹. It would be interesting to speculate how the interiors of the buildings were arranged, as accounts of Spies' dwellings show them to be only superficially Balinese in their outward appearance. It is possible that the reverse was the case with the officials and Bonnet's discourse is a further illustration of an attempted imposition of Western notions of the traditional based on outward appearances by people like Spies. Likewise, the new paintings being created in Bali had to conform to rules which removed the modern as subject, but allowed a certain degree of the modern as aesthetic innovation.

An alternative and more recent view comes from Roxana Waterson (Waterson, 1990, p. 233) who suggests that tin roofs could be said to have become a 'traditional' building material. She further examines the notion of the 'traditional' in terms of modernity and modernisation and this helps to contextualise the debate and its limitations within the *baliseering* policy.

...it is important to address the question of 'tradition' and what it really means, both to the investigator and the subjects of investigation. This will always be a difficult question, I suggest, because the concept itself is inherently ambiguous. It is not only in Western cultures that a bias is evident toward an understanding of tradition as something deserving of reverence, which ought to be upheld without change. It has a tendency to become equated with stasis, whereas its implied opposite - 'modernity' or 'modernisation' -

is just as indissolubly equated with change. But 'tradition' really describes a process of handing down, and as such is just as dynamic and as historical as any other social process. The *idea* of tradition, however (and its clash with the *ideology* of modernisation, as this is translated into action in the form of national policies, for example) are also a part of the total social dynamic and need to be considered as such. Tradition like history, is something that is continually being recreated and remodelled in the present, even as it is represented as fixed and unchangeable.
(Waterson, 1990, p. 232)

Despite the apparent horror, condescension, amusement and disgust expressed by some writers about these divergences from their own projected idea of 'tradition', these works have been and are still consumed by visitors as tourist attractions. In fact, they are often actively sought out. It seems that part of the tradition of the tourist visitor and part of their own consumption of tourist sights is to engage in this kind of contradictory discourse. Through a kind of cognitive dissonance, it is an indignant consumption - a way of taking a superior position in relation to these works. At the same time as condemning them, they are consuming them as part of their tourist experience.

These global-local articulations of ethnicity may be seen as forms of rhetoric, as symbolic expressions of exchange values. This is not simply a division along ethnic lines, but an intersection of different value systems, an attempt to universalize the Western sense of exchange value.
(Hitchcock, 2000, p. 6)

It is part of the discourse associated with the anxiety that a 'natural' world of difference and 'otherness' is being replaced by one of homogeneous modernity. There is also a sense that these elements can be tolerated and even enjoyed on a limited basis. They represent a minority curiosity which can in some way be used as a warning as to what might happen if the natives are allowed freedom in cultural development.

The 'Balinese Modernists'

From time to time, the idea of 'modernism' is presented in relation to Balinese tourist art of the 1930s and this term can be seen to be used in rather different ways. In relation to Balinese art and artefacts, it seems to be used to describe stylistic influences from the West which apparently bring works closer to Western forms of representation. Ironically, it is the introduction of perspective which is seen as a key element in the new Balinese forms. Western modernism can be seen as borrowing

from primitive art in its quest to subvert historical norms. This often means the abandonment of perspective. Chytry (Chytry, 1989, p. 458) characterises Western modernism as embodying notions such as formal experimentation and abstraction which deliberately articulate a political or quasi-political agenda, in particular supplanting the idea of perspective reality. In relation to Western discourses it is worth examining a quotation from A. S. Wadia, in which he uses the example of a Western artist - Epstein, to parallel the appearance of certain 'traditional' works.

As might be expected, much of the Balinese art-ware exhibited there was mere trash and tinsel, created and collected to delight the eyes and lighten the purse of art-innocents from abroad. But among the much shoddy stuff piled up on the verandas there were, lying unnoticed here and there, a few genuine pieces of rare art-craft and quaint old Balinese design. I have before me, as I write, a dozen *togogs*, diminutive wooden busts and statuettes, which I brought home with me, picked out of the hundreds exhibited in the shops and open booths of Danpassar. Strange to say, these *togogs*, of undoubted Balinese design and workmanship, displaying the art theories and embodying the centuries-old art traditions of Bali, have nevertheless an unmistakable modernistic touch and feel about them, inasmuch as they one and all attempt to catch and do indeed succeed in catching, with a few calculated strokes of the chisel and mallet, one or two salient and distinguishing characteristics of the subjects they present, thereby making but one or two impressions, definite and telling, on the mind of the beholder - after the manner so approved of in this modern art *salons* of Europe and America which take their inspiration from Epstein and his school of sculpture.

(Wadia, 1936, p. 66)

Wadia in fact, doesn't suggest a European modernist influence on this work and assumes that the 'traditional' might coincidentally mirror aspects of modern European sculpture. He uses this similarity to justify the perceived appeal and aesthetic quality of these items rather than entertaining the possibility of modern or modernist influence. Instead, he attributes the modern to what he sees as the more 'vulgar' items. In fact, it is quite possible that the items are not influenced by Western art, but he has unwittingly alluded to the oblique influence of 'primitive' art on Western modernists in the case of Epstein, by realising the superficial, but sometimes deliberate similarities some European modernist art can have to 'primitive' art. This is what Rhodes (Rhodes, 1994, p. 7) describes as 'stylistic primitivism'. There are subtle visual-linguistic cues which appeal to Wadia. In showing an interest in, and buying these works, he is engaging in the subtle development of the 'pidgin' language of tourist art in Bali which others have

described as Balinese modernism²². This is therefore a rare record of a part of that process of exchange in Bali's 'contact zone'.

During the time that Walter Spies spent in Bali, there were few occurrences of the modern either in paintings by himself or by Balinese artists. One artist who is known to have associated with Walter Spies is I. N. Ngendon. He rarely included motifs of modernity in his work. One work which includes representations of foreigners, whose purpose is well documented, is Ngendon's picture, created for Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, commissioned in 1938 (**fig. 25**). This work depicts Mead and Bateson leaving Bali to do fieldwork in Irian. The work shows the facility of an artist like Ngendon to produce a painting to order and to satisfy the requirements of a particular foreign patron. Even the clouds on Bali and the smoke from a volcano on Irian spell out "goodbye, good-luck" and "welcome" in English. Geertz argues:

All of this leads me to suggest that while Ngendon used pictures and dance performances to make money, this was not his primary motive. It was Western modernity and Western forms of power which fascinated him. All the evidence we have indicates that Ngendon felt an increasing resentment at being prevented from sharing in the advantages of Western life and at the colonial patterns of domination and appropriation of Balinese talents for outsiders' pleasures.
(Geertz, 1994, p. 19)

Geertz provides a profile of Ngendon's interest in Western modernity which is largely not visible in his work apart from this one exception. Ngendon clearly felt that despite being interested in the modern and later being a political activist²³, there was no point in discussing the experience of modernity or his attitude to it through his paintings, unless specifically commissioned to do so. It is clear that he felt he was working under stylistic restrictions not present to the artists at Jagaraga a few years earlier, who freely explored exchanges between the 'modern' and 'traditional' worlds. This example illustrates the change of attitudes over time towards depiction over a period of about 30 years. There is however, the geographical difference between Jagaraga and Batuan to take into account, which could be responsible for differences in approach, as well as the different media used. However, the example of Ngendon demonstrates both the sophistication of the underlying intellectual motivations of artists in Bali under colonial rule, including those at Jagaraga, and the restricted means of expressing those ideas and thoughts when artistically caged in a 'living museum'.

The exhibition (1999) in Rotterdam ²⁴ of paintings produced in Bali during the 1920s and 1930s is entitled *Balinese Modernists*. The works in this exhibition follow a paradisaal tropicalist style in most cases, some with mythical subjects and some which represent 'everyday life'. They cannot be said to correspond to normal notions of aesthetic modernism in a European sense, which might be construed from the exhibition title. However, if the consideration of what might be encapsulated by the term 'modernism' is broadened, within the bounds of an escape from Balinese tradition, this term could be seen as valid. However, it is an escape into a bounded world of quite conservative Western traditions and preoccupations and not wholly new formal ideas. Certainly, Chytry's idea, that Walter Spies can be viewed as a modernist, because of an abandonment of perspective, is often inverted in the case of the 'Balinese modernists', who begin to *adopt* perspective. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that Western modernism borrows ideas from the 'primitive' in a similarly superficial manner through 'stylistic primitivism' ²⁵. The new Balinese pictures could be described as modernist in the way in which they depart from the *wayang* model of painting. These works certainly do not provide a conceptual challenge in the mould of *avant garde* European modernism, as they largely conform to the notions of 'naïve' yet decorative and picturesque harmony desired by the popular art and tourist market, but largely dismissed in most European modernist intellectual art circles. Nevertheless, a broader, more culturally relativist view of modernism might allow these works to be considered as significant, through their hybridity and through, what was to a Balinese, an unorthodox marketplace. Perhaps tourist art should be considered more seriously as a significant modernist development in visual culture in general. Because the works are designed for external consumption, their revolutionary relevance or relationship to traditional Balinese artistic practices are also questionable; they are different forms of art for quite different purposes.

The only work in the exhibition which depicts the modern is by the 'Sanur' painter Ida Bagus Soenia (**fig. 26**), which caricatures foreigners as part of a village scene. The reflexivity of vision is notable in this work which also records, in detail, the artefacts being sold to tourists at this time. It also provides another record: this time it is visual and from the Balinese point of view, of the 'contact zone' providing the arena for the 'pidginisation' of Balinese art. This image ideally illustrates the interaction between the Balinese and Westerners and how it is viewed by a Balinese artist. It provides a unique contrast of perspectives upon the zone of tourist and Balinese contact with that described by Wadia above. Wadia employs the self-aggrandising language of connoisseurship portraying himself as seeing through the inauthentic works to identify those works which are 'authentically' Balinese (the authenticity of any of the works he

discusses is questionable). However, Soenia lampoons the Westerners and some of the Balinese as well. Soenia has carefully observed and recorded the look of avaricious excitement of the tourist on the left. This can be contrasted with the apparent indifference of the Balinese in this picture. He also appears to make fun of the tourists in the right regaled in items of traditional 'Balinese' clothing ²⁶. Both Wadia and Soenia have seen this 'contact zone' as being of interest and worth commenting upon in their own expressive media, but with quite different emphases. Wadia alludes to modernist characteristics in Balinese art, but as coincidence and seeks to extract and separate an experience of the 'traditional' from his encounter. Soenia directly accepts and comments upon the modern and the traditional existing side-by-side. The modern references in Soenia's picture make this quite a revolutionary and even subversive work in terms of the 'tradition' which was expected by Westerners from Balinese painting. However, as I have already discussed, this does not mean it is unusual in terms of a broader interpretation of Balinese traditions of representation. This work was purchased from the artist by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in 1936 and it is questionable whether it would have found a buyer if these two had not found it, as essentially it breaks many of the 'rules' of tourist paintings mentioned previously. The work is unusual in Balinese painting in its lack of nudity and mythology. However, it could be said to address the notion of 'everyday life', but not in the historicised way that this genre is intended to operate ²⁷. Nevertheless, the artist's style could be described as naïve and he does make use of perspective as well as quite a detailed and decorative attention right across the picture. Thus, in these respects the work fits with the paradigmatic model for tourist art suggested earlier. This subject is also unusual for this artist, much of whose output appears to be bizarre erotic art. This work is certainly characteristic of this artist in the sense that his works are highly individual and easy to identify through the style of depiction. In fact, this work displays humour and an intelligence of observation and statement which is lacking in the romanticised work of European artists working in Bali at this time. In this work, he seeks to unsentimentally observe rather than to mysticise or romanticise and subversively undermines the ideological orthodoxy which seeks to separate the colonised and colonisers in a physical and representational sense.

Thus, I suggest the term Balinese modernism is appropriate to describe new Balinese painting in this instance. As an innovative syncretic product of contact between 'pre-modern' and 'modern' cultures, which largely attempts to engage with certain conventions of that visual culture, but also occasionally seeks to subvert it, a new genre of modernist art was created in Bali, which fulfilled a new role in the more cash-dependant society.

Although my main discussion of the paintings of Walter Spies will be in Chapter 6, I will explore his work here in relation to the previous discussion of conventions of tourist art in Balinese art. The example of Walter Spies' paintings provides an opportunity to highlight such conventions in relation to the work of this European artist. My discussion of Spies as a modernist and his relationship with depictions of modernity will be developed in Chapter 6 after his position as a colonial figure has been further examined in the intervening chapters.

As with the vast majority of works by other European artists on Bali, the work of Walter Spies is paradigmatic of the myopia regarding the modern in Bali. This is highlighted through his own discourse on modernity in the Balinese context.

The nice thing was that through the help of Jacobs, V D Kaaden and the resident, it was at last ordered that no Balinese was allowed to wear a shirt or a *sapoet handoek* ²⁸, so for a few days Bali was the real Bali again.

(Letter, Spies, to Belo and McPhee, 10/05/1935, L.O.C.)

Spies' notion of the 'real Bali' is significant in highlighting the limitations of his own conceptual view of Bali and what it ought to be ²⁹. It is clear that the 'real Bali' is something which has to be created artificially through colonial decree or in the case of art through the imposition of ideologically oriented rules for the creation of images. These might be the paintings of Spies himself or those he has contact with. There are no Balinese wearing shirts, tourists or Europeans in any of Spies' known Asian paintings even though he himself was a hotelier of sorts and there are no motor cars or paved roads even though he himself was the proud owner of a car which he traded for two paintings from his friend and associate Victor, Baron von Plessen "I find the pictures much more beautiful than the car, but I need the car more..." (Letter, Spies to his mother 02/1928)³⁰. Nevertheless, some of his earlier works like *Transformationsakt* (fig. 27) did refer to modernity and had a social engagement which one would associate with an artist in inter-war Germany who had a connection with expressionists and post-expressionists like Otto Dix.

The social and political engagement Spies had sometimes applied, was discarded when Spies went to Bali from Java. It is possible that, like many of the Balinese, the economic imperative and temptation presented by a lucrative tourist art market might have been responsible for the style of his output in Bali. However, this is not a

complete explanation, bearing in mind Spies' own accounts of his work and beliefs³¹ which did not indicate solely mercenary intentions on his part. However, his painting in Bali for the tourist market became an increasingly marketable product. It is also possible that he became embroiled in the fantasy of Bali which he created for himself in Campuan³² and later Iseh³³, as he selectively sought to escape aspects of the modern world. However, such preferences also reflected the tastes of the Western traveller escaping the post-war misery of Europe. There is also the possibility that aspects of social realism were sidelined, as Spies increasingly became a part of a different form of political engagement as a cultural player in the colonial project of the Balinisation of Bali.

Although Spies did address the modern and the urban in some of his works in the 1920s like *Transformationsakt* in Germany and *Laterna Magica* (fig. 29) in Java, the majority of the known work produced by Spies in Germany before he came to Asia focused on the rural and the traditional. This tendency in his work took over completely when he moved to Bali. Like his European contemporaries in Bali, his paintings avoided themes and motifs of modernity. Spies' change in his preoccupations appears to be a specific reaction to coming to Bali. When he was still in Java, he did create landscapes, but they lacked the escapism of some of his Balinese works. The landscapes created in Java tended to be unpopulated. However, when human figures were included, they tended to be the subjects, such as with *Heimkehrende Javaner* of 1924 (fig. 28) and *Laterna Magica* of 1926. There was a sense that, at this stage, Spies was observing and studying his new surroundings and people in a more worldly, socially engaged way. Although the landscapes were atmospheric, there was a sense of observation rather than the fantasy which started to appear in his Balinese paintings. The pictures produced in Java which represented people, although stylised in some respects, come much closer to providing intimate and socially aware reportage of the lives of poor peasants in the Indies. *Laterna Magica* in particular engages with the contact of the feudal poor with the modern world. It depicts Javanese wearing Western-style clothes, it shows electric lighting and a European-style carousel in the background providing another thematic link with his earlier work *Karussel* of 1922 (fig. 32). In other words, Spies was reporting what he saw and what he knew, as well as including a visual theatricality in terms of lighting. This work shows that Spies was perfectly capable and aware of pursuing a form of social realism. He even took a sensitive and sympathetic view of this interface of the traditional and the new. His decision to filter out these things in his Balinese works demonstrates a change in the 'rules' he followed and a selectivity which reflected his own attempts to withdraw from the modern world. It also indicates an increasing dependence on the tourist market. Walter Spies, by some

accounts, 'went native' ³⁴, but in a very selective way. It seems that Spies' coming to Bali was the logical conclusion of his escape from what he saw as the ugliness and spiritual emptiness of the modern world as represented by Europe. The irony was that in his lifestyle he continued to take pleasure from a selective modernity and what it could provide for him. His ownership of a car is an example of this. He also made extensive use of photography and film. In this respect, Spies was the most modern artist on Bali at that time.

Despite his apparent dislike of aspects of the colonial regime, Walter Spies' output fitted very much with the 'living museum' ³⁵ notion which was being propagated by the colonial authorities. It is ironic that despite his flaunting of what was formally allowed in terms of European residency amongst the natives, he was in many ways the perfect ambassador for the curious form of social engineering which was being perpetrated by the colonial authorities. With a few notable exceptions, his painting was a reflection of his role and his reasons for denying the modern would have been different from the Balinese, in that he appeared to believe that what he was depicting was the 'real Bali' in some spiritual sense and therefore he was not producing work by formula for a tourist market. However, in some of his works there is little which supports this idea (**fig. 30**). Such pictures appear to be quite routinely formularised arrangements of familiar motifs such as cow and cowherd in a landscape of palm trees, rice fields and mountains. In these works, his motivations appear to come much closer to those of the Balinese artists producing for the tourist market. Yet it could be argued that much of the Balinese work was more accomplished than this example. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 7, he could command much better prices due to his fame and connections in the art and film world. This market value for his works was probably the strongest motivation of all for him to paint.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the conventions of painting which characterised tourist art in Bali in the inter-war period. In particular I have focused on motifs of modernity as a taboo subject in Balinese art which can be related to the brand of colonialism practised in Bali. This 'taboo' can be seen as having a complex relationship with the *baliseering* cultural orthodoxy, which can incorporate self-imposed traditionalism on the parts of the artists and also enshrines a certain level of resistance through mimicry. The notion of mythical narrative as realism has been examined in relation to a different

sense of the real amongst the Balinese as suggested by Djelantik (Djelantik, 1986, pp. 36-37).

The powers of intellectual discrimination by the Balinese has been posited with their depictions and the way they draw the relationship between power and technology in certain instances, whereas in others, modernity and technology is notably absent. This mimicry of the colonial ideas of traditionalism is clearly a conscious decision on the part of the Balinese artists who highlight this adherence to the 'traditional' by their occasional transgressions. Possible relationships between humour and serious comment are explored and illustrated through occasional examples of the modern in the form of pejorative representations of the colonisers, for instance in northern Bali.

The European concern with outward appearances of a particular type of European neurosis about modernity has led to the expression of that neurosis through an imposition of a discourse of aestheticisation of people and landscape. This discourse is more about the appearance of tradition than its reality, in a context where European colonialism can be seen to represent an aspect of modernity and modernism. Nevertheless, the consumption of the modern by Europeans in paintings and landscape can be seen as a manifestation of pleasure through indignant engagement with apparently incongruent aspects of Western modernity in the traditional context. In addition to this, I have questioned the notion of the traditional as being historically static or easily definable in any context as appears to be the belief articulated through the colonial discourse.

The new painting which results from this situation of ersatz traditionalism, can be seen as contradictory in terms of not being representative of Western modernist aesthetic innovation. At the same time as being innovative in a Balinese traditional context, it only occasionally goes to the point of depicting the modern, which highlights the constraints and self-constraints innate in the formulation of the codes of new Balinese painting. The work of Soenia illustrates this through being unsentimentally observant and being modernist in subverting Europeanised conventions.

In the work of Spies, these conventions also hold true in his Balinese work which can be seen as the final stage in the eradication of the depiction of the modern in his paintings, which in *Laterna Magica* observed the contact zone, between Javanese tradition and the modern in a humorous and observant way, although stopping short of depicting Westerners or cars for instance. Any explicit discourse of contact was absent in his Balinese work. His work appears to escape modern reality in accordance with

tourist markets. It is clear that Spies followed the rules in avoiding modernity in a selective way which meant that despite apparently disliking certain aspects of colonial authority, he was in accord with their cultural philosophy. He was also engaged in profiting from the market for tourist paintings.

The next chapter will examine the biography of Walter Spies and the way in which it has been constructed in order to begin to explain the discourse which has developed in relation to Spies. It also explains his presence in Bali to set up the following discussion which develops ideas about the nature of European contacts with the Balinese through the example of Spies' own contacts. These are, in turn, of relevance to the later more detailed discussion and textual analysis of Spies' own work, its imperial discourse and the ultimate discourse of influence in relation to Balinese art which I contend has been a neo-colonial construction through which causal and comprehensive influence has tended to have been directly attributed to Spies.

¹ In the 1970s a painter from Batuan, I Made Budi (1932-) started to consistently depart from the traditional content of Balinese paintings and started to incorporate elements of the modern world into his work. He showed vehicles and tourists in his paintings in a playful acknowledgement of the existence of tourists as part of his landscape. His works show tourists with video cameras and he also depicts Balinese people wearing modern 'Western' clothes. Wayan Bendi (1950-) and Ida Bagus Nyoman Rai (1915-) are other artists who have in recent years followed this trend, taking on themes of recent history and colonialism as well as adopting a new approach to the theme of 'everyday life' which has been associated with Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet and will be discussed in Chapter 7.

² Elizabeth Bohls writing about Dorothy Wordsworth makes a similar observation about attitudes to landscapes and their inhabitants: "Like the *Grassmere Journals*, *Recollections* insists that land is inhabited by people with practical needs, feelings, desires, subjectivities, and voices; both texts thus counteract to some extent the dehumanising tendency of landscape aesthetics" (Bohls, 1995, p. 171)

³ Ramseyer, 1986, p. 240

⁴ See chapter 2.

⁵ "...the tourists, who are bearers of modernization, are drawn to Bali essentially by the wealth of its traditions; consequently, for reasons of both cultural conservation and economic necessity, the Balinese cultivate their traditions with a view to procuring the necessary means for their modernization." (Picard, 1996, p. 111) The artistic and religious traditions of the Balinese (the 'inside') are judged worthy of interest by the tourists (the 'outside'). And it is precisely this interest shown by the tourists for their traditions – by the continuous process of adjustment of the inside to the demands and expectations of the outside that it created in the first place – that will reassure the Balinese in their self-confidence and sense of identity, while sharpening their artistic talents." (Picard, 1996, p. 111)

⁶ Spivak, 1988, pp. 280-281

⁷ *The Last Paradise* is the title of the popular travel book, by Hickman Powell which attracted many tourists to Bali in the 1930s. (Powell, 1930)

⁸ According to the New Shorter Oxford Dictionary (Oxford, 1993), "Arcadia is a mountainous district in the Peloponnese (used as a name for) an ideal region of rural contentment."

⁹ Murray, 1983, p. 314

¹⁰ Ashcroft *et al* suggest that the concept of the noble savage arose in the eighteenth century "as a European nostalgia for a simple, pure, idyllic state of the natural, posed against rising industrialism and the notion of overcomplications and sophistications of European urban society... The crucial fact about the construction is that it produces an ostensibly positive oversimplification of the 'savage' figure, rendering it in this particular form as an idealised rather than a debased stereotype." (Ashcroft *et al*, 1998, p. 210)

¹¹ I will discuss this later in this chapter in relation to *Jagaraga*

¹² Hitchcock, 1988, pp. 164-165

¹³ This bas-relief will be discussed in detail in the next section.

¹⁴ Hitchcock, recollection of a discussion with Duff-Cooper, thesis feedback comments, 2000

¹⁵ *Jaba* is the Balinese word for 'low class' commoners.

¹⁶ These economic imperatives were discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁷ Hinzler, confirms that this is a representation of a Dutchman. However, she questions whether the woman is Balinese because although the hairstyle and clothes are of lower class Balinese, she is depicted as wearing shoes, so it is more likely that she is Chinese or European, so this remains a somewhat ambiguous depiction in this respect (Hinzler, 1986, p. 486).

¹⁸ See the section on geographical factors in the previous chapter.

¹⁹ See the discussion of the *puputan* in chapter 2.

²⁰ Letter, Spies to his mother, 01/05/1932 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 306

²¹ Stowell, 1992, p. 33

²² The term 'Balinese modernism' is used by Drs. F. Haks in the catalogue for *Pre-War Balinese Modernists: 1928-1942*.

²³ Höhn, 1997, p. 51

²⁴ The exhibition was entitled *Pre-War Balinese Modernists: 1928-1942*. It took place from 15th May to 22nd August, 1999.

²⁵ Rhodes, 1994, p. 107

²⁶ It is possible that these two are supposed to be Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson.

²⁷ The notion of 'everyday life' will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

²⁸ *Sapoet handoek* refers to towels worn as loincloths by Balinese men.

²⁹ Spies' notions of the 'real' Bali will be revisited in Chapters 6 and 7 in relation to representations of Bali and Spies' supposed influence on new Balinese art.

³⁰ Letter, Spies to his mother 02/1928 in Rhodius, 1964, pp. 257-258, translated by Geff Green.

³¹ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, pp. 69-70

³² Campuan was where Spies set up his first house in Bali, it is located just outside Ubud (see the map – fig. 69)

³³ Spies moved to Iseh in 1937, (see the map – fig.69)

³⁴ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 51. Although being factually quite well researched in terms of empirical information, Rhodius' account takes a very romantic view of Spies portraying him as being "...more Balinese than German."

³⁵ Hitchcock & Norris, 1995

A discussion of Walter Spies' life and the construction of a particular narrative

Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the biographical construction of Spies' life and to establish certain chronological biographical details about Walter Spies. As well as establishing facts such as dates, locations and contacts, I will also explore how and why previous accounts have been distorted. I will discuss the neocolonial bias which has arisen from the presentation of Walter Spies' life as a form of romantic fiction rather than the fact which is often implied or interpreted by the term biography. Biography purportedly deals with real rather than fictional characters when in fact it could just as easily be seen as fiction created loosely around actual facts and people. My biographical account inevitably suffers the weakness of any biographical material which is factually based on the accounts and records of others and inevitably is another construction. In this case its construction is designed to focus on details which relate to later points such as; Spies' association with Murnau, or his motivations for travelling to the Indies. Therefore biography in this case, serves a particular purpose which is selective, but it is neither hagiographic nor comprehensive. However, I have attempted to correlate the facts as presented by others in a consistent manner, looking for verification where it exists. Nevertheless, "... 'biography' does not *explain* the texts of those whose lives it presumes to reconstruct." (Boon, 1986, p. 236). This account does not seek to explain texts through biography, but will use biography as part of my wider framework of discussion in this thesis in order to explore the texts of Walter Spies in relationship to his Balinese context. It is necessary to establish biographical facts in order to explain Spies' artistic and cultural background and also what brought him to the Dutch East Indies.

To highlight the fictions which have arisen over the years, this, and the following chapter will highlight the discourse which has constructed Walter Spies' life and his relationship to Bali and Balinese art. My discussion of Hans Rhodius is particularly important in establishing the background to the biographical construction of Spies and particularly what I suggest are popular misconceptions about Spies which arise from ignoring the political realities of his colonial context. The account looks briefly at his formative years, but focuses more on his life in the Colonial Dutch East Indies. Due to his intercultural positioning, it is most useful to do this through an examination of the construction of this colonial history. This will be done through writers, commentators

and advocates such as Rhodius, whose agenda and ideas have strongly influenced the canon of discourse surrounding the life and work of Walter Spies which developed during the latter half of the 20th century. However, it can be said that Rhodius was himself influenced by a localised canon of opinions of friends and associates of Spies who contributed to his book. It is important to stress that the Rhodius texts are being used in two ways: as sources of factual information, and as texts which are under critical scrutiny.

Walter Spies had a peripheral involvement with some well-documented artistic movements and artists of the early twentieth century. Yet he passed almost invisibly through the worlds of music, film, painting and anthropology, in terms of conventional accounts of the development of art and culture during this period. He was almost Zelig-like ¹ in his picaresque journey through notable historical, cultural and anthropological nodes during this time, even maintaining and developing such contact with his Hollywood and anthropologist friends, when he lived in Asia. Although his own story is an interesting one, he tends to be a footnote in the biographies of others, who had more conventional or consistent and categorisable lives. In terms of major accounts of these periods, however, Spies receives few mentions. There are actually numerous small references to him and his work and perhaps his lack of fame in European cultural writings is due to the brevity of his stay in any one place or clique and also his relatively early departure to the Dutch-Asian Colonies. The best biographical detail in English comes from Carnegy (1971), Soejima (1997) and Rhodius (Rhodius, & Darling 1980). The last of these is poor, however, in terms of its lack of citations for the various quotations and details discussed. It is unnecessarily sentimental. However, almost all of the important details from this account and the others come from the material contained in German in the compilation by Rhodius (1964), and articles in Dutch by Niehaus (1939 & 1941). In turn, the biographical material used by Niehaus comes from a letter written by Spies from prison outlining his early life in order to help with Niehaus's article. Part of this account is included in Rhodius (1964). These biographies form the basis of the following short account. In my account, in addition to critical use of these sources, I use correspondence from Rhodius (1964) and from the Walter Spies Archive in Leiden ² not included in Rhodius, which is used later to shed light on the circumstances surrounding Spies' incarceration, for instance. In addition, other anecdotal accounts are included which help to illustrate the construction of Spies' image and reputation. These include interviews I conducted with Heidi Hinzler and David Sandberg ³.

The Invention of 'Walter Spies'

Perhaps no artist can achieve fame without a patron or advocate. In the case of Walter Spies, he found this posthumously in the form of Hans Rhodius. Although, during his life, Spies had many rich and influential admirers, particularly of his painting, Rhodius was distinct in only being able to take an active interest in Spies' work after Spies' death in 1942. In many other respects, Rhodius fitted the profile of Spies' admirers during his lifetime who were largely wealthy, well-travelled aristocratic and *nouveau riches* clients and patrons. A number of accounts exist which chart Walter Spies' biography. However, most accounts appear to owe a great deal to one or two sources which are both attributable to Hans Rhodius (Rhodius, 1964; Rhodius & Darling, 1980). The way the story of Spies has been told is inextricably linked to Hans Rhodius' own romanticised and sometimes sanitised view of Walter Spies. Unfortunately, by omission of certain details, particularly those relating to Spies' homosexuality and his later arrest, suspicion is in fact magnified regarding this particular event ⁴. It is useful, therefore, to look at Hans Rhodius before discussing Walter Spies' life and work. While, on the one hand, Rhodius' work is extremely valuable in bringing into the published realm previously unseen documentary information (largely in the form of letters), his editorial hand is not an even one. Thus, what appears to be something of a scholarly, comprehensive and representative collection of letters largely from Spies (who was a copious correspondent), can, in fact, at times be quite misleading, particularly in omitting much of Spies' especially candid letters, which he wrote in English to people like Jane Belo ⁵.

The role of Rhodius is also important in illustrating the advocacy of patrons, art historians and biographers, in adding posthumous value to art through discourse. Rhodius is not a writer in an academic sense and his account of Spies in Rhodius and Darling (Rhodius and Darling, 1980) has a romanticised almost fictional, feel to it ⁶. There is also a lack of referencing for quotations and sources. Although the account is very useful, Rhodius is more of an enthusiast than an art historian or a biographer. His money and enthusiasm, through the organisation of publications, and exhibitions, has created a mythology of Spies and increased the market value of his works. This momentum might otherwise have faded away with time, particularly with the dispersion of Spies' artworks world-wide into private ownership over the years. From early in his career, Spies' works were sold to private individuals. A few individuals have collected his works over the years like Paulus Spies and Hans Rhodius, but these collections have now been dispersed and sold. Their relatively high market value ⁷ means that they are bought as investments particularly on the Asian markets, making it increasingly difficult to see the works in any one place ⁸. Since his death, groups of

Spies' paintings have been exhibited in 1964 at the Gemeentemuseum in the Hague, the Tropenmuseum in 1980, the Erasmushuis in Jakarta in 1992 and the Goethe Institute in Jakarta in 1996.

In the opinion of David Sandberg⁹, Rhodius operated a very selective view of Spies' work when writing this biographical work. He focused on the more bucolic aspects of Spies' output and this had meant not including pictures he did not like in the book. As this is the most comprehensive book about Spies, his life and work which has been published, the listing and displaying of paintings has the misleading implication that the book is comprehensive and representative. David Sandberg¹⁰ and Heidi Hinzler¹¹ confirmed my view that the work by Rhodius was flawed because of his selective and over-romanticised approach to Spies. The same criteria apply to the letters which were used, with the predominance of letters written to his mother, which only reflected a certain group of opinions. These had been supplied by Walter Spies' sister Daisy¹².

The story of Hans Rhodius himself is worth exploring as it is deeply interwoven with the promotion of various myths surrounding Walter Spies, which will be examined in the course of this thesis. Rhodius was a wealthy Dutch industrialist who had inherited a wool business from his father. He was in the Dutch military posted in the Indies and first saw works by Spies at an exhibition in Batavia in 1939 (while Spies was still alive) and became enamoured with the artwork. This was probably the exhibition of old Balinese painting, *Pita Maha* work, and a room of paintings by Spies¹³. After the war in 1947¹⁴, he found himself in Bali; he stayed with his friend Anak Agung Madé Djelantik¹⁵ and started what would ultimately be a lifetime's obsession, to investigate the story and artworks of this artist. David Sandberg¹⁶ mentioned the photograph of Rhodius sitting cross-legged with various members of the original *Pita Maha* group (**fig. 31**) which was probably taken during the 1970s. Sandberg felt that this was a very staged picture which was in some way intended to cast Rhodius as a surrogate Walter Spies figure and which perhaps makes a good metaphor for his approach to Spies. It is probably not accidental that identification with Spies was the vehicle through which Rhodius realised his own homosexuality and ultimately divorced his wife and in the process allegedly¹⁷ alienated his children.

Rhodius' early interest in Spies turned into a life-long interest in the artist and he set out over the years to buy as many paintings by Spies as he could, as well as researching and writing about Spies. He also organised several exhibitions of Spies' work over the same period with his collection as the core for these projects. It is probably fair to say that despite the bias and romanticism in his view of the work by

Spies, his efforts have been crucial in marking out and defining the works of Spies to a wider (although still narrow) audience, particularly in Europe. For instance, I first discovered the existence of Spies when I bought a book about Walter Spies in Bali in 1992 (Rhodius & Darling, 1980), as I mentioned in my introduction to this thesis. This book had originally been published in 1980 to accompany an exhibition of Spies' paintings at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. The monetary value of Spies' paintings has also probably been increased as a direct result of Rhodius' attentions over the years ¹⁸. All of these exhibitions, publications and also the founding of the Walter Spies Society ¹⁹, were funded by Rhodius. When he compiled *Schönheit und Reichtum des Lebens* (1964) ²⁰ he did not mention Spies' homosexuality nor his imprisonment and this was due, at least in part, to pressure from Spies' family ²¹. They felt that this should not be made public and they threatened to withdraw statements and anecdotes they had provided about Spies for publication in the book. In the later book with John Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980), these issues were dealt with, but still in a coy, euphemistic and vaguely justificatory way.

Rhodius died in the late 1980s and, after his death, his collection of Spies' paintings was sold and dispersed. This appears to be a source of some bitterness to the Spies family members and others interested in his work, who expected Rhodius' will to state that the collection should remain intact and perhaps be donated for permanent loan to a gallery under the care of the Walter Spies Society. Possibly, there might have been a gallery specifically founded to display the works. These works in a sense represent the life's work of Hans Rhodius ²². The price these works could acquire by then on the art market must have been a compelling factor in the break-up of the collection. It is almost impossible to view any of Spies' work on public display anywhere in the world. Even the two paintings held in storage in Dresden *Das Karussell*, (1922) (**fig. 32**) and *Der Abschied*, (1921) (**fig. 33**), which I was able to view, are likely soon to be claimed by the relatives of their original owners. The paintings had originally been loaned to the museum and had then been appropriated under the communist regime. It seems likely that one or both of these paintings are likely to be sold to private collections ²³.

The Life and Death of Walter Spies

Walter Spies was born in Russia in 1895, under privileged circumstances during the late years of Czarist feudalism. He was one of five children of the German honorary consul and businessman Leon Spies (1858-1921) and his wife Martha (1863-1946) in Moscow and all but one of the children eventually followed lives in the arts - particularly music and dance. This was probably under the influence of their mother who was

educated in English Literature at the prestigious Smolny institute ²⁴. Walter Spies' sister Daisy, became a ballerina and choreographer, his sister Ira became a musician and *avant-garde* artist and brother Leo was a composer and conductor. He composed music for two films by F. W. Murnau ²⁵. The extended Spies family had extensive business interests in Russia which included oil extraction by Spies' uncle, George Spies, and cigarette manufacture by his uncle Albert Spies ²⁶. They were an extremely rich and powerful family network, although Walter's immediate family appears to have been moderately rich compared to his uncles' families. His household was a very cultured one in an elitist European sense and many artists and particularly composers and musicians such as Scriabin, Rachmaninoff and Dobrowen were regular guests at the Spies' household. Spies was apparently particularly influenced by Scriabin ²⁷. Spies started drawing and painting at an early age and a few unexceptional examples of his earliest work have survived (**fig. 34**). Some of Spies' early schooling from the age of fifteen was in Dresden, where he had his first contact with futurism, cubism and expressionism ²⁸. His family had a house there overlooking the river Elbe.

During the First World War, Spies initially worked in the family house in Moscow which had been converted into a military hospital. Upon reaching military age, he was interned as a German national, although language aside, he was probably more Russian than German and even his German apparently had a strong Russian accent ²⁹. His internment was at Sterlitamak in the southern part of the Ural mountains of Russia and it was here that he became aware of Baschkirian folk art and traditional nomadic lifestyles, which must have contrasted greatly with the rarified atmosphere of his youth. It seems that Spies actually had freedom of movement at this time.

According to Rhodius, he was not incarcerated and moved in with a family who were part of a 'Tatar' ³⁰ tribe ³¹. Rhodius also describes this time as being idyllic, but he omits the story told by Niehaus of Spies learning to survive during a famine by eating worms and insects ³². This period was very important to Spies, as his interest in Baschkirian folk art broadened his artistic horizons beyond the art world he had previously inhabited, although his acquaintance with early German modernism might have predisposed him towards folk art. This, combined with his early contact with works by Rousseau and Chagall, which he encountered on his return to Moscow in 1917, were strong influences on his future artistic style. Unfortunately, no paintings of this period appear to have survived, although he did make a brief return to the Urals in 1920 and he gave a couple of works to Maxim Gorki ³³ who apparently, liked them ³⁴. This could have been repayment by Spies for help Gorki provided in Spies getting an assignment to design the set for Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* in a futurist style at the Grand Opera in Moscow after his internment ³⁵.

Moscow at this time had food shortages, disease, epidemics and no electricity³⁶. Eventually, the anarchy and instability of this time drove him back to Germany, where he rejoined his family who had previously returned. They settled in Dresden at the family home and Spies immediately became involved with the artistic scene there. According to Spies, at this time: "I came into the clique of Nolde, Pechstein, George Grosz, etc., but I never felt comfortable there and not at home." (Letter, Spies to Kaspar Niehaus, 1939)³⁷. He did however express a strong affinity and warmth for Paul Klee who he also became acquainted with and then later lost contact with³⁸. He joined the *Dresden Secession* with his sister Ira and another notable member of this group who took a great interest in his work was Otto Dix, whom Spies described as the 'master of technique'³⁹.

Spies moved to the utopian new artists' community at Hellerau just outside Dresden. Here, he lived and worked with the sculptor Hedwig Jaenchen⁴⁰. He also had a love affair with German composer and academic, Jürgen von der Wense. He studied painting with Oskar Kokoschka for a time, although according to Carnegie (Carnegie, 1971, p. 60), he did not take Spies seriously. Also, at this time, he had a number of exhibitions and some of his paintings were exhibited as part of a *Novembergruppe* exhibition probably in Berlin. Spies was surprised that he sold a number of works. His work was admired by the art critic and art historian Frans Roh, with whom Spies had an ongoing correspondence, particularly later on, just before he left for Asia⁴¹.

It is clear from Spies' own account that he was uncomfortable and undecided about being a painter first and foremost⁴². He seems to have been drawn to music at this point. Spies moved to Berlin next, where he met a great number of figures from the musical world at the house of his friend Eduard Erdmann; he lists "Busoni, Pfitzner, Schnabel, Hindemith, Krenek, Petyrek, Haba, etc."

(Letter, Spies to Kaspar Niehaus, 1939)⁴³ He also associated with Bauhaus members, such as Walter Gropius and Moholy Nagy⁴⁴. There, he also became involved with F.W. Murnau, who was already a successful film director. This acquaintance possibly came about through Spies' brother Leo, who was writing musical scores for Murnau. Murnau established Spies in his own studio at his villa in Grünewald⁴⁵. They lived together as lovers for a while and Spies notably worked with Murnau on his seminal film *Nosferatu* and probably the other six films he made during this period⁴⁶. It is unclear exactly what Spies' role was, but it is likely that he was involved in art direction, editing and possibly musical scoring in association with his brother Leo. It is also likely that he gained or perhaps developed an awareness of filmic lighting, as well as other visual devices used

by Murnau, and this would have further developed a visual sense augmented by his theatrical work. In addition to this, he found time for some university studies, learning ancient languages, such as Coptic and Egyptian, to add to the German, Russian, Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Tartar he had already acquired ⁴⁷.

It seems that during this period Spies found it difficult to settle and his relationship with Murnau was sometimes a stormy one. He moved from painting to composing, to film-work, to performing music and he clearly had dreams of travelling which were revealed early while he was still in Sterlitamak. In one of his letters (Spies to his Mother, 1917)⁴⁸ he had suggested a circuitous route to travel back to Germany upon his release, which would take in Tibet, North Africa and Spain. Spies finally acted on this apparent wanderlust just at a point where it looked as though he was about to make a name for himself as a painter in Europe. Spies' departure also coincided with, and was perhaps a partial result of the break-up of his relationship with Murnau. Despite this split, they continued to correspond. Spies painted several works for Murnau, who also intended to sail across the Pacific in his yacht to visit Spies after the completion of his film *Tabu* (1931) ⁴⁹. This did not eventually happen, due to his untimely death in California in 1931.

Spies had had two very successful exhibitions in Holland in the Stedelijk museum in Amsterdam and at various venues in the Hague ⁵⁰. This would have earned him valuable foreign currency during the period of hyper-inflation in Germany ⁵¹. Despite the apparent good prospects in his painting career, he joined a ship bound for the Indies in August 1923, with his friend the German writer Heinrich Hauser ⁵². Spies pretended to be a Russian sailor and both men worked their passage via Cardiff to Batavia (now Jakarta) in Java, where Spies jumped ship and his companion continued his journey.

It seems curious that Spies decided to work his passage rather than to pay to travel, particularly as he would recently have made some money from the sale of paintings and also his family could have provided the money. It is also curious why he decided to travel under a false identity. The coy way in which his later conviction for having sexual relations with a minor ⁵³ has been dealt with in other accounts along with the fact that he never once returned to Germany, could indicate that he was running away from a similar accusation in Germany or Holland. He certainly expresses nervousness about returning to Germany in his correspondence ⁵⁴. However, it seems more likely that a sense of romance could have been behind his decision to travel in this way. Also, this trip did not occur completely unannounced, as both he and Hauser corresponded with

people like his sister Daisy and Oskar Kokoschka⁵⁵ about their trip. It was clear that he was unhappy with the grim and convention-bound world of Europe.

You don't understand at all how unhappy I feel living among those impassive and emotionless people in Germany! They don't have anything natural. Everything is false and artificial.
(Letter, Spies to Frau S, 1923)⁵⁶

Perhaps, ironically, he was seeking to reinvent himself on the lines of popular European and particularly German paradisaic romantic thinking about casting off the restrictive mantle of civilisation and living a more natural and free existence⁵⁷. Perhaps he was also aiming to rediscover freedoms he had experienced in the Urals, which may have included his homosexual initiation⁵⁸. It is interesting that Murnau appears to have shared this idea and in his own way explored it through some of his films, in particular *Tabu*. This was clearly a strong compulsion amongst young German artists such as Emil Nolde, who Spies had known and who travelled to New Guinea. Spies' teacher, Oskar Kokoschka, in correspondence also expressed similar desires, at exactly the time that Spies left Germany.

Do you know what would be a proper existence, Mirli? Africa. But it would take a miracle to transport us from here to there. I would like to be an African king and I would drive out all the European shopkeepers and commercial travellers, and arouse my black people. That would be worthwhile and exciting enough for me to go on living, confining those awful bourgeois to Europe, where they would have to go on bartering feathers and postage - stamps and flimsy little pictures until they are carted to the cemetery.
(Letter, Oskar Kokoschka to Mirli)⁵⁹

It is somewhat ironic that several years later with Spies' work in the Bali museum and the advent of *Pita Maha*⁶⁰ along with Spies' hotel ventures⁶¹, he himself could have been described as a 'shopkeeper' in the terms Kokoschka describes. Kokoschka's discourse seems to typify European attitudes which despised bourgeois European colonialists and yet could only conceive of the colonised people throwing off their chains with the help of a white instigator. This fantasy is similar to that which is encapsulated in *Lord Jim* (Conrad, 1900)⁶², but also in the way that Spies' own role in relation to the Balinese has been constructed by Rhodius.

When Spies arrived in Batavia he jumped ship and made his way to Bandung where he found a job as a pianist in a cinema and it was in this way that he made his living for

the first few months of his stay. After a while, he moved to Yogyakarta in East Java and a chance encounter there led to his becoming 'Kapellmeister' to the European-style orchestra of the Sultan of Yogyakarta in 1924⁶³. Spies would probably have felt at home in these aristocratic circles after his upbringing in Moscow. The same would apply to his later association with Balinese royalty. There were also other attractions of the *Kraton*⁶⁴ for Spies: "My dinner has just been brought in by my delicate, lotus-eyed, barefoot boy, whom I have as good as adopted." (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 21) .⁶⁵ This job paid him well and he lived a privileged existence in the *Kraton*. At this time, he also studied and transcribed Javanese Gamelan music, inventing a notation to record Gamelan⁶⁶. Unfortunately, it appears that little of this work survives.

Although Spies painted and exhibited works at this time, it seems that much of his efforts went into his musical activities. He created some interesting paintings, which were exhibited and sold, of which perhaps the most interesting and intriguing is *Laterna Magica* (fig. 29) which I discussed in the previous chapter and which seems to mark the transition between his European style and preoccupations with the beginnings of a new Asian subject⁶⁷. His mother also visited him during this period from 1925 to 1927. Spies' close relationship with his mother is worth noting at this point, particularly as his chatty correspondence with her forms the backbone of Rhodius' compilation of letters. The nature of his relationship with her is also revealed in the vacillations Spies expresses in a letter to Jane Belo (1939)⁶⁸ in which he agonises about how to reveal his homosexuality to his mother or perhaps conceal it in the light of his imprisonment. He characterises her as innocent and needing protection, although he also appears to present himself in that light and it seems that both of them adopted roles to some extent.

In 1925 Spies visited Bali as a guest of Cokorda Gede Raka Sukawati, a prince of Ubud, at the *Puri* (palace) there. There is a certain amount of confusion about this Prince and his brother Cokorda Gede Agung Sukawati, who were, to some extent, rivals and who were involved with Spies' artistic activities at certain times. They were also both pro-colonial officials. Raka was the Peoples' Council representative for Bali as well as sitting on the Council of Kings, both of which were instigated by the Dutch⁶⁹. Vickers describes him as "...very much the model of an aristocratic colonial civil servant" (Vickers, 1989, p. 141). According to Kam (Kam, 1993, p. 42) they both became involved with Spies in an artistic sense with the founding of the *Pita Maha* group, although it was Agung who had a more 'hands-on' involvement in terms of selecting works. Along with Spies, they could all be regarded

as part of the colonial elite in relation to Spivak's model describing layers of colonial subalternity (Spivak, 1988, p. 284).

After this visit, Spies was attracted by Bali and the Balinese and he contrived to move there. He gave his notice to the Sultan of Yogyakarta and moved to Bali in 1927 where initially he stayed at the *Puri*⁷⁰. Eventually, he was allowed by the Prince to build his own dwelling on palace land in Campuan. Thus, Spies became one of the earliest expatriate bohemian Westerners to settle in Bali at this time. More importantly, he set up his home outside the urban areas designated by the Dutch. This could be compared to the way that European artists settled in Italy during the golden age of the Grand Tour and provided artworks for the aristocratic and wealthy individuals on the smaller orbit of the tours of those days. Spies settled in what was to become one of the most popular and celebrated parts of the colonial world amongst this privileged group. This was much to the apparent annoyance and bemusement of the colonial authorities and administrators who had been the only outsiders, along with a handful of carefully regulated tourists centring around the Bali Hotel in Denpasar until this time⁷¹.

During his time in Bali, Spies became actively and energetically involved with a number of different projects and activities. These included the role of tour-guide⁷², scholar of indigenous dance and music⁷³, choreographer of dance⁷⁴, designer of a backdrop for *wayang* productions⁷⁵, naturalist, painter⁷⁶, photographer⁷⁷, film-maker⁷⁸, musicologist⁷⁹, hotelier⁸⁰, curator⁸¹, correspondent⁸², hedonist and finally cultural ambassador and consultant⁸³. The first few years in Bali were spent establishing friends and contacts, as well as studying Balinese culture, particularly music and dance. It is fair to say that his interest in, and regard for, these art forms probably outweighed his interest in Balinese painting for much of his stay in Bali⁸⁴. This is interesting because perhaps he felt more inclined to try and influence painting. He may have felt that this artistic area was already much more in the 'contact-zone'⁸⁵ between outsiders and Balinese⁸⁶.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Spies became involved with two film projects, *Island of Demons* (1931) (**fig. 35**) and *Kriss* (1930). He was a key figure in the making of both films in terms of general consultancy, casting, plot, choreography and art-direction. The nature of film is that it is a collaborative project. However, several aspects of the final product are a clear representation of the attitudes and values of Spies⁸⁷. Spies also had an increasing involvement with Balinese painting during the 1930s, which was directly linked with the increase in foreign tourists and the growth of the local art market. Spies became curator of the newly established Bali museum⁸⁸ and started to

sell paintings and other artefacts by Balinese artists from there. This ultimately led to the foundation of the *Pita Maha* artists group in January 1936⁸⁹ as described in Chapter 2. This is a particularly significant event in the discourse surrounding Spies and his relationship with Balinese art will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

During this period, Spies also became more of a celebrity and was clearly flattered by the attentions of the rich and famous of the time⁹⁰. Filmstars, millionaires as well as anthropologists, archaeologists, musicologists and the European aristocracy were attracted to Bali at this time. A visit to Spies, with the prospect of buying one of his paintings, was often on their itinerary. The Hollywood group included Charlie Chaplin, Noel Coward, Vicki Baum and Cole Porter. He was also visited by Barbara Hutton, (the Woolworth heiress). On the academic side he was visited by Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Rose and Miguel Covarrubias, Jane Belo and Colin McPhee. Spies was also visited by Beryl de Zoete with whom he produced the book *Dance and Drama in Bali* (1938). Various British aristocrats such as Lady Delamere, the sister-in-law of Lord Mountbatten, visited Spies. Spies often acted as guide, consultant on Balinese culture and hotelier for these prominent guests. This is likely to have been a further annoyance for the colonial authorities who would have preferred the prestige of entertaining such well-known figures themselves.

During the 1930s, he became increasingly and promiscuously involved with Balinese youth⁹¹. It is clear that he was not particularly discreet about these liaisons. As a long term resident, and hotelier catering for the Hollywood set, this meant that he and others such as 'Manx'⁹² increasingly gained a reputation amongst the more conservative white residents of Bali for debauchery and 'deviance'⁹³. This was a reflection of the reputation that Bali gained in the late 1930s as a permissive destination for sexual tourism, both heterosexual and homosexual. This reputation seems to have been a self-perpetuating one and is certainly in part the product of the official promotion of the island at this time (**fig. 36**). Vickers suggests that the homosexual tourism was an accidental by-product of the rather puerile promotion of Bali as the home of beautiful women⁹⁴. The visual objectification of Bali's landscape and its people as a tourist attraction became translated in many cases into more physical exploitation of the apparently different sexual mores of the Balinese combined with their need for cash in post-depression colonial Bali.⁹⁵

The growing perception of Bali as a 'den of iniquity' by the authorities and a fear of a loss of 'prestige' prompted a purge against homosexuals, which resulted in the investigation, arrest and prosecution of many thousands of men and sometimes

women throughout the Indies. However, the main focus was on Bali and Walter Spies was one of those arrested on 31st of September 1938 and he was tried for sex with a minor. Spies was eventually given what was described by his lawyer as a lenient sentence⁹⁶ in July 1939 and Spies decided not to appeal, as a number of appeals by others had resulted in longer sentences. Spies was eventually released less than two months later on the first of September 1939⁹⁷.

After a short period in Buitenzorg working at the Botanical Gardens, he returned to Bali, which was probably much emptier of Europeans at this time due to the war in Europe and also because of the previous exodus due to the purge⁹⁸. He only remained in Bali for a few months. He was interned for a second time in his life as a German national upon the invasion of Holland by Germany in 1940. It is clear that on the urging of friends⁹⁹, he tried to become a Dutch citizen some time in 1939 and his application still exists in the Indonesian national archive signed Walter R. Spies¹⁰⁰. However, it appears that this application was rejected or was not processed in time and so he was taken first to Ngawi in Java and then to Kotjané in North Sumatra. After twenty months of internment, during which he began to paint again, he and his fellow internees were put on a ship to Ceylon in January 1942 upon the imminent invasion of the Indies by the Japanese. Tragically, the overloaded ship, the *Van Imhoff* was bombed by a Japanese aircraft and sank near Nias off the coast of Sumatra. Spies was one of those prisoners trapped behind barbed-wire in the hold who were deliberately not released in the panic when the ship started to sink and the crew escaped in the lifeboats¹⁰¹. Walter Spies perished aged forty seven, with hundreds of other internees.

‘Bali’s most famous resident’ : popular discourse about Spies and his life in Bali

It was in Bali that the mystification of Spies’ persona was created and he appears as a cameo in some tourist and travel accounts. Some of these accounts acknowledge him more extensively. Most accounts are complimentary, some awed and some salacious. These accounts are written mostly by the visitors and residents of Bali at that time, many of whom were disposed to write about their experiences of the Island in memoirs which capitalised on its increasingly exotic image throughout the 1920s and 1930s, for example, Koke (1987, [f. written, 1942]) and Tantri (1960). A biographical composite can be created of Spies from these accounts by Westerners, some of which view him from afar, some which claim to be intimate, some which derive from official documents and one or two glimpses which come from the pen of Spies himself. This discourse around Spies is useful in establishing ideas of who he was and what he represented

within the various lines of colonial discourse created by foreigners (However, it is not very helpful in ascertaining the views of the Balinese about Spies and other colonial figures with whom they had contact ¹⁰²). This section is mostly concerned with the creation of a composite characterisation deriving from occidental sources, which has in fact been constructed using disparate and sometimes conflicting impressions. There is a tacit acceptance of the colonial system and the place of people like Spies within that system, which is also characteristic of most of these accounts.

Louise Koke's account, written in 1942, salaciously tries to portray Spies as rather mysterious and decadent. It gives a very particular impression clearly fed not only by her observations of Spies, but by preconceptions of Walter Spies probably gathered from expatriate island gossip, alluded to by Spies and Belo in their correspondences

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There was a man living in Ubud, about twenty miles away from Denpasar, named Walter Spies who was reputed to know everything about Bali... A dark brown, two-storey house clung to the side of a steep ravine. Dense foliage screened it from the road and made a secret stillness. Below the house an oval swimming pool lay half hidden among the trees, fed by bamboo pipe from a hillside spring. The house was decorated with Balinese paintings and antique carvings. One of Mr Spies' own paintings, a forest scene in great detail with great shafts of light casting long shadows, hung in the living room. There was also a grand piano as well - a remarkable thing to find in such a place.

Mr Spies, tall and dignified, about forty years old, received us cordially and we were soon joined by Miss Vicki Baum, her brother and another German. Miss Baum was doing research for her novel, *A Tale of Bali*. Two handsome young Balinese men served us with whiskey and soda.

At the swimming pool later Mr Spies introduced us to another handsome young Balinese, invited him to show us how well he could swim and dive, and watched him with proud solicitude. The servants brought a low table laden with bottles, glasses and ice and set it in the water at the shallow end of the pool. Mr Spies, lying partly immersed, poured the drinks. I sat up to my waist in the cool, mountain water, holding a glass of Holland gin and imagining what exotic parties could take place in that hidden ravine. At night the wooded slope would be mysteriously lit by burning wicks set in hanging coconut shells. Metal threads in the servants' garments would shimmer in the warm glow. The air would be a little heavy with burning incense, and with the odour of coconut oil in freshly washed and anointed hair.

(Koke, 1942, pub.1987, pp. 49-50) ¹⁰⁴

Koke's use of words like 'would' and 'could' illustrate the supposition and imagination being exercised in constructing this impression of Spies. By contrast, Charlie Chaplin in 1934 presents the view of a fleeting visitor to Bali and feeds the view of Spies as a benevolent colonial, the dedicated nurturer and connoisseur of Balinese culture who is loved and revered by the Balinese.

Walter Spies is lunching with us today. He is a young Russian painter and musician who has lived on the island for five years making a study of Balinese music. He is a handsome man between twenty-eight and thirty, and is adored by the natives, who treat him like a father confessor. He has made a penetrating study of their arts and is well versed on Balinese life...

Later we dined at Walter Spies' house. It is a beautiful bungalow with a thatched roof situated on the brink of a ravine with a rushing river below. He told many strange stories about the Balinese, the mystic side of them and how cultured and refined they were.

Their taste for music is discriminating. When playing the piano to several natives, they listened indifferently to Chopin, Liszt and Schubert but only in Bach did they show any interest. The rest they dismissed as sentimental.

Spies said in the five years he had studied their music he was unable to master their time. The tempo seems to defy all mathematical laws, it is so involved, yet the natives can play it identically over and over again. He said he has made a score of some of their simpler music but it takes three virtuosos at one piano to play it. (Chaplin, 1934, pp. 21-23)

A close friend of Spies, Miguel Covarrubias continues this complimentary and admiring discourse about Spies. He presents him as being scholarly and informed and he also hints at Spies as a carefree person. Interestingly, he characterises Spies as being different from the colonial authorities and also by implication not sharing in their values. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 7, although different, these values may not have been as opposed to the colonial project in Bali as statements such as the following one implies.

It was my good fortune to have made friends in those days with Walter Spies, Bali's most famous resident. ...one day he went to Bali on a visit and has remained there ever since, and may perhaps, for the rest of his life. In his charming devil-may-care way, Spies is familiar with every phase of Balinese life and has been

the constant source of disinterested information to every archaeologist, anthropologist, musician or artist who has come to Bali. His assistance is given generously and without expecting even the reward of credit. Much of his energy and enthusiasm and energy has gone to help the work of others, but he has achievements of his own: He was the first to appreciate and record Balinese music, he has collected every pattern of Balinese art, has contributed to Dutch scientific journals, has created the Bali Museum, of which he is the curator, and has now built a splendid aquarium. An authentic friend of the Balinese and loved by them, I feel he has contributed more to the prestige of the white man than the colonial despots who fail to impress the discriminating Balinese by the policy used to bluff natives into submission.

...Walter loves to collect velvety dragonflies, strange spiders and sea-slugs, not in a naturalist's box, but in minutely accurate drawings. For days at a time he would sit in his tent drawing them, because, their beautiful colours disappeared. He was temperamental when he went into seclusion to paint, he would work incessantly for months on one of his rare canvases, great pictures that made the Balinese exclaim: "Beh" with their mouths wide open in astonishment, and that were snatched by prosperous art-loving travellers who were lucky enough to find Spies with a finished painting. There were never two paintings in his house at once. He paints dream-like landscapes in which every branch and every leaf is carefully painted, done with the love of a Persian miniaturist, a Cranach, a Breughel or a Douanier Rousseau.

(Covarrubias, 1937, pp. xxi - xxiii)

Spies is mentioned fleetingly by the British-born Ketut Tantri in her memoirs and she takes a similarly complimentary view of Spies, although it is clear that Spies loathed her ¹⁰⁵.

I remember with fondness Walter Spies, a fine German painter who had lived in Bali for many years and was always close to the Balinese people.

(Tantri, 1960, p. 74)

Ketut Tantri's account of a discussion with one of the colonial officials illustrates the view which was taken by white officials. This view is a dismissive and unambiguous statement of attitude as a reflection of colonial policy. This is perhaps illustrative of a key difference between Spies and the colonial authorities. Although he was also a paternalist, he had 'intimate' relationships with the Balinese

The other Dutchman I mentioned lives in Ubud with a German artist who also is a musician, a writer, and a collector of butterflies. But in no case do we like it

when the whites become intimate with the natives. It is bad for our prestige.
(Tantri, 1960, p. 21)

What is interesting about this is the way it echoes an apparent white preoccupation with the idea of the colonials having 'prestige' with the natives. It is clear that when the official refers to 'our prestige', he is referring to the prestige of 'whites'. Covarrubias (Covarrubias, 1937, pp. xxi - xxiii) is in marked contrast to the Dutch *controlleur* described by Ketut Tantri. They both consider 'white' prestige to be important, but Covarrubias feels this comes through his alleged friendship and celebrity amongst the Balinese, whereas the *controlleur* feels that these close relations undermine prestige. However, both seem to agree that some form of 'white' prestige is important. The whole idea of prestige seems to relate to notions of white status and colonial hierarchy and the word 'prestige' could appropriately be regarded as a euphemism for 'superiority'. Rhodius when describing Spies' stay in Java suggests that Spies himself "...had no prejudices about the white man's prestige, and the Javanese were devoted to him" (Rhodius in Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 27) . This rather generalised and simplistic claim, implying Spies' apparently seamless contact with the local people, will be explored and questioned in subsequent chapters. This idea will be further discussed later in relation to notions of colonial hierarchies and a 'white caste'.

A more distant view of Spies from a few years later in a piece of travel literature by Harold Forster, who had not met him, displays the early post-war development of a post-independence, packaged Walter Spies myth.

For this had been the home of Walter Spies, the German artist known to the West as the 'discoverer' of Bali and in Bali itself as a friend of all their arts. ...and when he visited Bali, he realised that he had found what he wanted and settled there for the rest of his life. His example and influence revived Balinese painting; his choreography created the *Ketjak* or Monkey Dance; his volume on *Dance and Drama in Bali*, in collaboration with Beryl de Zoete, revealed these arts to the West.
(Forster, 1958, p. 158)

Later accounts tend to continue this complimentary description and his impact is consistently seen as positive. Spies appears to have used his paintings and local knowledge not only as a way of earning money, but also as a different kind of currency to ingratiate himself with the rich and the aristocratic of Europe and America and to give him social standing. It could be argued that he found himself in Bali because he

was able to become a form of celebrity by being a 'big fish in a small pond' and, had he stayed in Europe, he might have been a mediocre and peripheral figure in the overall canon of modernism. In a way, he was recreating the rarefied world of his youth in Moscow. By gaining a foothold in the aristocratic world, he was allowed to engage vicariously and more directly in their lifestyle. He became a favoured courtier. In a sycophantic letter to Lady Delamere he suggested going hunting ("Shall we shoot a tiger?" (Spies to Lady Delamere, 1938)¹⁰⁶); he then goes on to lay out an itinerary of touristic activities in West Bali; camping, an excursion in outrigger canoes, seeing coral and Jane Belo's tennis court.

The fact is that he was seen as an extraordinarily creative, altruistic and well-loved individual amongst the white friends who shared his cultural values and his lifestyle. However, they also shared many of his secrets as well. It is much less clear how he was seen by the Balinese themselves and also what range of opinions existed about him amongst those with a lesser voice in terms of the documentary record. The largely complimentary opinions of Balinese which are recorded by Westerners tend to reflect the cultural and ideological position of those Westerners. Although such accounts may not necessarily be untrue, it is quite possible that other, dissenting subaltern voices have been diminished or edited out in contemporary and subsequent accounts, which tend to conform to received Western views of Spies. Spies seems to have been quite hedonistic and promiscuous¹⁰⁷. He could be seen as exploiting his position as a privileged white man under a colonial regime and under the protection of the Prince of Ubud, in his relationships with young Balinese men. Because Spies is characterised as a 'friend of the natives', it is useful to find out their views. This is not always easy as their voice tends not to exist in the colonial context, and records by Europeans are likely also to be mediated and edited. A more independent voice can be heard in the present day, but this is often also mediated by the established view of Spies heard through 'Western' voices. This darker side of Spies tends to be ignored in the older accounts, although a less idealised picture is starting to emerge. Accounts like Vickers (1989), Lindsey (1997) and Picard (1996) agree with the altruistic idea of Spies, but they also introduce a more balanced and factual approach, which is not based on romanticism, personal friendships or hagiography. They do not simply adopt the canon which has developed based on those early accounts which play down Spies' homosexuality. These accounts also start to examine Spies in a way which does not simply accept the self-indulgent colonial values implicit in his colonial context. This approach will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Summary

Some aspects of the picaresque life of Walter Spies lend themselves to romantic fiction, and indeed some of the colonial residents probably tried to invent themselves in relation to these fictions and films of the time. This has undoubtedly been part of the appeal to people such as Hans Rhodius. It also accounts for the inclusion of at least a mention of Walter Spies in numerous accounts which deal with the colourful and exotic reputation of Bali during that period. In fact accounts of Bali in the inter-war period which do not mention Spies are notable for his absence. This is because the great majority of works on Bali focus on aspects of its art, culture or colourful colonial residents and tend to focus on a relatively small area of south Bali north from Denpasar to Ubud and south from Denpasar to Legian, Kuta, and Sanur. Thus, when many writers talk about Bali, they do not necessarily consider the whole of the island of Bali, but rather the parts of Bali which have been promoted for their art and culture. This issue will be revisited in relation to the discourse of influence which relates to Spies in Chapter 7. The biographical construction of Spies is mainly hagiographic and this is largely a result of the work of Rhodius which although embodying some detailed biographical research, is largely responsible for the neo-colonial adoption of Spies as a father figure for Balinese art. This fits in with the male artist-as-genius model which characterises the traditional monographic approach to art history ¹⁰⁸.

In this chapter, I have challenged the notion of biography as truth and demonstrated this in relation to the discursive construction of Spies' own life particularly with reference to Hans Rhodius. I have demonstrated that a colonial discourse has been promoted through the work of Rhodius, without a significant deconstruction of the ideology which underpinned Spies and his colonial life. I have sought to describe Spies' life in order to provide an explanatory context to my later discussion, but I have sought to avoid the elaboration and fanciful romantic statements which have been made about Spies. Thus, this account resembles less a romantic narrative fiction and more a chronological collection of contacts, dates and places. However, these are still the result of a selection process which firstly, is based on the information which can be gleaned from existing primary and secondary sources and secondly, a selection of this information which inevitably emphasises some events and details over and above others in relation to the foci of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is necessary to provide this information to explain Spies' presence in Indonesia and also to position him colonially and in relation to European art and society ¹⁰⁹. This has been done in order, later in this thesis, to discuss the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory nature of cultural exchange in the arena of Bali and Balinese arts. My discussion also highlights the ways

in which discourse has played a part in the portrayal of contacts and cultural events in Bali at that time time, and ultimately their historical explanations through biography.

¹ Woody Allen, 1983 – a film in which the fictional protagonist *Zelig* appears in key historical and cultural events throughout the 20th century.

² This archive holds some useful correspondence from Walter Spies, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Jane Belo and others on microfilm from the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.

³ David Sandberg is Walter Spies' great nephew and holds useful archive material on Walter Spies as well as providing me with useful pieces of family history. Heidi Hinzler is the Curator of the Walter Spies archive at the University of Leiden.

⁴ This will be examined in detail in the next Chapter.

⁵ Jane Belo was an anthropologist and socialite who was a close friend of Walter Spies and was married to the musicologist Coin McPhee. She came to Bali with McPhee in the 1930s and set up a house there.

⁶ Hinzler suggested that this account was mainly written by John Stowell. Stylistically, this seems unlikely, although his editorial input and translation skills might have been sought.

(Interview with Heidi Hinzler, May, 2000)

⁷ Janet Ho, 1997

⁸ This also means that there is a thriving market of Spies forgeries in Indonesia. Because of my website, I have been contacted by email on a regular basis with requests to authenticate pictures (from digital images) which are clearly forgeries.

⁹ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999

¹⁰ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999

¹¹ Interview with Heidi Hinzler, May, 2000

¹² The book itself was funded entirely as a 'vanity' publication by Rhodius.

¹³ Letter, Walter Spies to Jane Belo, 06/07/1939 L.O.C

¹⁴ Rhodius, 1964, p. 19

¹⁵ Anak Agung Madé Djelantik is a descendent of one of the Balinese royal families who has had a career as a medical doctor and has also written a book about Balinese painting (Djelantik, 1990).

¹⁶ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999

¹⁷ This was alleged by both Heidi Hinzler and David Sandberg

¹⁸ "A Walter Spies painting of a tiger and a snake fighting went to a Jakarta collector for \$828,750.

At Sotheby's auction on Saturday, an Asian collector bid \$1.103 million to own a moody painting of volcanoes by Russian-born Spies...Spies' works could not be bought prior to the first auction of his works that was held by auction house Glerum in The Hague in 1990. Christie's auctioned its first Spies work here in 1994 for about \$450,000." (Janet Ho, *The Straits Times*, Singapore, Tuesday, April 1, 1997)

¹⁹ The Walter Spies Society was originally instigated by Hans Rhodius and now exists in three loosely associated entities. One is in Bali, one based in Cologne and the other in Leiden. It organises cultural events such as exhibitions and collects archive material relating to Spies.

²⁰ Rhodius, 1964, (*Schönheit und Reichtum des Lebens* translates as 'beauty and riches of the life')

²¹ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999

²² It has been alleged that in the later stages of his illness, he was persuaded to sign a revised will which allowed his sons to take possession of the artworks. The sons were apparently not interested in the idea of a collection and were perhaps even resentful about the role Spies had posthumously played in their father's life (Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999)

²³ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999,

²⁴ Rhodius, 1964, p. 585

²⁵ Rhodius, 1964, p. 587

²⁶ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999

²⁷ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 9

²⁸ Soejima, 1997, p. 61

²⁹ Interview with Dr. Heidi Hinzler, May, 2000

³⁰ In this case I have used Rhodius' ethnonym 'Tartar'. It is unclear what this tribe actually called themselves

³¹ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p.11

³² Niehaus, 1939, p. 167

³³ Maxim Gorki was a Russian writer and revolutionary who is known for his short stories dealing with thieves, tramps and outcasts.

³⁴ Niehaus, 1941, p. 25

- ³⁵ Niehaus, 1941, p. 25
- ³⁶ Spies in Rhodius, 1964, p. 32-33, Extract from a letter sent by Spies from prison in 1939 to Kaspar Niehaus about his life story.
- ³⁷ Spies in Rhodius, 1964, p. 33, Extract from a letter sent by Spies from prison in 1939 to Kaspar Niehaus about his life story.
- ³⁸ Niehaus, 1941, p. 27
- ³⁹ Niehaus, 1941, p. 27
- ⁴⁰ Hedwig Jaenchen was a pupil of Rodin and Bourdelle
- ⁴¹ Letter, Spies to Franz Roh, 09/1922, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 108-109
- ⁴² "I always had thousands of other interests!" Spies in Rhodius, 1964, p. 33, Extract from a letter sent by Spies from prison in 1939 to Kaspar Niehaus about his life story.
- ⁴³ Spies in Rhodius, 1964, p. 33, Extract from a letter sent by Spies from prison in 1939 to Kaspar Niehaus about his life story.
- ⁴⁴ Soejima, 1997, p. 68
- ⁴⁵ Shoonderbeek in Rhodius, 1964, p. 121
- ⁴⁶ Soejima, 1997, p. 69
- ⁴⁷ Niehaus, 1941, p. 27
- ⁴⁸ Letter, Spies to his Mother, Sterlitamak, 10/1917, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 75
- ⁴⁹ Letter, Spies to his Mother, Ubud, 04/1929, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 266. *Tabu* will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.
- ⁵⁰ Niehaus, 1941, p. 29
- ⁵¹ Soejima, 1997, p. 66
- ⁵² Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999
- ⁵³ This will be dealt with in the next chapter.
- ⁵⁴ Walter Spies to Jand Belo, 26/03/1932, L.O.C.
- ⁵⁵ Letters by Spies & Hauser, Hamburg, 08/1923, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 134-135
- ⁵⁶ Letter, Spies to Frau S, 07/1923 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 131, translation, Soejima, 1997
- ⁵⁷ This will be discussed in relation to Spies as a modernist in chapter 6.
- ⁵⁸ Stowell, annotations to material from Library of Congress, Spies Archive, Leiden
- ⁵⁹ Letter, Oskar Kokoschka to Mirli, 25/08/1923 in Kokoschka & Martinau, 1992, p. 94
- ⁶⁰ *Pita Maha* was the group founded by a group including Spies to market Balinese arts and crafts. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7.
- ⁶¹ In the later 1930s, Spies ran a number of lodges in Campuan, Bali, which he let out to select tourists
- ⁶² Conrad, 1900. This idea will explored further in Chapter 6.
- ⁶³ Although it is beyond the scope of this account, the transculturation involved with this enterprise is worthy of further discussion, particularly as it involves the teaching by Walter Spies of Western musical styles to Javanese musicians.
- ⁶⁴ The *Kraton* is the palace of the Sultan in Jogjakarta in Java.
- ⁶⁵ Spies quoted in Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 21
- ⁶⁶ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 27
- ⁶⁷ This work was discussed in the previous chapter and will be discussed in Chapter 6.
- ⁶⁸ Letter, Spies to Jane Belo, 05/02/39, L.O.C.
- ⁶⁹ Vickers, 1989, p. 140
- ⁷⁰ *Puri* is the word for 'palace' or 'royal dwelling' in Balinese.
- ⁷¹ Koke, 1987, p. 37
- ⁷² Letter, Spies to Lady Delamere, 07/1938 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 376. Spies describes an itinerary of camping, outrigger canoes and visiting coral reefs, tennis and shooting a tiger.
- ⁷³ De Zoete & Spies, 1938
- ⁷⁴ Vickers, 1989, p. 107
- ⁷⁵ Stowell, 1992, p. 8
- ⁷⁶ Rhodius & Darling, 1980
- ⁷⁷ Hitchcock & Norris, 1995
- ⁷⁸ Vickers, 1989, p. 107
- ⁷⁹ Kunst, 1946
- ⁸⁰ Lindsey, 1997
- ⁸¹ Stowell, 1992
- ⁸² Rhodius, 1964
- ⁸³ General correspondence from the library of congress microfilm held in the Walter Spies archive at the university of Leiden.
- ⁸⁴ This is attested to by the production and publication of *Dance and Drama in Bali* (de Zoete & Spies, 1938)

- ⁸⁵ The colonial 'contact-zone' is an idea developed by Mary Louise Pratt to describe the arena of cultural and economic exchange in a colonial context (Pratt, 1992) This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.
- ⁸⁶ In fact, the whole notion of painting on paper for sale to tourists could be seen as an entirely new art form without historical precedent. This idea will be discussed and questioned further later in chapter 7.
- ⁸⁷ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.
- ⁸⁸ The museum was founded in Denpasar to preserve Balinese traditional arts and to display them for tourists and other visitors to Bali. Spies was actively involved in collecting items for the museum as well as curating it. (Stowell, 1992)
- ⁸⁹ Margaret Mead, Fieldwork notes, 1939, L.O.C.
- ⁹⁰ Letter, Spies to his mother, 17/04/1936, Walter Spies archive, Leiden
- ⁹¹ Mead, 1939, L. O. C.: Lindsey, 1997, p. 32
- ⁹² 'Manx' was also known as 'Ketut Tantri' and later as 'Surabaya Sue'. She has written an autobiography (Tantri, 1960) which has recently been interestingly deconstructed by Timothy Lindsey (Lindsey, 1997)
- ⁹³ Lindsey, 1997, p. 92
- ⁹⁴ Vickers, 1995, p. 29
- ⁹⁵ This will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.
- ⁹⁶ Letter, Witsen Elias to Mead & Bateson, 10/07/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁹⁷ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 49
- ⁹⁸ Letter, Jane Belo to Johnny, 10/02/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁹⁹ H. K. Jacobs in Rhodius, 1964, p. 322
- ¹⁰⁰ Fieldwork, National Archive, Jakarta, Aug, 1998
- ¹⁰¹ Typewritten account of the sinking of the *Van Imhoff*, Father Aloysius, 1968, (provided by Heidi Hinzler)
- ¹⁰² The views of the Balinese and how they might have differed from the Westerners will be dealt with in more detail in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.
- ¹⁰³ Letter, Spies to Jane Belo, 04/11/1936, L.O.C.
- ¹⁰⁴ Koke, 1987 (first written in 1942), pp. 49-50
- ¹⁰⁵ Lindsey, 1997, p. 85
- ¹⁰⁶ Letter, Spies to Lady Delamere, 07/1938 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 376
- ¹⁰⁷ Lindsey, 1997, p. 32 :Mead, notes to court, 1939, L.O.C.
- ¹⁰⁸ Harris, 2001, p. 101. Harris summarises Nochlin's argument questioning the idea of male greatness in relation to the role of women. In the case of Walter Spies, the idea of greatness is questionable in the way it is attributed to a European figure and not to the Balinese artists for instance.
- ¹⁰⁹ I have also not discussed at any great length, the broader social background of Russia and Germany at that time, but I have alluded to these important contextual factors and they will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6 in relation to my discussion of Spies as a 'modernist'.

Walter Spies as a colonial figure

Introduction

This chapter seeks to build on the critical biographical outline of Spies in the previous chapter and further focuses on the generally ambivalent position of Spies as a colonial figure during his stay in Bali. It will explore notions of exploitation and exchange as aspects of intercultural colonial contact at this time and I will demonstrate the relevance of Spies' sexual contacts to his continued stay in Bali and on the artistic and institutional activities he engaged in. I will demonstrate the relevance and linkage of Spies' sexual contacts with the Balinese through an examination of his own aesthetic discourse which does not clearly differentiate physical attraction from artistic appreciation. I will examine the attitudes of the colonial authorities; the proclivities of Spies and his relationship and contact with the Balinese, which I will link with his more formal dealings with the Balinese, (such as through *Pita Maha* for instance). This approach is informed by the work of Hyam (1990) and Young (1995) who have explored the linkage between colonial expansion, discourse and desire and the sexual imperative behind the careers of colonists like Spies whose altruism and interest in the Balinese can be seen differently in the light of the sexual opportunities presented to them in the inequitable power relations provided in the colonies. However, Spies' existence along with that of many others at that time is also complicated by the forbidden nature of their sexuality. By looking in detail at the purge by Dutch colonial authorities on homosexuals and Spies' arrest in particular, I will highlight aspects of this part of Spies' life and will present new biographical information. I will also seek to answer questions which have not been dealt with in previous accounts, such as the grounds of his criminal charges and the discourse of his friends and associates in relation to his arrest. This will be done through focusing on how Spies' sexuality came to be seen and described by his friends, Margaret Mead, Jane Belo and Gregory Bateson, in particular. This will lead to a discussion of how this came to define him and his ambiguous relationship with the colonial establishment. I suggest that he served their policies well in respect of his cultural activities and yet, in terms of his homosexuality, he also became unacceptable to them.

Thus, I will examine notions of exploitation in relation to Spies and will seek to demonstrate how by implication, this exploitation is linked to his artistic contacts with the Balinese. I also explore attitudes towards colonialism itself and will discuss the way Spies and his associates viewed themselves in relation to Bali and the Balinese.

Finally, I will look at the Balinese reactions to the events and examine the problems in interpreting their reactions and position as a result of their closed and 'othered' subaltern discourse in relation to colonial authorities ¹. In relation to this idea, the linkage between sex-tourism and tourist art is also explored.

Sex tourism and relations of power in colonial Bali

Bali was strongly promoted by the Dutch as a tourist destination, partly to disperse doubt and international embarrassment ² following the bloodshed of the *puputan* massacres which marked their invasion of the southern part of the island in the early 20th century. The half-naked Balinese woman became an almost universal emblem in the Western world for Bali through films ³, advertising (**fig. 36**), tourist literature ⁴ and tourist art (**fig. 37**). This imagery promoted the notion that the sexual mores of the young Balinese men and women were permissive and that homosexuality was also accepted as normal amongst young men (and boys) prior to marriage ⁵. Beryl de Zoete wrote rather ambiguously:

Children grow quietly into puberty and manhood, and there is a perfect simplicity in the attitude of the Balinese towards sex.
(de Zoete & Spies, 1938, p. 3)

The perpetuation of such discourse into an academic context, whether true or not, would have attracted many European heterosexual and homosexual men ⁶ to places like Bali. From a Western cultural perspective, Bali might seem to be a land of sexual opportunity.

In the 1920s and 1930s, young homosexual men went to Asia in search of sexual freedom, away from the narrow constraints of Europe, and believed they had found their earthly paradise in Bali.
(Hitchcock & Norris, 1995, p. 29)

Hitchcock and Norris further contend that Bali had an "...image as a haven for homosexuals during the inter-war years." (Hitchcock & Norris, 1995, p. 29) . We must ask to what extent the Balinese became willing and accommodating sexual partners with the visitors? It seems important to consider whether the power-relationship between colonial masters and local Balinese would have forced the powerless to acquiesce unwillingly. It also seems important to look at what, if anything, the Balinese gained from the situation. Ronald Hyam discusses power and exploitation in terms of the notion of sexual perversion.

...but first let us agree that an act is perverted if its primary aim is domination rather than mutual enjoyment: if it becomes an expression of power rather than sensuality, and is thus so to speak plundering rather than worshipping. Rape is its commonest form. (Hyam, 1990, p. 9)

It is worth considering whether or not such behaviour was indeed acceptable within Balinese culture or whether this new dynamic was an inequitable product of the Balinese tourist 'contact zone'. This could also be seen as paralleling the way in which artistic and cultural ideas are adopted by a colonised people. It is arguable that this in fact takes the form of imposition in the contexts of *baliseering* and its cultural and political manifestations by conveniently promoting subtly remodelled ethnic stereotypes in order to promote tourism. This possibility of sexual exploitation is often ignored or toned down, partly because *baliseering* also required separatism. However, the discussion of sexual contacts and exploitation would create a more honest view about part of the attraction at least, of this island and the nature of the contacts which occurred in Bali. In the popular discourse concerning Walter Spies' sexual involvements with young male Balinese is the argument that such behaviour was of no concern to the Balinese⁷. It presents the idea that homosexuality does not exist as a formal state and is regarded as an unimportant aspect of behaviour rather than a possible basis for fixed identity in a Western sense⁸. De Zoete's earlier statement⁹ suggests a fairly justificatory argument for the alleged cultural acceptability of homosexual behaviour, amongst the Balinese, but this rather utopian sexual view is sullied by Covarrubias' observation about homosexual prostitution in Bali.

I have been asked by a naïve Balinese why it is that white men so often prefer boys to girls. I could only deny his strange idea, but later I found the explanation when I observed the alarming number of mercenary homosexuals around the hotels at night. (Covarrubias, 1937, p.145)

This highlights power relations based around money, privilege and exploitation. It is clear that there was often not some innocent sexual freedom amongst the Balinese youth and that sex with foreigners was regarded as a transaction for which some form of payment was due¹⁰. In the case of Walter Spies, this might have accounted for money stolen from his home¹¹ or perhaps in his case, the luxurious board and lodgings at his house in Campuan were enough payment for his succession of lovers

¹².

In addition to Balinese awareness of sex as a commodity catering to European demand, another important factor was at work. Throughout the 1930s, people in most areas of Bali were suffering extreme poverty as a result of the world-wide depression. Conrad Spies comments:

It seems to be some sort of an unlucky day. I had already 4 Balinese who came to ask for work. They brought presents with them, fruits, and then told me how difficult it is to get food to 'tingal idoeep' [stay alive]. Everyone tells the same tale 'soesa' [hardship] and then they think of the better times which passed, it seems forever.

(Letter, Conrad Spies to Jane Belo, 1932)¹³

This hardship must have driven many males and females into prostitution. The power relationship based on money would have been exacerbated by this situation along with colonial taxation. This would have left many Balinese ripe for further sexual exploitation under the western apology of the cultural acceptability of 'free' sex, as suggested by de Zoete ¹⁴.

Overall, it could be argued that Spies' sexual tastes and activities are, in fact, an irrelevance when discussing Spies' work and influence on the Balinese painters. However, it is relevant within the critical framework of an historically based accurate postcolonial approach to contextualising the artist's work. My discussion focuses on the discourse of influence and contact, and one of the most emphatic forms of contact between the races was sexual. Ronald Hyam points out that:

Historians of empire have to come to grips with sex if only because it is there. The sex drive, even in its weakest manifestations, has repercussions on how men relate to other people and how they go about their work. An understanding of individual sexual desire is thus important for interpreting a career.

(Hyam, 1990, p. 2)

This is the view I am also taking in relation to Spies, although a historical materialist view might suggest that focusing on an individual career itself, might not be the way to deal with contacts. The idea of individual motivations assumes the historical importance of such individuals. There is a danger in focusing on sexual aspects, that at the same time as exploring and exposing areas of past happenings and motivations, which have been historically considered as private, undue focus can also be placed on such details. This could be considered to be a sensationalist exposure of private aspects of an individual's life, perhaps lasciviously pandering to the voyeuristic tastes

of the very cultural orthodoxy which prevented such facts from being discussed originally. Thus, it is important to consider these factors in relation to others which relate to broader social and political processes.

The predominance of male subjects in Walter Spies' paintings differentiates him from most other European painters who worked in Bali, then and since. The discourse of sexual attraction is woven in with his aesthetic musings ¹⁵. However, it could be said that the figurative aspect of Spies' paintings is probably not the most important aspect of his work. The focus of many of the other European and American artists who have lived in Bali often objectified the semi-nudity of Balinese women about their daily work. In many respects, it is a refreshing aspect of Spies' paintings that he did not focus on Balinese women. He represented male figures in the Balinese landscape in his paintings and thus departed from the clichés which were the currency of many other Europeans in Bali at that time and since (**fig. 38**). However, the inclusion of these male figures is important, as I will illustrate in the next chapter. The significance of this focus should not be underestimated or ignored, nor can the European tradition of sex-tourism, which, as Ronald Hyam's book ¹⁶ illustrates, is surely not a new invention.

The purge: the arrest and trial of Walter Spies

Regarding the arrests made of Europeans in Bali in 1938 and 1939, Ketut Tantri comments:

In a first move the governor-general had ordered a clean-up of homosexuals throughout the Dutch East Indies, thus providing himself with an excuse for arresting a great many people, the innocent along with the guilty. An enormous scandal broke. Doctors, lawyers, naval officials and even members of the Dutch administration who had not quite toed the desired political line were taken into custody. The resultant hysteria soon spread to Bali. There were inquiries, a number of people fled the island.
(Tantri, 1960, pp. 89-90)

In terms of its realisation, the purge resulted in an expensive, poorly implemented legal and police operation, which destroyed lives and reputations, through sometimes questionable charges and evidence. It was problematically based on making a case under Dutch law which meant that 'under-age' sex had to be proved in order to prosecute homosexuals. The purge also had unforeseen consequences in terms of personal cost, expense and public relations, just at a time when war was looming. Jane

Belo ¹⁷ mentions this, saying that Java was also purged of homosexuals and that many more prominent people than expected were charged and they were harshly treated.

The way that this episode in Spies' life has been discussed has not been particularly helpful, as it has either been ignored ¹⁸, glossed over, or his sexual preferences unquestioningly justified in other accounts ¹⁹. The facts have been presented in an unclear manner, due to coyness or lack of research. These types of omission ultimately do not help the reputation of Spies, as they leave important but awkward questions unanswered. A large police operation was mounted in Bali, as in Java and other provinces, during 1939 and attempts were made to entrap and to gather information about particular individuals who were known or suspected homosexuals. In Bali, the appearance of a geographical and cultural separateness was important to the Dutch colonial authorities. This seems to have been augmented by the restoration of regency to the Balinese kings and princes in 1938. According to Belo, the head of South Bali wanted to rid rural Bali of Europeans and to restrict them to the cities where they could be watched ²⁰. There is a powerful irony here, as this can be seen as a different and administrative manifestation of Spies' own cultural viewpoints. It is similar to the way that residents like Spies, in line with the *baliseering* policy, wished the Balinese to be cleansed of the trappings of European-ness such as Western-style shirts and corrugated iron roofs. The 'moral' intention was the same in each case, to preserve the picturesque, 'uncorrupted' and 'authentic' human and physical Balinese landscape. ²¹

Eventually, arrests started to be made and court cases were conducted. The authorities were shocked by the sheer scope of the problem as indicated by the numbers of people charged ²². It is clear that by the time Spies was arrested, they were endeavouring to bring the whole affair to a close. The scandal made headlines in Europe ²³ and the apparent scale of activities meant that the entire reputation of the colony was under scrutiny in Europe and was ultimately damaged by this purge, despite the perceived need to act upon some of the alleged abuses which had been happening. It is clear that an attempt to preserve an appearance of correctness, was the prime motivation in this case and not a genuine concern for the basic human rights of the colonial subjects. This is another example of the colonial preoccupation with the 'prestige' of the white man.

Perhaps the reason why so little is known about this extraordinary episode is because of the war which was being conducted in Europe, which must have dominated the newspapers at this time. The way that Bali was perceived from outside is amusingly

illustrated by this extract from a letter written on behalf of Gregory Bateson by the British Consul General in Batavia.

I fear that anyone returning to a place with Bali's present unenviable moral reputation, cannot quite escape the risks inevitable for those who choose to live near a cesspool, but I understand that the recent investigations into moral offences have been so carefully conducted that this risk should be practically negligible in the case of persons of unblemished character well-known to the authorities. (Letter, British consul to a Mr Adams, 1939) ²⁴

Thus, Bali had apparently been transformed from paradise to cesspool very quickly and the pompous and supercilious tone of this letter is a clear indication of the ethos and attitudes of British establishment views of colonies as places inhabited by Europeans, whose 'natives' were of no consequence. The idea of a paradise had been created by Europeans just as now the idea of the cesspool was an alternative and equally inaccurate invention to describe Bali. Also noteworthy was the British consulate's clear approval of such a moral crusade on the part of the Dutch colonial authorities, regardless of the real nature of its implementation and its scope. There were certainly ulterior motives in Bali, where the authorities had for a long time tried with a singular lack of success, to prevent foreigners from living outside designated areas. Their misguided moral crusade undoubtedly provided them with a tool to do this. Jane Belo comments on how these events resulted in what was tantamount to a mass exodus. This was either a result of the enormous scale of inter-racial sexual contact on the island or a fear of wrongful arrest, or perhaps a combination of both.

At least half of the people living in Bali have been asked to leave, or have left on their own accord, one dares not wonder why. (Letter, Belo to Johnny, 1939) ²⁵

Presumably Belo does not mean half of the 'people', but rather half of the 'white people'. The fact that she refers to them in this way is representative of an attitude shared by Belo and probably her close friend Spies towards the Balinese. They are seen either as, lesser people or "pets" ²⁶ as she pejoratively refers to them later. Spies also refers to one of his employees (or perhaps lover) as his "Brahmin dog" ²⁷. Belo goes on to say that: "The Balinese think the whole white caste has gone mad" ²⁸. Although it is a casual comment, this is a revealing statement in that she perceives or perhaps explains the white people as a caste. This serves as a linguistic justification for the powerful colonial role of Europeans over the Balinese by

placing them into a pseudo-Hindu hierarchy. This conveniently justifies a racial hierarchy which insinuates the whites somewhere above the Brahmins and effectively implies a divine right to preside over other groups. One of those 'white caste' members pre-empting arrest by leaving of their own accord was Belo's ex-husband, the composer and musicologist Colin McPhee whose own behaviour had been highly suspect. It is not inaccurate to say that a climate of fear and paranoia prevailed amongst many of Bali's white bohemian as well as establishment residents.

The best source of information about this period in Bali is the various correspondences of Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Walter Spies and Jane Belo. It is clear from these writings that this purge represented an opportunity for the authorities to settle scores with individuals and the police methods are likely to have 'created' and coerced evidence against more than one person. It is unquestionably true that Spies was homosexual, but the coercive methods by which testimony was gathered by the authorities, if representative of their usual methods, was highly suspect and could certainly have been used as a political weapon as well as a legal one. Rhodius suggests that "petty-minded vengefulness" ²⁹ was a prime motive in imprisoning Spies and this is possibly a factor, but this over-personalises what was a much larger operation. Spies was fairly openly and incautiously homosexual at a time when this was not socially acceptable in white colonial society ³⁰. Like many others, including his friend Goris, he was penalised for his chosen lifestyle, although he probably had much less to lose than those who, like Goris, lost their careers and pensions.

The legality of the purge is questionable on the basis of the legitimacy of many of the proceedings. The Dutch colonial authorities had to rely on section 292 of the Dutch criminal code ³¹. From this it is clear that an individual could not be punished for 'adult' homosexual relations and that it was sex with a minor which was punishable by law. In fact, the Netherlands abolished punishment for private homosexual activity in the 1880s ³². Thus, it is clear that they had the notion of stamping out homosexuality without specific anti-homosexual legislation; this meant having to prove sex with minors. What this tended to do was to put all accused men into the category of paedophiles in order to bring prosecutions and, although many of these men could have been paedophiles, the implementation of the purge was intended to condemn all homosexual men in the same manner. In fact, the age of majority under Dutch law was twenty-one and therefore this law could quite easily be applied to prosecute many homosexual men, even if their relationships were with adults.

Another aspect to this purge was the notion of sexual relations between the races. Although this type of union would not result in mixed-race children, which was responsible for much of the disapproval of other sexual relationships ³³, the authorities were undoubtedly trying to impose another aspect of 'apartheid' principles. In Bali, there is evidence of inter-racial heterosexual relationships, for example white women with Balinese men, such as the case of Betty Waterman, the fountain pen heiress ³⁴. This type of relationship would have been particularly threatening to the white patriarchy ³⁵ of the colonial authorities. Consequently, a message against all interracial relationships would undoubtedly have been a sub-text of the moral crusade which was going on.

According to Ketut Tantri, some Dutch officials also had sympathy with Nazi ideas which were current at the time with fascist organisations in Java such as the N. S. B. ³⁶. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that at the same time that homosexuals in Germany were being imprisoned, the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies sought a similar purge even if the impetus derived from a slightly different source. Spies himself apparently did not take the situation very seriously and this is illustrated by his extraordinary account of himself while trying to initiate a dance performance, effectively entrapping some undercover policemen who were trying to gather information on him or others.

...so we went back and ordered a *gandroeng* ³⁷ instead. You know how *nakal* ³⁸ a *gandroeng* in Selat can be! And there were rumours that the police were after all Europeans with, as Victor calls it, popographic intentions. In the middle of kissing orgies of the youth I saw some funny pyjama clad, sandaled and spectacled beaus standing in a group. I was told they were police! you know 'pell' sadja! So the fun began - I asked the *gandroengs* to attack them. And so they wooed them and *ngarased* them and *ngipoeked* ³⁹ them in the most seductive way, so that they could not bear it any longer, and they started to dance and to be very *nakal* indeed. They had a lot of fun and we too! and everyone was happy.
(Letter, Spies to Belo, 1938) ⁴⁰

Gentle warnings had already come from Spies' friends and associates, which also revealed attitudes of those around Spies towards the Balinese as being of lesser significance and status to Europeans and their 'higher' artistic goals. There is also evidence of a frustration of those who knew Spies with his inability to continue and fully

develop any one particular talent or interest. Noel Coward clearly thought that Spies should be focusing on painting above all else ⁴¹.

Oh Walter Dear, Oh Walter Dear
Please don't neglect your painting
Neglect dear Walter if you must
Your pleasure in the native's trust
Neglect if need be social grace
And charity and pride of race
Crush down dear Walter if you can
Your passion for the gamelan
Neglect your overwhelming wish
To gaze for hours at coloured fish
You may delight in forest and trees
And talking to the Balinese
But they alas though gay and sweet
Are not withstanding most effete
And conducive to the state
You need in order to create
So Walter dear neglect to drink
Neglect to eat or wash or think
Of opportunities to shirk
The stern necessity to work
And when at last you madly rush
To squeeze your paint and grab your brush
Do not neglect in memory
To give a kindly thought to me
(Noel Coward, 1935) ⁴²

After his arrest, Spies also had some influential and loquacious supporters in the guise of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, as well as a competent and sympathetic lawyer Witsen Elias. Interestingly, Bateson upon discovering Spies' plight, asked the same questions of the lawyers ⁴³ as I did when originally formulating this part of my thesis. The fact that these questions have not been answered in subsequent biographical accounts indicates the ambiguity of the laws used to convict the accused. In particular it is the hagiographic accounts which gloss over these events ⁴⁴. It is also interesting that although such questions were being asked then about this episode, they still remain poorly answered today.

Discourse on the nature of Spies' homosexuality

The real truth of Spies' proclivities can probably not be known. Even close friends and colleagues, although supportive, seem to deal in assumptions rather than certainties saying, for instance that it is unlikely that Spies was interested in pre-pubescent boys ⁴⁵, but it is also clear that they do not rule this out entirely. Belo, however, seems sure.

That the charges against him are dubious, to say the least is quite clear. Certainly he has never cared for the young, and it becomes a mere quibbling point when the lawyers have to make a great fuss debating with the aid of X-Rays, Balinese calendrical computations, etc., the age in years of Balinese who are obviously mature - and on this it seems will hang the whole trial.
(Letter, Belo to Stutterheim, 1939)⁴⁶

A cynic might suggest that being an artist and encouraging the art of young Balinese men might be more than an altruistic venture on his part and Mead's comments below do indicate that there is a link between Spies' work with painters and his sexual liaisons.

The young men who have known Walter Spies marry and are happy. They have children and are proud of them; they continue to carve and paint and make beautiful things as Walter had taught them to do.
(Letter, Mead to Witsen Elias, 1939)⁴⁷

There are also other accounts, such as the one about Spies dressing up as Father Christmas and inviting the local children to his house, putting them on his knee and giving them presents sometime in the late 1930s⁴⁸. In a way, this is too much of a stereotypical paedophile ploy; but again this could be an entirely innocent and altruistic gesture on Spies' part. It is however interesting in illustrating a lack of concern about introducing certain Western customs to the locals when at times he seems critical of other foreign introductions. This illustrates part of the contradiction of his position. Spies' own account indicates that it was not only the art and the music which interested him and that the two are not easily separable in his own mind. Therefore, his sexual and cultural appreciation of the Balinese are not easily separable. This has a bearing on his artwork, contact and alleged influence on the Balinese.

One of the latest of our joys is the Gengong orchestra in Batuan. The same that Colin never had a chance to hear - they are marvellous!! I call them very often to my house; it is one of the most soft, gentle, *halus*⁴⁹, unnoisy kind of chamber music you can imagine! And the boys look one more beautiful and appetising than the other. So clean and loveable - without any *panoes*, *boelenaar*, or any other skin trouble!
(Letter, Spies to Belo and McPhee, 1935)⁵⁰

The age of the musicians he refers to as 'boys' is difficult to assess and therefore not much can be surmised from this about Spies' potential status as a paedophile.

However, if the musicians are adult, then referring to them as boys may be a pejorative statement. There is almost a feeling that Spies is deriving an aesthetic pleasure from the musicians which would not translate into action. However, the use of the words like 'appetising' have a more predatory implication. In addition to this, it is interesting that Spies shares this interest in this case with McPhee and Belo in a letter. In fact, Spies shared secrets with others as well. According to Timothy Lindsey (Lindsey, 1997, p. 32), Jane Belo was also involved in bisexual relationships with the Balinese, as well as Spies' other friends Jack and Katherine Mershon at Legian.

Spies had several homosexual friends and associates, including Roelof Goris who has been identified as a paedophile ⁵¹, and Colin McPhee. However, it is less clear to what degree they exchanged information about their activities and their contacts, although the letter quoted above ⁵² to McPhee and Belo goes some way towards suggesting this. Most of the surviving records of their contacts appear to be professional, involving publications, music, archaeology etc. Spies produced a book in the 1930s with Goris ⁵³, however, there could have been other exchanges between these individuals. The belief of his friends about his innocence as a paedophile does not necessarily mean that he avoided this type of sexual activity.

Another ploy used by Mead and Bateson alluded to by Belo which allowed them to utilise their own research in 'muddying the waters' of the case is the difficulty in establishing the age of the alleged victims or 'witnesses' as they were euphemistically referred to. They asserted that establishing the age of an individual Balinese in Western terms of accuracy was almost impossible. In fact, only estimates could be made of an individual's age which would effectively invalidate any case against an individual unless puberty was used as a criterion. Gregory Bateson suggests that Spies should not be categorised as a paedophile and although he could be seen to be returning a favour in terms of the help Spies provided for him and Margaret Mead ⁵⁴, it seems that concealment of facts from the court would be an almost intolerable compromise of scientific work. He indicates that although paedophile behaviour has not been entirely ruled out in the case of Spies, others like Goris appear to have had more questionable tastes.

The man who loves little boys is generally either a frightened rabbit (like Goris) or a bully, and the little boys are substituted for women. I do not think Walter was of this type and I shall be surprised if it is shown that he ever loved little boys.
(Letter, Bateson to Witsen Elias, 1939) ⁵⁵

Thus, Spies' friend, Roelof Goris, is identified as a paedophile and the colonial authorities clearly believed that this type of behaviour was widespread throughout the Indies at this time. It appears that many officials in the Netherlands such as schoolmasters, who had been suspected of being morally suspect, or downright criminal, were often discreetly transferred to the Indies from Holland (**fig. 39**) rather than being properly dealt with at home ⁵⁶. This probably led to a disproportionate number of paedophiles in the Indies aside from those attracted there as tourists. This type of activity is part of what eventually resulted in the moral panic amongst the authorities. This was to some extent justified, but unearthed many more miscreants than the colonial authorities had expected. Jane Belo alludes to the extent of a genuine paedophile problem in a letter about Walter Spies, which positively differentiates Spies from other Westerners on Bali.

...He has simply been caught up in the turmoil - semi political, I gather - that started in Java, and that he is actually innocent of the charges which do apply to some of the other charming residents of our island - the point about minors.

(Letter, Belo to Stutterheim, 1939)⁵⁷

Thus, Walter Spies would technically have been a paedophile under Dutch law, but this is largely because of the relatively high age of majority. In fact, it is quite possible that even if some of his lovers had been under twenty one, it is suggested by Mead that they were effectively adults in Balinese terms, as they would have been post-pubescent and of marriageable age. This is despite the fact that Spies is likely to have referred to them as 'boys' ⁵⁸. The notion of childhood is an interesting one in the context of this colonial contact. It can be argued that the more general discourse of 'liberals' such as Mead, Bateson and Spies sometimes used to characterise Balinese of all ages as children or even animals ⁵⁹. Certainly, the official administrative line through *baliseering* also perpetuated this idea.

Bateson and Mead's convenient categorisation of types of homosexuals seems very stereotypical, tidy and overly simplistic in today's terms and, although it might have provided a good legal argument at the time, does not make much sense today.

According to Mead (Letter to Witsen Elias, 1939)⁶⁰, Spies was a rare "...creative type" of homosexual ⁶¹ who was "...not in any sense pathological." she claimed that he was more in tune with the Balinese by wishing to be "...close to others and yet not too close - ...a Balinese ideal...". She then further differentiates Spies from the 'predatory' and 'aggressive' homosexual who is

attracted by apparent Balinese passivity. She describes such men as "...an enemy to society".

The subtlety of some of her distinctions may well have been lost on the court, which consisted of a panel of three judges. Mead states that:

In the case of the exploiting type of homosexual, the choice of companions from another and partially subject race is just another form of exploitation; he chooses always the weaker, children, servants, members of a darker race who look up to him as superior.
(Letter, Mead to Witsen Elias, 1939)⁶²

This statement could in fact quite easily be applied to Spies. This is because in Mead's terms, as one who portrayed the Balinese as holding Spies in awe, he could be seen as exploiting the Balinese through having sexual relations with them. The complaisance and apparent compliance of the Balinese should not necessarily be seen as a justification for such behaviour, as these arguments could also be applied to the innocent and trusting reactions of pre-pubescent children. This relates to the notion of exploitation and abuse of power by Spies. This idea of power over a subject race can also be applied in relation to artistic paternalism and the *Pita Maha* project⁶³.

...the very number of his contacts is a point in his favour, based on an objection to any strong ties which might have bound the Balinese to him too heavily or him to them.

(Letter, Mead to Witsen Elias, 1939)⁶⁴

The now almost legendary dedication of Mead and Bateson to science above almost all else was at the point of being damning of Spies, who was their friend and associate. Although their prime motivation was to help Spies to be acquitted or to receive a lighter sentence, this would not be done at the expense of scientific objectivity or their own professional reputations. In fact, their characterisation of Spies as promiscuous and having multiple casual partners may not have helped Spies, even though they asserted that this was for the good of the young men themselves, by discouraging them from making more permanent attachments. This is a rather disingenuous notion, implying that the Balinese would somehow be corrupted through having a serious emotional relationship with Spies and adopting the colonialist notion that serious and equal interracial relationships were morally wrong.

Very tellingly, Mead also tries to make a distinction between Spies and others, by saying that he "...has not selected another race than his own

because they are exploitable but because their culture is congenial to him." (Letter, Mead to Witsen Elias, 1939) ⁶⁵ This is really a subtle distinction, which is hard to maintain. To claim that Spies did not behave in an exploitative way is stretching credibility and those who denied this were trying to excuse their own tacit knowledge and support of such behaviour. Viewed more widely, this also constitutes a tacit support of the colonial project in Bali and the supposedly benign and fatherly subjugation of native peoples. It is fair to say that in almost all cases, the natives were being exploited by the colonial regime. In this particular thesis, it is the degrees of exploitation enacted by Spies which are important rather than Mead's rather tenuous debate which tried to identify Spies' behaviour as non-exploitative in relation to the behaviour of others. This argument is only sustainable within the context of an acceptance of colonial domination and a lack of genuine self-determination for native peoples. Mead's referral to the Balinese as a "...partially subject race..." (Letter, Mead to Witsen Elias, 1939) ⁶⁶ illustrates her self-justificatory position clearly with its implicit denial of colonial realities and power-relations.

Reactions of the Balinese to the 'new' tourism and its results

The purge against European homosexuals is important as it highlights another area of the 'contact-zone' which Spies occupied. Interestingly, the Balinese appear not to have been scandalised, but rather bemused by the apparently extraordinary behaviour of the Europeans. Nevertheless, the reactions of Balinese are less clearly documented and tend to come from interested parties close to Spies ⁶⁷. This area might be worth further investigating, as it is likely that some of the increasing homosexual activities by Europeans in Bali at this time would have included much more exploitative abusive and violent behaviour which was not spoken about ⁶⁸ or highlighted in Spies' court case.

Although the Balinese reaction to the events described is not particularly well represented or recorded, what does remain, gives quite a different perspective on the events. Hans Rhodius describes the Balinese reactions.

In Bali, friendships between members of the same sex have always been allowed more open and intense expression than is the case in most western societies, caught in the maze of their own taboos. This attitude was clearly shown by the father of Spies's young friend. When the lawyer asked if he was angry at Mr. Spies's conduct, he replied: "Kenapa? (But Why?) He is after all our best friend, and it was an honour for my

son to be in his company, and if both are in agreement,
why fuss?"
(Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 45)

Unfortunately, the source of this account is not cited and it has a tidy contrivance about it which does not make it seem very believable. For instance *kenapa*⁶⁹ is a Malay rather than a Balinese word. It seems to be more a reflection of Rhodius' own fantasies. Even if this is what a Balinese would have said in a colonial court, it is possible that he could have felt obliged to speak up in Spies' favour, in order not to cause humiliation for his son. Margaret Mead suggests that homosexuality was a source of worry to the Balinese. In her book *Male and Female* (1950), Margaret Mead suggests:

When the fear of passivity is also present in the minds of adults - that is, when homosexuality is recognized in a society, with either approval or disapproval - the fear is exacerbated. The parents begin to pick on the child, to worry about his behaviour, to set him trials, or to lament his softness. Why did the eight year old little Balinese boy Gelis sit around all day with the women and girls, his head cradled against any convenient knee, instead of taking the oxen out to the fields?
(Mead, 1950, p. 113)

Nevertheless, according to Margaret Mead, one of Spies' servants called Seken could not understand why the police were attacking Spies when up to 1000 guilders had been stolen from his house, and the police had not retrieved any of the money or culprits. He was clearly implying that the police were not interested in justice and simply looking for easy victims. It is interesting that Spies had had so much stolen and this indicated either that he was being robbed by his Western guests or that his relationship with his 'beloved' Balinese was not as harmonious as it was portrayed. Seken was clearly a loyal employee and, despite being held for three days by the police, did not confess to having relations with Spies. According to Seken, another individual called I Tedoen from Sangsi, Singapadre, did falsely confess to having relations with Spies, after being threatened with imprisonment⁷⁰. Seken's loyalty could have arisen from pragmatism as well as from being a 'devoted servant', however.

When I interviewed modern residents of Ubud about this subject my questions were met with unconcern which appears to match the dismissal of the subject by Rhodius, but without the attempted aggrandisement of Spies. Agung Rai⁷¹ said that essentially, affectionate and tactile relationships with men sleeping together were normal in Bali and thus, such behaviour by Spies would also be regarded as unexceptional. He

acknowledged that he did not know how far Spies' activities went and by whose testimony he was imprisoned. Wayan Sukada ⁷² pointed out that if there had been a problem locally, people would have known about it, because it was a small village. He argued that it was a private matter. It does seem that at the time of the arrests the people in Ubud were similarly unconcerned and this could have been because Spies was discreet about his behaviour in those environs. It perhaps also could have been because his worst excesses occurred elsewhere in towns like Denpasar, for instance, where commercial forms of male prostitution were more prevalent ⁷³. Certainly Spies' encounter with the undercover police discussed earlier suggests Spies was not necessarily very discreet outside Ubud ⁷⁴. It also has to be remembered that Spies was linked to the Royal family of Ubud and was perhaps expected to please himself and not to be questioned on his behaviour.

It is likely that the alleged admiration and trust that the Balinese had for Spies was relative. In other words, although he was European, he was not as bad as the colonial establishment. Jane Belo discusses a meeting with a local leader, the Pedanda Kerta from Selat who expressed a distaste for discussion of the wrongs of the 'Rajas' [kings] and the 'Tuans' [white overlords]. What he seemed to be saying was to let them get on with what ever they were doing. What he was concerned about was whether this law would now be applied to the Balinese as they did not understand this kind of behaviour as intrinsically wrong. Belo reports that he wanted to know whether this was a trick to ultimately trap the Balinese as they had often previously been tricked into a colonial position ⁷⁵. Mead wryly observes that perhaps the age of consent in Bali should be increased to fifty in relation to their dealings with the whites and Chinese ⁷⁶. This continues the theme of regarding the Balinese as children as an explanation for their apparently easy exploitation ⁷⁷. Adrian Vickers makes an interesting observation which links the preoccupations and activities of the colonists to the sometimes erotic artistic output of Balinese artists such as Gusti Nyoman Lempad who depicts a Balinese man having penetrative sex with a Balinese boy. (fig. 40)

Lempad's work was not intended as some kind of puritanical censure of his friend Spies, or of anyone else. It was more of a comment on the Bali of the time, where homosexuality had been made into a topic of public interaction, something by which Bali was known, and a feature of Balinese interaction with others. Lempad, at least in part, was connecting homosexual acts with the age of instability in which he found himself. It was not morally wrong, but its public importance was a symptom of an age of indulgence where the moral order was undergoing rapid change.

This is an interesting idea, although Spies apparently felt that this genre of pictures had been suggested to Lempad by tourists; Mead, with her grounding in European psychoanalysis, thought it reflected Lempad's own obsessions ⁷⁸. It is notable that this image also depicts Balinese engaging in this act rather than Europeans or even both races. It seems that Lempad is depicting an image which objectifies the Balinese and distances the voyeuristic European viewer by leaving him / her out of the picture.

Thus, as well as its odd combination of artistic virtuosity and pornographic content, it is an emblematic image which represents the acceptability of such an act amongst the Balinese. Thus, in a sense it assuages the guilt of a Westerner who is thinking of engaging in sex with a Balinese boy. Lempad is also following the convention of tourist art whereby the modern and the Western is excluded from the picture ⁷⁹. This image could also be considered as part of a certain tradition in what might be described as 'erotic art' from a Western point of view. Hitchcock and Norris (1995, p. 23) illustrate sexual imagery in temple carvings and describe this type of image from a Balinese point of view, as depicting the torments of hell. This is perhaps a questionable explanation as the notion of hell in a Hindu cosmology is unlikely to equate with a Western use of this word. Nevertheless, there are visual precedents as illustrated in the picture, which almost certainly would have meant that such an image would mean something different to a Balinese viewer, than it would to a Westerner. However, the way that this subject is isolated from a traditional context as a single image on paper, does change its significance somewhat and brings it into the realms of a Western codification of images.

Summary

It is clear that the story of the mythical inter-war colonial Bali of which Spies was an integral part, was not brought to an end by the war, but rather by the nature of the Europeans' contradictory relationship with the Balinese people. This increasingly involved sexual tourism of a homosexual nature. This situation was subsequently acted upon by the colonial authorities based on rumours. However, as my account shows, these rumours were clearly based in documented fact, but the way in which they were prosecuted was profoundly flawed. Nevertheless these events and the various accounts of the events has allowed for a closer examination of this aspect of colonial contact and its relationship to colonial motivations and cultural contact which has a

bearing on influence and an examination of its discourse in the situation of Walter Spies.

In this chapter, the situation in Bali has been discussed as an example of sexual tourism with its implications of domination and power relations. The result of this tourism in this colonial context is explored in relation to the colonial purge of Bali; a moral crusade which in the Indies in general related closely to notions of 'prestige' amongst the Western community. This concern with prestige indicates, perhaps a misguided colonial intention to maintain power and authority through the admiration and respect of the Balinese rather than merely through military and technological domination. In Bali the purge also related strongly with the ideology related to *baliseering*. The discourse of the purge was Eurocentric in its focus on foreigners rather than on the Balinese. In many ways, a modern day Western moral framework does not differ fundamentally from that followed by the Dutch in the 1930s. Often, paedophile behaviour is not differentiated from homosexual behaviour in general. The idea of prosecuting all homosexuals under a law focusing on sex with minors reflects this clumsy and prejudiced distinction. It is clear that homosexual relations between white men would have been less frowned upon, particularly if conducted discreetly. The punishments are likely to have been less, as indicated by the quiet removal of paedophiles to the colonies. Thus, discretion is a key element of this equation and overall, Spies certainly was not very discreet, as he did not apparently make great efforts to conceal his liaisons. The fact that Spies' sexual relationships were interracial was also seen as breaking colonially invented taboos. This seems to be because this implies a form of equality with the Balinese which colonial philosophy of this time did not entertain. This is paradoxical as I have also argued that in fact these relationships involved a form of colonial exploitation of privilege on the part of Spies.

Within the colonial context that Mead and Bateson argued their case, they provided criteria which they felt portrayed Spies as non-exploitative. The fairly spurious categorisation of different types of homosexuals helped to define him as exploitative within an argument which accepts the power relationships extant in a colonial situation. However, it is clear from my previous discussion, that the very nature of Spies' position as a colonial figure renders the types of relationships described as exploitative. Ultimately, the justification provided by Mead and Bateson is a relativist one which accepts the tenets of Balinese colonialism and, to some extent, seeks to justify the status quo. This status quo also provided them with a comfortable platform from which to conduct research.

Although the evidence that exists indicates that in present day terms Spies would not be seen as a paedophile, this type of activity cannot be entirely ruled out, as it was clearly attributed to others like Goris. Childhood in colonial discourse was also examined in relation to these questions. Spies' promiscuity was highlighted and dubiously presented as a point in his favour almost as an aspect of his allegedly 'fatherly' stature amongst the Balinese. There is also the important question of exploitation whereby Spies could be seen as exploiting his position in sexual situations and by extension through his relationship with the Balinese artists in possibly influencing artistic conventions. Spies' own writings as well as those of Mead have clearly linked his sexuality to his artistic thoughts, ideas and activities and this lack of separation plus its relevance to his own artistic output helps to clarify the ways Spies saw Bali and the Balinese as artists, subjects of art and as potential sexual partners.

Ultimately I have identified European discourse as being in denial of the realities of colonial life and power-relations. Balinese reactions are more difficult to assess due to the selective nature of Western records, but it seems clear that the impact of such exploitative sexual contact is more significant and possibly less acceptable, than it has been largely portrayed, particularly within the power-relations between coloniser and colonised. The lack of Balinese discussion of this issue and the mediated nature of that which is recorded represents the silenced subaltern voice in colonial situations. This is an uncomfortable silence which can be misinterpreted as indifference or fear. However, what seems to be articulated by what does exist, is an attempt to accommodate and understand what seems to be incomprehensible behaviour and mores on the part of the Westerners. In some cases, the Balinese sought to express these contacts and the changes they represent through works like the image produced by Lempad (**fig. 40**)

The specific attitudes of the colonisers will be explored further in the next chapter, through an examination of the creative output of Spies in Bali which will include an examination of his film projects and his paintings as articulating a discourse of possession and desire, but also a European modernist desire to become a 'primitive'. The reception and audience for this work will also be examined as reflecting his own beliefs and disseminating the specific colonial ideology of Bali to a wider Western audience, by turns, influencing and reflecting their own expectations and desires.

¹ See my discussion of Spivak and subalternity in Chapter 1.

² Vickers, 1989, p. 35

³ *Calonarang*, (1927), *Kriss* (1932), *Island of Demons* (1934) These films will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

⁴ Examples of this literature which are examined in this thesis are Wadia (1936), Gorner (1936), Powell (1930), Seton (1938), Poortenaar (1928), Clifton (1927), Yates (1933).

⁵ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 45

⁶ It is worth noting at this point that homosexuality as an identity had only really existed in the West since the invention of the term 'sexuality' in the 19th century. "So great was the mismatch between the scientific intent and the moralistic reception of many sexological tests from the 1880s through to the 1920s, it would be fair to claim these weighty tomes drove at the centre of a major anxiety in Western culture. For there was a constant struggle among those who saw themselves as respectable people to hide what sexology, in all its scientific authority, was determined to uncover" (Bristow, 1997, p. 13)

⁷ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 45

⁸ Bateson for the attention of the court, 28/02/1939, L.O.C.

⁹ de Zoete & Spies, 1938, p. 3

¹⁰ Although there don't appear to be any specific studies relating to homosexual sex tourism in Bali in the 1930s, modern studies have something to say about the nature of transactions and the degrees of exploitation which exist in sexual tourism. However, most of these studies also tend to focus on heterosexual contact. Nevertheless, it could be argued that many principles would apply to both heterosexual and homosexual contacts. It has been proposed that there is a level of mutual exploitation in a relationship which involves money (Opperman, 1998, p. 157). However, a colonial context or a context which is embodied by a disparity of wealth and power, might create an imbalance in such an exchange. "Tourism allows both male and female sex tourists to seek experiences that are 'fictionalised, idealised or exaggerated models' not simply of social life, but of social relations of power...The commodification of difference' makes it possible for sex tourists to construct and consume 'Others/Otherness', while the commodification of 'Blackness' encourages locals to sell tourists different forms of 'embodied racisms'" (Taylor in Clift and Carter, 2000, pp. 50-51). In the case of Spies, where an exchange of money is harder to discern, it could be argued that a greater level of exploitation existed with no discernible exchange value existing for Spies' partners, who are unlikely to have been aware of the potential to 'commodify Blackness'.

¹¹ Margaret Mead, Fieldwork, 14/03/1939, L.O.C.

¹² Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/39

¹³ Letter, Conrad Spies to Jane Belo, 07/01/1932, L.O.C

¹⁴ de Zoete & Spies, 1938, p. 3

¹⁵ Letter, Spies to Jane Belo and Colin McPhee, 10/05/1935, L.O.C.

¹⁶ "Byron's first trip to Greece was deliberately undertaken to get some pederastic experience, which he and his undergraduate friends had often talked about at Trinity College, Cambridge...Later travellers in search of sex fastened upon Naples, Capri and Sicily. Capri was traditionally renowned for an open sexual permissiveness and the complaisance of its beautiful women and boys" (Hyam, 1990, p. 92)

¹⁷ Letter, Jane Belo to Johnny, 10/02/39, L.O.C. (It is unclear who Johnny is. It might be Colin McPhee who had already fled from Bali)

¹⁸ Rhodius, 1964

¹⁹ Rhodius & Darling, 1980

²⁰ Letter, Jane Belo to her Mother, 10/02/39, L.O.C.

²¹ Issues around this kind of encoding of the Balinese landscape and people was discussed in Chapter 3.

²² Letter, Jane Belo to 'Johnny', 10/02/39, L.O.C.

²³ Letter, Spies to Jane Belo, 05/02/1939, L.O.C.

²⁴ Letter, British consul to a Mr Adams concerning Bateson's visit to Bali 26/01/1939, L.O.C.

²⁵ Letter, Belo to Johnny 10/02/1939, L.O.C.

²⁶ Letter, Belo to her Mother 07/06/1937, L.O.C.

²⁷ Letter, Spies to Lady Delamere, 07/1938, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 376

²⁸ Letter, Belo to 'Johnny' 10/02/1939, L.O.C.

²⁹ Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 45

- ³⁰ This unacceptability was particularly the case in Dutch colonial society as evidenced by the purge.
- ³¹ Letter, Witsen Elias to Margaret Mead, 10/02/1939, L.O.C.
- ³² Hyam, 1990, p. 65
- ³³ Stoler in Cooper & Stoler, 1997, p. 218
- ³⁴ Letter, Walter Spies to Belo & McPhee, 10/05/35, L.O.C. Spies alludes to someone called Sampé who was having an affair with Waterman and was thrown out after an argument. Spies also alludes to her sleeping with someone called Poegig who may be the painter of the same name who was a member of the *Pita Maha* group.
- ³⁵ Robert Young cites the example of the American South where he discusses " ...the scare tactics of the Southerners who were prone to claim, as the Jamaican planters had done before them, that freeing the slaves would bring about sexual pandemonium between black men and white women." (Young, 1995, p. 145)
- ³⁶ The N.S.B. are alluded to by Ketut Tantri (Tantri, 1960, p. 90). However, this mnemonic is not expanded upon and at this time it is not clear what it stands for. One possibility is *National Socialists of Batavia*.
- ³⁷ *Gandroeng* is a dance which is the precursor of the *kebyar* dance.
- ³⁸ *Nakal* is a Malay word meaning 'naughty'
- ³⁹ *Ngipoek* is to flirt as in a love scene in a dance.
- ⁴⁰ Letter, Spies to Belo, 11/04/1938, L.O.C.
- ⁴¹ It is worth noting that Coward's reference to the Balinese as 'gay' predates its usage as a term denoting homosexuality.
- ⁴² Noel Coward, 1935, Walter Spies Archive, Leiden
- ⁴³ Letter, Gregory Bateson to Witsen Elias, 08/02/1939, L.O.C., "Points we would like to know: 1) the exact wording – translated into English – of the sections of the criminal code under which these investigations are being made, especially the definition of what constitutes an illegal homosexual act. 2) The position of accomplice evidence under Dutch law. 3) The definition of a minor, and what kind of proof of age is necessary. 4) What is the relationship between crimes against minor girls and crimes against minor boys? 5) Is the proof of an act against a boy beneath the age of consent necessary for a conviction? 6) Will there be a jury, or only one judge or several judges? 7) Under Dutch law is someone accused of a crime assumed to be innocent until proved guilty."
- ⁴⁴ For example Rhodius, 1964, 1980; Niehaus, 1939, 1941)
- ⁴⁵ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁴⁶ Letter, Jane Belo to Stutterheim, 09/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁴⁷ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁴⁸ Interview with Ida Gusti Made Kerti, 20/08/1998
- ⁴⁹ *Halus* is a Malay word meaning 'smooth' or 'refined'
- ⁵⁰ Letter, Spies to Belo and McPhee, 10/05/1935, L.O.C.
- ⁵¹ Letter, Bateson to Witsen Elias, 04/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁵² Lindsey, 1997, p. 32
- ⁵³ Goris & Spies 193? This book does not record a publication date.
- ⁵⁴ "He [Walter Spies] introduced anthropologists and scholars who flocked to between-wars Bali (including Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson) to their contacts and made the arrangements for their fieldwork, including accommodation, translators, and even interviewees." [my brackets] Lindsey, 1997, p. 78
- ⁵⁵ Letter, Bateson to Witsen Elias, 04/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁵⁶ Interview, Hinzler, May, 2000
- ⁵⁷ Letter, Jane Belo to Stutterheim, 09/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁵⁸ Letter, Spies to Jane Belo and Colin McPhee, 10/05/1935, L.O.C.
- ⁵⁹ Letter, Spies to Lady Delamere, 07/08/1938 L.O.C.
- ⁶⁰ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/39, L.O.C.
- ⁶¹ This reflects Mead's own thinking in terms of her anthropological research which correlates sexuality and temperament. "The deviant [homosexual] may translate his sense of remoteness into painting or music or revolutionary activity and yet remain in his relations to members of his own and the opposite sex, essentially unfocused" [my brackets - in this instance, deviant refers to deviance from ideas of a heterosexual norm] (Mead, 1950, p. 293)
- ⁶² Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/39, L.O.C.
- ⁶³ This will be explored more in Chapter 6
- ⁶⁴ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/39, L.O.C.
- ⁶⁵ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/39, L.O.C.
- ⁶⁶ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/39, L.O.C.

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- ⁶⁷ Mead, Fieldwork counter-evidence 14/03/1939, Bateson, Belo Fieldwork 03/12/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁶⁸ Letter, Jane Belo to Stutterheim, 09/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁶⁹ *Kenapa* is a Malay word meaning "why?"
- ⁷⁰ Margaret Mead, Fieldwork notes, 14/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁷¹ Interview with Agung Rai, 18/08/98
- ⁷² Wayan Sukada, Interview, 20/08/98
- ⁷³ Covarrubias, 1937, p.145
- ⁷⁴ Letter, Spies to Belo, 11/04/1938, L.O.C.
- ⁷⁵ Belo, Fieldwork notes, 12/03/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁷⁶ Gregory Bateson, for the attention of the court 28/02/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁷⁷ The issue of the portrayal Chinese as exploiters will be explored in Chapter 6 in relation to Spies' film-work.
- ⁷⁸ Vickers, 1989, pp. 143-144
- ⁷⁹ This idea was discussed in Chapter 3.

A critical assessment of the Balinese paintings and films of Walter Spies

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the paintings and films of Walter Spies. In doing so, I will examine how Spies' work can be assessed and whether terms such as 'modernist' are appropriate to the analysis of his work. I maintain that his presence in Bali and his production of art for the tourist market makes his work that of a modernist, despite not participating in the European art worlds through a direct interaction with artists in those worlds. This requires a broad interpretation of the term 'modernist' as an inclusive rather than an exclusive term which describes modern conservatism as well as innovation. I will demonstrate that Spies, at the same time as being a bourgeois exile, was also a romantic primitivist and to some extent an avant-garde experimenter, yet with a taste for medieval traditions in painting. I argue that, as in his film projects, Spies' paintings were a conscious construction of an imagined historical Bali, which no longer (and probably never) existed. The discussion will then lead onto the films Walter Spies worked on in Bali and I will examine the continuation of the colonial Balinese discourse of 'balinisation' which is present in Spies' paintings, but which characterises the films. I will look in detail at the reception and perception of the text of these films by European audiences. Spies can be seen as a painter creating tourist art in a colonial context, both creating and reflecting the fantasy image of a harmonious rural idyll. I will examine his early 'formative' works in relation to notions of modernism and 'magic realism' ¹. Then, I will focus on his Balinese output in particular, with a focus on its colonial discourse. This discussion will lead on to a detailed examination of influences Walter Spies derived from Bali and the Balinese. In doing so, the notion of linear causality of influence running from Spies to the Balinese will be questioned, thus setting up the discussion for the final chapter.

In this chapter, as well as focusing on his paintings, I will focus on the films of Walter Spies as two representative aspects of his output in Bali, in terms of the ideology and visualisation of the island which they present. However, they will be dealt with largely separately as two quite different media and also because I will use these creations to explore different aspects of Spies' ideas as representative of a 'liberal' separatism in relation to Bali. The paintings offer a much more detailed view of Spies as a modernist, as well as exemplifying the direct influences of Bali, the art and cosmology of the Island. The films, as well as articulating the ideology underpinning *baliseering*, also

provide an interesting view of wider paradisaal discourses concerning the 'natural' and the 'authentic', as well as provocative visual elements, such as nudity. The way these discourses moulded and reflected Western popular imperial thinking, becomes evident through an analysis of the reviews which exist of these films in relation to the texts of the films themselves. This includes the publicity material, which was created to promote *Island of Demons*. This chapter will demonstrate the linkage between film and still photography, and Spies' approach to figuration in terms of lighting effects. Very little has been written in relation to his films and there does not at this time appear to be any textual analysis of the films other than the reviews of the films at the time. There is a great deal which can be said with reference to colonial ideologies of the time in relation to these films. Similarities in the discourse and message of these films will be compared to the ideologies dictating Spies' own adherence to colonial cultural policy in the subjects of his paintings. Ideas of mediation of images of Bali for a Western audience will be examined, establishing common cultural–linguistic characteristics of presenting a traditionalist and separatist notion of Bali and the Balinese as a distant spectacle.

There are a number of existing perspectives on the paintings of Walter Spies and this chapter will discuss these views which provide differing opinions about how the paintings of Walter Spies can be defined and located. Most readings of Spies' work are Eurocentric, suggesting that he maintained ideas developed in Europe and Russia into an Asian context. These readings tend to be narrow, focusing on the work as an aesthetic product and rather neglecting commercial, social and political factors. In particular, colonial history and circumstances tend to be ignored. Josef Chytrý (1989) provides quite an extensive examination of the work of Walter Spies as a modernist, but in relation to the history of German ideas and thinking linking his career with German Romantics of the past and ultimately to a celebration and idealisation of Greek culture and ideas. Patrick Carnegy (1971) characterises Spies as an 'amateur' who in most of his painting was strongly influenced by Caucasian folk art and Balinese folklore. Rhodius (Rhodius & Darling, 1980) takes a very indulgently interpretative approach to Spies' paintings which attempts to read them as biographical works, but does make some specific observations about relationships to Balinese cosmology and religion and to musical paradigms in his work. James Boon (1986) makes some fairly esoteric comments, trying to relate Spies' work in terms of music as being 'chromatic' rather than 'diatonic'. He also characterises Spies' art as 'erotic'. The writings of Franz Roh (1968) are also important in defining Spies in a European context as a German modernist, as he has very categorical views about how Spies should be regarded. In terms of the writings during Spies' lifetime, the opinions of Kaspar Niehaus (1939 &

1941) cast some light on how Spies was seen then within the colonial context. Finally, there are the writings of Spies himself which discuss the way that he worked and what he felt he was expressing through his paintings.

There are distinct phases in the paintings of Walter Spies from early experimentation with futurism and cubism immediately after World War I, to a proto-naïve 'magic realist' folk art of the early 1920s, to a more objective depiction of Javanese landscapes and people as social subjects. Upon reaching Bali, there is an almost immediate change to a more metaphysical and romanticised approach to his work which seems to combine the brief formal experimentation of his early works to synthesise a style comprised of the realist, the formal and the mystical. Spies' tendency to idealise and to mysticise appears to have greatly increased at this point. However, there was also an increase in formal experimentation in certain works as well (**fig. 41**). Another aspect of his work which started to emerge, at the end of his life, was a more surrealist approach. Each change in his style and apparent preoccupations seems to have resulted from, or corresponded with changes in his social, commercial and political environment.

Spies as a Modernist

Walter Spies did not display the degree of originality or challenge to society in his paintings which might be found in the works of some of his contemporaries such as Otto Dix and Paul Klee, with whom he had associated. This lack of challenge is also a factor in the way his work has been regarded. Its contemporary commercial success especially with establishment figures, be it in the colonies or in Germany, reflected the fact that his work was not seen as being *avant-garde*. Nevertheless, his work was distinctive in more modest ways. There were aspects of his work, through the combination of the style he developed after arriving in Asia and the subject matter of his pictures, which set him apart from other European artists. He first came to light within the parameters of European modernism, in terms of being described as a post-expressionist ² painter or 'magic realist'. At that time, his work was considered on a par with many of his contemporaries. He was clearly considered to have genuine potential and his work had commercial appeal from an early stage. However, it seems that Spies was not prepared to single-mindedly seek success in the art world which might have involved him persevering with painting and exhibiting in Europe. He was not dedicated to an artistic career as was the case with his one-time tutor Oskar Kokoschka. It is clear that, after flirting with left-wing ideas and avant-garde art for a few years during the post-war German political and artistic ferment ³, it was an 'artistic lifestyle', rather than a career as a painter which probably became more important to him. It was a part

of what led him towards the colonies during the last days of empire. When in Germany, he strongly identified with his formative experiences and these formed the basis for many of his paintings. Thus, although physically removed from the place of his internment, he created works from memory which tried to evoke these experiences and these tend to be some of his more memorable pieces from this period (**fig. 42**). Many of Spies' works are sentimentalised and lack the hard edged, urban post war angst of many of his German *Neue Sachlichkeit*⁴ contemporaries such as George Grosz and Otto Dix. Only one known work by Spies has a more menacing aspect which indicates a darker side to Spies which crept into these works⁵.

It is probably fair to say that, of the European artists in Bali, Walter Spies was the most eclectic and least orthodox in terms of Western art practice at the time. He was certainly not avant-garde in a European abstract sense, although he had experimented with more abstract approaches while still in Europe. Like the majority of other Western artists in Bali at this time, he was a figurative realist. Although his work had modernist characteristics, there was also a conscious primitivism accompanied by what could be described as an 'Orientalist' style. This Orientalism made his work similar in its discourse to the more lurid Orientalist paintings of some of his contemporaries, such as Adrien Jean le Mayeur de Merpres and Willem Hofker. However their work differed in the way it focused on the nudity of Balinese women, in particular (**fig. 10**). I will explore this aspect of his work later in this chapter.

Much of Spies' early work can be described as derivative and this is particularly the case with his earlier works which were very reminiscent of Lyonel Feininger and Wassily Kandinsky. This futurist style was also used in the theatre design he engaged in for *Don Pasquale* in Moscow⁶. Such works represent Spies' only real experiment with abstraction which seems to have been abandoned by him relatively quickly when the emergence of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in postwar Germany endorsed a more representative, figurative art in the early 1920s. A distinctive style started to emerge from Spies' synthesis of influences when he was in Germany in the 1920s. Spies' work has been described by Franz Roh using the term *Magischer Realismus*, - a term that is adopted by Chytrý⁷ on the basis that Spies endorsed it. Franz Roh (Roh, 1968, p. 112) characterises this movement as a "countermovement" and a "breathing spell" after too many innovations. Thus, it can be seen as a reactionary art but with socialist leanings⁸. Just as the *Neue Sachlichkeit* is difficult to clearly define, *Magic Realism* is also difficult to identify as a subsection of this 'movement'. Roh describes the advent of *Magic Realism* thus:

In an article written in 1924 I coined the phrase *Magischer Realismus* (magic realism) - magic of course not in the religious - psychological sense of ethnology. In 1925 the expression was attached as subtitle to my book. *Nach-Expressionismus* (Post-Expressionism). The same year Hartlaub organized the important exhibition at his gallery in Mannheim with the title *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity or New Realism) - a formulation I had avoided - to imply that we were not dealing here with a repetition of the more neutral realism of Courbet or Leibl. This New Objectivity was aimed in quite a different direction, seeking an approach to the autonomous sharpness of objects, as in the late middle ages, the quattrocento, or to the revolutionary form-hardening classicism of David or Ingres. Moreover, the emphasis in relation to the objective world implied abstraction, not empathy. (Roh, 1968, p. 112 - 113)

It is clear that Roh sees Magic Realism as a more appropriate, all encompassing term for what has come to be known as *Neue Sachlichkeit*. It is also clear that the term Magic Realism has come to infer exactly what Roh did not intend it to mean, when used to describe the work of Walter Spies by a number of commentators such as Rhodius (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 41), Djelantik (1995)⁹ and Chytry (1989, p. 461). Taken to an Indonesian context where belief in magic is commonplace, the description takes on the connotation of an evocation of magic in the ethnographic sense which Roh criticises. Stutterheim acknowledges this idea in relation to Balinese art.

These demons really exist in the mind of the Balinese, and their representation is a matter of uttermost realism. You may call this magic realism, but it is realism all the same. (Stutterheim, 1932, p. 8)

This implies, through the use of this term, that traditional Balinese painting is a form of 'modernism' if magic realism is to be seen as a form of modernism. It also raises the question of whether a term should be used in the spirit in which it was originally coined, or in the way or ways it is subsequently appropriated and used.

Having reluctantly accepted the term of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Roh divides this grouping into three sections, the first being "aggressive and socially critical" (Roh, 1968, p. 114) . These are artists such as Grosz, Dix and Günther. The second group is described as being from southern Germany, being "more melancholy" (Roh, 1968, p. 114) and seeking "a link with the art of the early Renaissance" (Roh, 1968, p. 114) . The third group is said to include Georg Sholtz and Walter Spies. It "favoured the detailed, fussily painted

idyll, similar to some paintings by Henri Rousseau" (Roh, 1968, p. 114) . This is a characteristic which seems to have been continued and developed in some of the works produced in Bali (**fig. 45**) ¹⁰.

Willet (Willet, 1978, p. 112) characterises *Magischer Realismus* painters as an entirely different group to *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters and having little in common with them. However, he describes the *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists as having arisen from the *Novembergruppe*, which Spies had successfully (in terms of sales) participated in ¹¹. This is illustrative of the limited nature of such categorisations, which only serve to indicate individual styles and allegiances rather than clearly define them. Spies' work at the time of the *Novembergruppe* did more closely resemble the works of artists like Dix. *Transformationsakt* (**fig. 27**) shows that depiction of urban social record was embarked upon by Spies and is an interesting example of an experiment in a less idealised and aestheticised rural context than some of Spies' other works of this time, like *Thüringerwald* of 1923 (**fig. 43**). However, this work is still knowingly naïve and lacks the hard-edged austerity of the work of some of his contemporaries (**fig. 44**). It is clear that Spies carried some of these ideas of social observation to Java and they can be seen in works such as *Heimkehrende Javaner* (**fig. 28**) and *Laterna Magica* of 1926 (**fig. 29**) which I discussed in Chapter 3. However, after his move to Bali, this type of observation and statement was largely curtailed, with a more romanticised, mythologised and metaphysical approach at times with an awareness of the tourist market for his paintings. Additionally, there seems to be less humour in the Balinese works than in those he created in Java and in Germany (**fig. 27**).

Spies' works did not have the stark challenging realism of paintings by artists like Dix and Grosz nor was the humour he employed as overt or intellectually incisive. Even during his participation in the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Spies' work was largely rural in subject matter, but even when depicting urban life, there was a romantic and sometimes childlike quality which removed the intellectual edge characterising some of his contemporaries' work and replacing harsher realities with more dreamlike and escapist imagery. Willet (1978, p. 112) describes this metaphysical aspect to be characteristic of magic realism and that there were some similarities with the French surrealists. This aspect of Spies' work was maintained and developed when Spies left the modernist 'hothouse' of 1920s Germany and his style diverged in relative isolation in the more conservative artistic tastes of the Dutch colonies, from much of what was subsequently produced in the West. This is not to say that Spies did not attempt to innovate. This removal from the European art world is important to the apparent invisibility of Spies' work in many accounts of post-expressionist art in Germany. He

departed before he had a chance to establish a firm place within Eurocentric art history as a German post-expressionist artist. It is illustrative of the way art historical interest can focus on certain time periods, locations, groupings and 'family trees' in its attribution of significance or relevance to individual artists. In a wider sense, it also highlights the Eurocentricity and lack of plurality in the normative canon of some popular art historical discourse. Nevertheless, despite his apparent defiance of categorisation, Spies has been discussed in terms of being a classic German modernist in his Asian work by Josef Chytry. Chytry describes Walter Spies as exemplifying a form of German modernist thought by establishing "a force field between modernism and the island of Bali." (Chytry, 1989, p. 449) He states that "Spies's activities on Bali were a self conscious form of modernist legislation, a peculiarly modernist mode of metapolitical activity." (Chytry, 1989, p. 450) He goes on to describe modernism as "a fundamental attempt to supplant the reality-construction of perspective that marked the origins of the 'Ge-stell' dominating European art and science after the Renaissance." (Chytry, 1989, p. 458)¹²

Chytry sees the manipulation or abandonment of perspective as particularly important as a component in the modernist project and therefore sees Spies' use of multiple viewpoints in many of his Balinese paintings as a significant development in his work as a modernist rather than as an esoteric departure from modernism in a 'pre-modern' context. Interestingly, he sees this approach as also being conceptually fused with awareness of local musical traditions and references to Balinese spirituality.

An intervening apprenticeship in Javanese gamelan music sharpened his conviction that traditional perspective was an insufficient foundation for the world he wished to project. Accordingly, by the time he was ready to leave Java for Bali he had declared his new intentions in the work whose outlines, he claimed had come to him in a dream. *Traumlandschaft* (**fig. 46**) is the first Spiesian statement that resorts to his later use of multiple landscapes to solve the problem of standard perspective, and its content of a deliberately mythicizing portrayal of the central figure, the "holy acete," declares Spies's allegiance to the classic Indic motif of the Brahmanic presence penetrating the three "worlds" (loka) of Hindu-Buddhist cosmology. (Chytry, 1989, p. 462)

Chytry's views are thought-provoking and provide an interesting perspective on the work of Walter Spies, but they are partly based on a narrow aesthetic modernism,

which, like most other accounts, ignores the wider social and political dimension which contextualises the work of Walter Spies in Bali. In particular he ignores, Spies' production of most of his Balinese paintings for the tourist marketplace and the colonial ideology embedded in Spies' work. Although he makes valid points in relation to Spies and his work, he makes the common mistake of essentialising Bali and the Balinese at this point in time. He takes the sentimental view of Bali as a cohesive and unmediated aesthetically driven state, rather than a colonised nation, a factor which underpinned the nature of Bali at this time. Nevertheless, his view is based on the correspondence of Spies and does perhaps express part of the perspective and approach of "homo aestheticus" (Chytry, 1989, p. 449) Spies, as expressed within the material published by Rhodius (1964). There is, in fact, another more popular and mundane modernism at work in the paintings of Spies and that is the modernism of colonial 'ethical' policy and of the marketplace created by international tourism. This tourism dictated certain visual codes as discussed in Chapter 3. Like Rhodius, Chytry ignores the motivations inherent in a tourist market operating within the particular colonial ideology of *baliseering*.

Spies discovered the common ground between the modernist enterprise and Balinese society: a conscious *siting* of reality construction through the medium of art. His discovery was not accidental. Whatever else it has been, modernism is a metapolitics committed to the overthrow of old perceptual grids and to the creation of multidimensional reorientations of reality. (Chytry, 1989, p. 480)

Perhaps if Spies had included representations of motor cars and tourists and colonial officials in his paintings, he might have provided more than just a formal aesthetic modernism and truly overthrown old perceptual grids.

Spies was not a painter in the way that some of his contemporaries were and in some ways he could be likened more to an illustrator in the carefully worked, but quite inexpressive paint-work he produced. Much of his work incorporated a disingenuous naivety which seems to have been copied from elements of folk art, particularly that of Russia (which he had observed in the Urals). Spies was well travelled and had seen the works of many different artists. He was well informed about their styles, so the likeness of some of his early works like *Abschied* of 1921 (**fig. 33**) in terms of perspective distortion to the paintings of Chagall is significant. However, there are only elements of Chagall in these paintings and although there are similarities, the treatment of paint and colour is much less liberated than Chagall and is almost painfully restrained and detailed at times. Spies seems employ a style which is almost medieval

in its figurative control and narrativity, but without the expressive delicacy or religious focus of many such works. *Tatarenfest* (fig. 47) seems to attempt some of the characteristics of a Breughel, depicting a genre scene of a rural festival with crowds of people viewing the horse race. It is clear that Spies had taken an interest, along with Otto Dix, in medieval art, probably as a product of his interest in folk art.

The affinities are striking. Spies had studied medieval painting with Otto Dix in the State Gallery in Dresden in 1919 and adopted the oil-painting technique of the Old Masters. He speaks himself of his admiration for Meister Bertram and Meister Francke, both active in Northwest Germany around 1400 and whose work shows the same interest in realistic detail combined with a free attitude towards perspective and soft modelling through tonal chiaroscuro. The casting of shadows with the use of a variety of light sources was also a feature of the works of the painters of this 'soft' style which celebrated a rich world of varied possibilities. (Stowell. 1992, p. 21)

This focus on the medieval fits in with Roh's characterisation of Magic Realism as having parallels with the 'quattrocento' mentioned above. However, the comment about light sources is questionable, as this approach could be attributed to a much more modern influence; Spies' experience in film and theatre.

Ironically, Spies might be the last person who should attempt to emulate a 'naïve' style, as he was particularly well educated (and indeed immersed) in the classical and early modernist arts. So, this somewhat disingenuous proto-naivety seems to have been a partially successful reaction to Western modernist artistic orthodoxy, in terms of rejecting abstraction. In fact Spies seems to have been drawn to the exotic and the 'primitive' throughout his life, either in terms of subject matter or style, with varying degrees of success. However, this was almost always combined with a knowing implementation of modernist motifs and styles. This is what Rhodes (Rhodes, 1994, p. 107) describes as 'stylistic primitivism'.

Although, on the one hand, Spies can be described as a modernist in an innovative sense, at the same time he was also conservative and driven by convention. There are no real avant-garde tendencies, other than in a bourgeois sense, except his involvement in groups like the *Dresden Secession*. It seems that with this group, he was playing at being avant-garde, rather than participating in a politically committed fashion. Chytry suggests that Spies distanced himself from more radical socialist declarations by groups he was involved in such as the *Novembergruppe*¹³. It seems clear that he did, however, share the sense of alienation of other artists which drove

and to some extent moulded, their artistic styles and ideologies. However, with Spies, this alienation manifested itself in a different way, so that rather than challenging the establishment as he saw it, he sought escape from it. Although Spies probably knew very little about the Dutch East Indies, he was not parochial in his views and experiences, having lived outside the so-called civilised, industrialised world during his time in the Urals. It seems that he had found this to be a very inspiring experience and, despite successfully navigating through various artistic cliques in Russia and Germany over a period of about six years, he seemed suited and even destined to be a member of a particular breed: the artistic colonial exile. This was a dream shared by a number of Spies' artistic contemporaries such as Kokoschka, Klee and Nolde, although perhaps the impetus was stronger in Spies, because he had already experienced this type of displacement.

Spies' intellect seems to be an important factor in his work as he tends to almost try to conceal it at certain times. This concealment seems to be part of the kind of self-deception of an artist trying to short-circuit his own educational background and cultural tradition to become a 'primitive'. The letters to his mother¹⁴ are an indication of this tendency in which he describes work in an almost childlike and simplistic fashion which does nothing to betray some of the deeper level artifice and eclecticism being employed in creating the works. Colin Rhodes suggests that this was a Nietzschean idea embraced by the expressionists. He suggests that:

...Nietzsche's idea that creativity is intuitive rather than rational, and that artistic creation can be equated with the primitive procreative urge.
(Rhodes, 1994, p. 142)

It is interesting that Oskar Kokoschka did not take Spies seriously.¹⁵ This might have arisen from the way that Spies seems to have refused to intellectualise what he was doing in European modernist terms. Thus, although he produced provocative and interesting works from quite early on in his painting career, he was not able or perhaps willing to describe or develop those ideas in a clearly articulated manner. Rather, he relied on his own, probably spurious, notions of his own intuition and inspiration which denied the more mundane thought process which informed his own creative process. Although Spies did discuss his paintings at times, particularly in his correspondence, it is clear that he tried to diminish the conscious intellectual input he provided to his work and preferred to interpret it after finishing a painting for instance.

I do not plan the meaning of the painting, I can only admit it afterwards, perhaps as a sort of interpretation of what is going on.
(Niehaus, 1941, p. 35)

Spies appears to have been a reluctant intellectual who, on the one hand, had a voracious curiosity and desire to learn and synthesise ideas, but on the other hand attempted to repudiate his own scientific tendencies and even his own sanity. It is interesting that in his correspondence, his outlook seemed to dichotomise a sophisticated synthesis of artistic approach and a denial of reason at the same time.

Goris was very intrigued by the schizophrenic book and asked to borrow it for a day. There are dreadfully interesting things in it, but according to this Toewan
¹⁶ I *must* be insane. I am afraid! How beautiful! I would rather be insane than be as stupidly scientific as the writer! I am so happy not to have any intellect.
(Letter, Spies to Belo, 1939)¹⁷

Rhodes expands on this idea in a way that applies very much to Spies in the light of this quotation. Spies was clearly attracted by the idea of insane, childish and primitive mentalities in relation to creating art, thus corresponding with this aspect of expressionist and post-expressionist German thought. Rhodes discusses this denial of intellect and argues that:

This represents an attempt on the part of Western artists to retreat from reason and thereby gain access to the very sources of creativity itself, which they believed was exemplified in its most authentic and liberated form in the minds of children, tribal peoples and the insane.
(Rhodes, 1994, p. 133)

Quite early in his career, Spies equated this denial of reason with the work of Klee and Chagall in a letter to his father. He regretted the formal training he had been given and hoped to bypass technique, as he felt these artists had done¹⁸.

Spies might be described as modernist in another important way, which made him different from other more traditional artists in the Indies. This was through embracing forms like photography and film as valid media without the traditional Western cultural prejudices which regarded these as lesser, commercial forms which could not be expressive or profoundly communicative. Spies clearly saw the value and power of these media. He also allowed all of these media to influence one another in his own output. It is quite possible that German modernist ideas had a strong and enduring influence on the visual approach and ideas of Spies. In fact many of these tendencies, based on primitivist ideas as they were, meant that many local visual and other stimuli were confirmatory of some of Spies' modernist tendencies. Thus, although modernist

categories are quite appropriate to describe the paintings and ideas of Walter Spies, it is only a broad interpretation of modernism which can encapsulate Spies, whose ideas combined conservative historicism with romantic primitivism. In addition to this equation, if the term modernism is to be used to comfortably describe Spies, as Chytry has tried to do, the term needs to include Spies' production of paintings and films in a colonial tourist context. This work can be seen as tourist work essentialising Bali and the Balinese and enshrining an Orientalist message in the service of a divisive colonial ideology.

Spies as a film maker: The significance of *Island of Demons* and *Kriss*

During the 1920s and 1930s, a new sub-genre of feature films started to emerge to satisfy European and American audiences' fascination with the world of the 'savage' and the 'primitive': the "South Seas film" (Langer, 1985, p. 43). A common ground of primitivist visual discourse was being mapped out by these films and almost certainly helped to reflect as well as mould the visual expectations of the visitors to exotic places like Bali. Most of these visitors are likely to have been cinema-goers. One of the first and probably most famous of these films was *Tabu* released in 1931 and the project of Robert J. Flaherty and F. W. Murnau. Other films soon followed, including two which originated from Bali and were, at least, in part the work of Walter Spies. These were entitled *Island of Demons* and *Kriss* Like the Balinese tourist paintings which Spies and others attempted to mediate, Bali and its cultures were also being mediated and packaged by producers of film for a Western audience, their desires and expectations. Thus, these films and the discourse they represent are helpful in illustrating the ideology of their makers as well as their reception by European audiences ¹⁹. They help to illustrate the attitudes and expectations that tourists of the 1930s brought with them when visiting Bali and the 'South Seas'. This section proposes that the persuasive power of the new medium of the sound film was significant in bringing people to Bali. As well as reflecting received ideas about the 'Orient' derived from colonial literature, advertising and folklore, these films also helped to further mould those ideas with specific images and narratives from a 'tropical island paradise'.

Tabu was Murnau's last film and is perhaps the most famous of the films of this genre It popularised a style and approach copied by subsequent films. Murnau's collaboration with Flaherty on this film brought about the sometimes discordant conjunction of

elements of ethnographic documentary woven in with more conventional film narrative. Many of the characteristics of *Tabu* can be seen in the Bali-based film Walter Spies was most involved with - *Island of Demons*. Although all of the films in this genre could be said to articulate already existing generalities common to a Western primitivist discourse, there are likely to have been strands of influence between the various productions. These would have come from those who worked on more than one production of that genre like Flaherty, from those who saw other similar films, and from direct communication between the creators of those films, such as that which existed between Murnau and Walter Spies.

The approach of combining narrative film conventions with elements of documentary appears in the works which Spies was involved with. However, it is more difficult to attribute this to a direct causal influence, as it is not clear whether Spies had seen *Tabu*. However, Spies was corresponding with Murnau at this time and he alludes to this correspondence in his letters to his mother ²⁰. The collaborative nature of film means that the final shape of both films would have been formed by others who were familiar with *Tabu* and other works by Flaherty. These were films such as *Nanook of the North* (1922), *Moana* (1926) and *White Shadows in the Southern Seas* (1928) ²¹. Certainly in *Kriss*, Spies had much less influence on the final product. In fact he is not credited in the production, despite his involvement in formulating the original story ²² and filming the first attempt at the film which was subsequently destroyed during processing in Surabaya ²³.

Walter Spies was involved with film intermittently throughout his adult life, whether it was amateur ethnographic work and photography ²⁴ or narrative features. He was very enthusiastic about being a filmmaker and corresponded enthusiastically with his mother on the subject ²⁵. His knowledge of early cinema gained from working quite intensively in the German film system with Murnau in the early 1920s would have recommended him as a consultant and contributor to any films shot in Bali. This, combined with his local knowledge, contacts and reputation amongst Europeans in Bali itself inevitably meant that he was called upon to work on the two notable feature films made in Bali in the Inter-war period. The first was melodramatically titled *Kriss - The Sword of Death* also known as *Goona Goona* or *Love Powder*. The film was something of a minor hit in the USA and the title *Goona Goona* gained currency in New York for a time with a craze for all things Balinese, which included a New York night-club called *The Sins of Bali* ²⁶. Vickers suggests "...in New York high society it made *guna-guna*, a Malay and Javanese term for love magic, into a popular phrase.

In fact it can be credited with linking sex and magic in the popular image of Bali" (Vickers, 1989, p. 108). Thus, it is clear that these films had a significant impact outside Bali. The second film Spies worked on in Bali was called *Insel der Dämonen* (*Island of Demons*) also known as *Black Magic*. The film was produced by Victor Baron von Plessen and Dr. Friedrich Dalsheim in 1931. Spies and his nephew Conrad were both included in the film credits.

Kriss was initially produced in 1928. This was the project of the American Andre Roosevelt, but interestingly Spies claimed to do most of the directing.

...I am making a film only with the Balinese, here in Ubud. I am directing most of the time and Mr Roosevelt is the cameraman. I have a wonderful and very simple story and it will be a very simple lovely story 'à la schwedisch'. Perhaps I can still become a famous film director, who knows!...I have also found very good actors. I hope to make a lot of money.
(letter, Spies to his mother)²⁷

In terms of narrative, a key difference between the two films is that *Kriss* has a tragic and melodramatic ending whereas *Island of Demons* has a happy ending with the lovers coming together at the end of the film. *Kriss* is a film of love, jealousy, intrigue and sorcery and *Island of Demons* is a film of love, sorcery, sickness and spiritual cleansing.

The final visual qualities of *Island of Demons*, particularly the editing and lighting, seem to owe a great deal to the legacy of Murnau. The editing seems to have been done in Germany without Spies, but possibly with some direction from him, and the shooting was done very much under the guidance of Spies. This, combined with the fact that the film was a largely German production with the strongly felt influence of Murnau in that industry, gives the film a German expressionist flavour at times particularly in the lighting and the editing of the night scenes. Spies had probably worked with F. W. Murnau on his classic film *Nosferatu* ²⁸ as well as a number of other films produced by Murnau before he left for America. Although Spies appears to have been disillusioned with the film world.

My friend [Murnau] and I are the worst enemies of the movie business and all the people in it. We stay away from them wherever we possibly can. It's probably true that those who have anything to do with the film making industry are just inferior, shallow and frivolous people. Neither these people nor any films in general are worth taking seriously, but one should be satisfied

and even thankful, that one can earn some money by these perhaps not-so-noble means. And this may be what spurs most of the people to the film, and after all, avarice doesn't belong to the noblest instincts of human beings.

(Letter, Spies to Frau S, 1923)²⁹

Despite this disillusionment with the film world, Spies seemed very enthusiastic about the Balinese productions and clearly saw this as a source of income³⁰. This is also indicative of his motivations in relation to painting. Both of Spies' 'Balinese' films also continued the European fascination with sorcery and the spirit world represented in *Nosferatu*. However, there are other, more colonial issues embedded in these two 'Balinese' films, which are of great relevance to the political and ideological climate amongst Bali's residents, both 'bohemian' and establishment figures.

The two films produced in Bali are perhaps not classics of early modern cinema, but they are very revealing of some of the attitudes held by Spies and some of his contemporary Europeans in Bali. Like Spies' paintings and those of artists promoted by *Pita Maha*, the films are notable as much for what they do not portray and discuss, as for what they actually do. In particular, the modern, the Western and the colonial are largely ignored or dealt with in a particularly distant and moralised way.

It is clear that, for both films, Spies was present during the filming (**fig. 35**) and was involved with enlisting actors, as well as developing storylines and plots. He was involved as visual consultant and is likely to have framed the specific shots, as well as finding locations for the films. He might have had some input on editing and the musical score although the final editing and packaging of these films occurred in Europe. This might account for the disgust he expresses about the final musical accompaniment to *Island of Demons* which he describes as "execrable"³¹. It also indicates the concern that he had to try and create something that he felt was 'authentic'. The second film, *Island of Demons* is based on traditional Balinese folk tales and provides narrative elements of the story of *barong* in cinematic form. The film culminates in a performance of *barong*³² to exorcise a plague brought on the village by a *leyak*³³ or witch who could be seen as representing the mythical and ritualised witch figure Rangda.

Both films are characterised by bucolic establishing scenes of rural harmony and focus from an early stage on the semi-nudity of the female and sometimes the male actors. In the case of *Island of Demons*, this harmony is in stark contrast to the hardships being experienced at that time by the rural poor in post-depression Bali. The films include

genre scenes of everyday life, reflecting and possibly pre-empting the subject matter of the *Pita Maha* paintings. *Kriss* in particular includes picturesque scenes of the marketplace, harvesting, cockfights, feasts, temples and palaces. *Island of Demons* is something of a guide to Balinese tourism, with locations chosen specifically from a contemporary tourist itinerary of Bali, which has changed little since then, with locations such as Goa Gajah and Tanah Lot. It is possible that the film itself influenced the favoured destinations of the tourists, but these are likely to have been already fairly established at the time of the film. They were clearly chosen for their photogeneity, in terms of Western ideas of the picturesque. *Kriss* includes familiar human tourist attractions, such as the dancer Mario who was much filmed and photographed by Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies³⁴. There are shots in Campuan where Spies lived and at a monkey forest reminiscent of a Spies painting *Heiliger Wald bei Sangsit* of 1928 (fig. 48). In *Island of Demons*, a modified version of the *ketjak* dance³⁵ was included as a key visual pivot at the denouement of the narrative. The authorship of these changes has sometimes been attributed to Spies³⁶ but this has also been questioned. "The initiative did not come from Spies, but from Balinese who had already started to adapt the chorus. It was convenient for him to direct this adaptation into the film" (Vickers, 1989, p. 108). Garret Kam (1993, p.163) names the Balinese innovator as I Wayan Limbak. Although Spies was probably responsible for its inclusion in the film, the search amongst commentators for a kind of personalised neo-colonial causality, as has happened in the arena of new Balinese painting, has probably been overplayed over time³⁷.

There is an element of ethnographic record in the films and there are elements of the pseudo-educational with the inclusion of various rituals and practices, seemingly attempting to represent a harmonious and cohesive totality to Balinese life and culture, which reflects the *baliseering* philosophy of the colonisers. However, it is not all harmony; the scene in *Kriss* where *amok*³⁸ is depicted, represents another famous, dramatic and colourful Indies' ethnographic cliché which equates more closely with the mythologising of the *puputan*.

Thus, the films tended to reinforce certain ideas about the people and the landscape as picturesque objects adhering to visual genres established in accordance to notions of a living museum. As with the paintings produced for tourists, corrugated iron roofs and Western style garments are not visible. The characters were also sexually objectified not by the performance of the actors themselves, but in the way the Western camera, editor, reviewers and primary audience observed and packaged them. Nudity itself as a motif represents an area of visual-linguistic contestation, as the way this would be

perceived, by a Western audience, would differ greatly from the meaning such nudity on film might have to the Balinese. Much as the traditional rituals would be seen in many cases as unexceptional everyday occurrences to a Balinese viewer, to a Western male audience of the time, this nudity is likely to have been read as an indication of sexual availability. Additionally, to a more libertarian Western audience of the time, it might also have helped to confirm Bali as reflecting a more general ideal in freedom from Western inhibitions. In terms of the reputation that Bali started to gain as a homosexual paradise, the films go further and they not only focus on the nudity of women but *Kriss* also quite gratuitously focuses on naked boys and adolescents in a harvesting scene. Thus, as well as being a vessel for the pre-industrial fantasies of a heterosexual male European audience, the films advertise Bali as a focus for forbidden homosexual fantasies as well. These selling points for the films are apparent from the euphemistic allusions made to these aspects of the films in some of the reviews written of the films at the time.

...some excellent exotic backgrounds have been obtained which form an interesting background for the native players.

Incidentally, the feminine members of the cast act with unaffected simplicity and charm.

(*Picturegoer Weekly*, August 6th, 1932, p. 19)

The films may also be indirectly responsible for the type of sexual tourism which subsequently developed in Bali during the 1930s. No figures appear to exist for the number of women who attended the films, but it would be interesting to know what the real demographic demand for the films was. The influence of cinema in attracting visitors and to some extent moulding their views of the Island should probably not be underestimated. One woman who was attracted to Bali by *Kriss* was Ketut Tantri (or 'Manx')³⁹.

As well as framing the people as visual objects, the film also sought consciously or unconsciously to convey justificatory ideological messages about European colonialism. Within the narratives of these stories, there are various veiled critiques which are almost like warnings to the natives themselves. In *Island of Demons*, the money lender to whom one of the key protagonists owes money is ethnically Chinese: the only occurrence of a non-Balinese in either film. This fits with a popular image of the Chinese as manipulative exploiters of the natives⁴⁰. Interestingly this discourse is also continued in Vicki Baum's *A Tale from Bali* (Baum, 1937, pp. 75-79 & p. 459), in relation to the Chinese owners of the ship the Sri Kumala. The odd discourse of displacement of the image of interracial exploitation and its inclusion in *Island of*

Demons seems likely to have been intentional as carrying a subliminal and disparaging anti-Chinese discourse. This also corresponds interestingly with Murnau's *Tabu* which includes a similar cameo portrayal of the Chinese as exploiters of native populations. It is possible that in some cases the Chinese did exploit native populations, but to be routinely identified as exploiters by European colonial figures is somewhat hypocritical

41.

With *Kriss*, it is not entirely true that the modern is excluded. Although no foreigners make an appearance, this film is more clearly rooted in the present with the Raja's son returning from Europe where he has been studying. Royalty is portrayed as debauched and corrupt, again suggesting a reason for colonial masters to keep a watchful eye on them. Nevertheless, in *Kriss* the arrival of the prince newly returned from his European education, makes it clear that Europe is a faraway place and masks the reality of the Dutch colonial control of Bali at this time. The narrative of the film makes it clear that he has been somehow morally corrupted by the experience and that the tragic events which follow are a result of outside influence on a 'traditional' society. The narrative is told in such a way that it appears to be the father who is to blame for the sending of his son overseas. This narrative ploy also represents the ideology of *baliseering* in firstly, excluding any intermingling of Western motifs and customs and secondly, by the implied corruption of simple natives by too much exposure to the ways of the West. However, the behaviour of the actors is often not traditional or characteristic and shows what appears to be a strong element of direction in acting in order to communicate through posture and body movement to the Western audience certain narrative ideas. This might arise through an awareness of the actors themselves, through seeing movies of apparently appropriate screen behaviour. For example, at the beginning of *Kriss*, the main protagonist Wayan walks out of his field with a swagger like a cowboy rather than a Balinese farmer. This would also belie the notion of some reviewers that the actors are in some way 'natural' and not camera conscious.

...There is a decided story thread throughout which wins for 'Goona' the distinction of being among the first feature length travelogs with a melodramatic flavor.

The native cast is excellent because not one of its members is camera conscious.

(Waly, *Variety*, Sept 27, 1932)

The strongest irony in this message is the very existence of a film crew staging a very modern drama and represents one of the problematic questions of anthropological studies and documentaries which portray a separation of those recording, from their respondents or actors ⁴². This contradiction being created by such film productions is

very similar to the questionable premises of traditional anthropology being conducted in Bali at this time by many of Spies' friends such as Belo, McPhee, Mead and Bateson.

Both films were fairly commercially successful. It appears that *Island of Demons* had more of a cinematic presence in Europe and was distributed by British Lion films in Britain (figs. 49 & 50). It was shown in most large British cities under the title *Black Magic*. For example it was shown at the Picture Palace in Sheffield on the week of April 6th 1934 and at the West End Birmingham starting on April 5th 43. Notably, in each case it was screened late at night, probably due to its rating. The film had favourable reviews which are worth commenting upon as they illustrate European responses to this depiction of Bali and highlight some of the preoccupations of the reviewers and thus possibly the audience for the film.

The heroine, played by a young Eastern beauty rejoicing in the name of Sari, is a truly glamorous young person with a personality worthy of a Garbo, the allure of a Joan Crawford and a figure that any chorine would envy. A number of other beautiful girls appear in this production, each possessing looks and figures that would satisfy even Busby Berkeley!
(anon, *Kinematograph Weekly*, March 22nd, 1934, p. 8)

The emphasis in this review is clearly a lascivious one and although nudity is not specifically mentioned, it is euphemised, as is the case with similar language from other reviews of this film. The use of Hollywood metaphors to describe the film illustrates the difficulties that the audience had in evaluating 'ethnographic' material on its own terms. The Busby Berkeley reference is interesting in the way that the Western view sought to appropriate and decontextualise dancers, for instance, and to repackage or at least suggest such repackaging for a Western audience. This is what happened to Reri, the female star of *Tabu*, who was later employed and recontextualised by the Ziegfeld Follies in New York based on her performance in *Tabu* 44. This is another example of a readjustment of tradition to create a mediated visual-linguistic contact zone as is the case with Balinese tourist art.

...The scenery is reminiscent of the whimsicality of Arthur Rackham. A charming film, deserving of high commendation. The voices of the natives speaking the language of their country is extremely pleasant to hear. The translation of it into English is good.
...The subject lends itself naturally, of course, to pictorial beauty, and the utmost has been made of every opportunity. Composition, camera angles, close-ups, flashes, dissolving shots, lighting - every possible technical device has been utilised and the result,

photographically speaking, is well-nigh perfect. "Black Magic," is purely intended as an entertainment film, but the perceptive will pick out much that is instructive - for instance, in regard to the native methods of cultivating rice. It has doubtless been classed as an "A" Certificate film because of the inevitable display of the female form, divine. (C.C., *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May, 1934, p. 29)

With a focus still on 'beauty', the landscape is highlighted in this account and the use of the Arthur Rackham comparison is interesting in the way that it uses another visual metaphor, which is quite inaccurate, but likely to be familiar to the audience, to communicate the apparent charm of the landscape. It illustrates the difficulty consumers of the visual had in viewing this landscape and the people in the terms of those who inhabit the landscape. Thus, a fairly inappropriate transcription of that landscape into familiar visual vocabulary is deemed necessary, by the mediators of the product ⁴⁵. The review comments on the use of native language and it seems curious that this should be noteworthy, but the comment indicates the appearance of this film as something of a curiosity. Language is also an interesting issue in *Kriss*. There are different layers of language where at one point the actors apparently use their native tongue, but on the sound track Malay rather than Balinese is used. At another point the priest appears to speak Balinese when conducting a ceremony. The ethnographic recording aspect of the film should also not be ignored. In an age where few could afford international travel and television as such did not exist, the availability of such a representation for Western audiences meant that these films were in some way 'educational' as well as salacious in the eyes of the Western viewing public. In fact, this reviewer manages to conflate both of these divergent ideas in a single comment. The review is strangely earnest in its reference to the cultivation of rice, which it seems highly unlikely will interest anybody. This comment is interesting as an example of an apparent need or desire on the part of mediators of the film to attribute educational value to such films. This ploy is repeated in other reviews of both films. Nevertheless, the review quickly reverts to type when referring to the female form. This reveals the 'educational' comment as reflecting a concealment of intent and a codification of allusions to lewdness on the part of the reviewer ⁴⁶.

Received views of the 'primitive', the 'natural' and the 'authentic' pervade these accounts both in a confirmatory and suggestive fashion and are to some extent illustrative of the views many visitors to Bali would also have carried with them. They may also have had an influence upon their views. The following review uses the word 'authentic' twice and 'authenticity' once, as well as again highlighting a beautiful landscape.

Native folk drama.. Exceptionally impressive study of superstition and fear in Bali. Ingenuous story of islanders who believed witch responsible for ills and evils, provides sufficient backbone for authentic and captivating survey of domesticity, religion, rituals, dances and people of Malayan paradise. Sympathetic direction of story, and careful use of material, whole filmed on spot with native actors, authentic chants, dances and customs, against entrancing pictorial background gives film unprecedented appeal as racial documentary. Fascinating and sometimes terrifying native dances. Charmingly natural portrayals. Fine camerawork secures generous, candid and intimate studies of girlish beauty and masculine grace, and superb canvas of natural island. Native dialogue interpolated with adequate subtitles. Very efficient editing knits production together. Production unexcelled for conviction and authenticity as racial study provides very attractive off beaten track entertainment to be exploited on specialised lines. (A.F., *The Cinema* - Booking Guide, July, 1934, p. 5)

It seems unlikely that the writer of this article was intimately familiar with Bali and so it is interesting that he should be convinced of the 'authenticity' of the film and to speculate on what information he had to identify that what he is seeing is 'authentic'. In this case, 'authentic' equates with 'difference' and thus also 'Otherness'. It seems that by having elements of the unfamiliar framed within a familiar medium and narrative filmic language, the writer feels that these unfamiliar elements constitute authenticity. 'Charmingly natural' also indicates the European view of the Balinese subjects of the film. The idea of the 'natural' as opposed to the 'cultured' seems important here. There is a clearly sentimentalised and essentialised distinction being made between the review writer's audience who are supposedly not natural, but 'cultured' and 'disciplined' and the Balinese subjects who are apparently 'natural' and therefore uncultured. The invisibility of the existence of the culture of others and so also its possible sophistication and utility, is symptomatic of the misapprehended appeal of such films by Western viewers. A similarly 'naïve' charm is likely to be an attractive element in the appeal of many of the Balinese tourist paintings. The Western approval of actors not being 'camera conscious' could be equated with the non-inclusion of motifs of modernity in Balinese (and European) artistic production notions of 'paradise', 'authenticity' and the 'natural' are all identified linguistically in this article and are apparently sought by tourist consumers of art. Indeed such visual demand is likely to have been helped by the existence, visual composition, and overall discourse of these films.

Overall, across the different reviews and sometimes within the same review, a seemingly irreconcilable range of comments from the salacious to the earnest appears to exist. As with the previous *Film Bulletin* review, an apparently serious, educational aspect of the film seems to be stressed here. Interestingly, the reviewer also uses the term 'racial documentary'. This term highlights the racial separatism, in the vein of *baliseering*, implicit in the film, by its lack of European actors. In the reviews, there is certainly no querying of the story in terms of its lack of the trappings of modernity, nor is there any sense of irony about the lack of European colonial figures in the film. In the minds of the film-makers, reviewers and audience, this distancing is accurate and correct. The term 'racial documentary' suggests the modern conception of the documentary, but at that time the documentary as an idea was still relatively young and developing. Thus, the mixture of the feature film romance and the idea of the documentary might not seem so incongruous as it does today. However, even reviews of the time can be seen to highlight this mismatch as is the case with *Kriss* which tends much more towards the documentary:

This film is described by its sponsors as "the life drama of a million people." To the natives of the island of Bali, Dutch East Indies with whom this treats, the events unfolded may be in the nature of a drama, but to audiences in British cinemas, already versed in native ceremonials, it is more than likely to prove decidedly tedious...

...The fact that the girls of the island wear nothing above the waist has earned for the picture an "A" certificate, which precludes it from its most suitable category as an "educational." An appropriate musical score is added.

(*The Bioscope*, March 23 1932, p. 27)

This review is almost breathtakingly arrogant in its suggestion that British audiences could in any way be versed in so-called 'native ceremonials'. It also suggests a naïve interpretation of narrative by the Balinese people themselves. The review goes further than others in explicitly highlighting the nudity in the film and suggests that the musical score is 'appropriate'. The score is worth discussing, as it characterises the kind of ersatz Hollywood international Orientalism, whereby a pentatonic phrase is arranged for orchestra and abstracted into a kind of aural pidgin, occupying a musical linguistic contact zone which is deemed comprehensible to an audience where sustained traditional and more indigenous music is seen to be unsuitable. This attitude can also arise from a lack of awareness of musical nuance on the part of producers as well as consumers, who would all be untrained in terms of a musical appreciation of the intricacies and structures of Balinese music. This ploy (or accident) clearly worked in

the judgement of this reviewer and this is likely to be the reason why Walter Spies disliked the music in *Island of Demons*. It is interesting that Spies objected to this type of simplified musical hybridity, when in the case of Balinese tourist painting he engaged in, and actively encouraged, the establishment of a mediated visual language which pandered to simplistic tourist expectations of paradise, the 'natural', and the 'authentic'. Perhaps the difference, from Spies' perspective, is that one is a Western misinterpretation of Balinese culture for Western consumption, whereas the other is Balinese reinterpretation of their own painting traditions for foreign consumption, under the scrutiny of a Western *animateur*⁴⁷. What is common to both, is the usage of familiar motifs which have been established through film, photography, magazines, literature or music to communicate particular appealing Western ideas of Bali and the Balinese, in recognisable and familiar 'linguistic' terms to a Western audience.

Some of the critics took a less complimentary view of *Kriss* in particular. This review also illustrates the thematic links with *Tabu* (1931)⁴⁸ and *White Shadows in the Southern Seas* (1928)⁴⁹ and clearly indicates that these were part of a particular genre in the mind of the viewers and probably the film makers themselves. It indicates the profile Bali had at the time with the reviewer's allusion to the current interest in Bali.

Photo doesn't justify the interest of the film and is way below 'White Shadows' or 'Tabu.' Story and acting of small interest. The current interest in the Malay island of Bali where the film has been made, has been exploited by Roosevelt, who has tacked on his film the local crematory rites, which are rather extraneous to the story - normally extending after the slaying of the murderer. A sequence showing same rites appears in the current Fox Movietone newsreel.

Roosevelt whose father was a first cousin to the late president, spent five years in Bali, out of which 15 months were employed in preparation and filmization of the production, cost of which is below \$50, 000.

(Maxi, *Variety*, January 26th, 1932)

Kriss yielded some more reflective views on its main text. Another less than complimentary review of the film in *Close-Up* is illustrative of differing European opinions about the 'benefits' of colonialism. The reviewer has the strong message from this film from the colonies, about the apparent corruption of 'traditional' values from the West. He characterises this as an idea which is seldom articulated. This is an interesting perspective of the time which indicates a different and British ideological understanding of colonialism. This comment highlights the rather curious nature and position of the *baliseering* separatism project in the context of broader Western discourse about the nature and purpose of colonialism. These ideas are effectively characterised as 'liberal', radical and progressive which relate to the colonised as a

more common discourse of commerce, modernisation, administration and education. However, this film is not an anti-colonial film and the reviewer also recoils from condemning colonialism himself. He takes the position of the film-makers' *baliseering* perspective which promotes an enlightened paternalism. In this article he alludes several times to magic and this is something which repeatedly reappears in relation to Spies' magic realism or even magic realism in relation to Balinese painters ⁵⁰.

Nonga has lived in Europe; he comes back expecting his education will give him more freedom and power, will help him. He meets the forgotten taboos. He finds his education has untrammelled desires which make him more a slave to them, finally a victim. In my experience, it is the first film I have seen in which it is even hinted that Westernisation may bring things other than benefits to an older civilisation than ours. I am not saying, leave the poor natives in peace. I am merely remarking that in preferring the advantages of Western civilisation, it is good to remember that Westerners are not working on virgin soil. They come with their ideas, their machines, morals and outlook to races whose minds have been trained for centuries longer than theirs in quite a different civilisation. ...It is a calm unfolding of magic before our eyes. French, it is to come on for a run just about when this issue comes out, and the bad photography and the dull lecture, made with an eye on America, will probably spoil it for many.
(Robert Herring, *Close Up*, 1932, p. 116 -117)

It is interesting that this reviewer implies that there is so much modernity in this film when none is visible. He also disassociates himself from the colonisers by using the third person. He is almost apologetic about the possibility that he might be suggesting that colonialism is a bad idea, but he has clearly been persuaded by the separatist agenda of the film. Like *An Outcast of the Islands* (Conrad, 1896) and *Twin Flower* (Collins, 1934), the message in *Kriss* focuses on the tragic consequences for all concerned of, inter-racial contact and Western interference. In this sense, it follows a particular tradition in literature about the colonies. *A Tale From Bali* (Baum, 1937) tends to focus on a tragedy arising from a clash of cultures. The Balinese are represented as autonomous, independent and largely happy in a traditional way of life whose only threat comes from the spirit world, or from the supposedly geographically distant moral threats posed by 'modern' Western societies. The levels of distancing of Westerners is an interesting factor in the narrative. *Kriss* more self-consciously makes use of a Western commentator ⁵¹, who attempts to explain a number of Balinese traditions incorporated into the film. This provides a European mediator although he is never seen. It is this mediator who seems to irritate the reviewer from *Close-Up* and perhaps this illustrates part of the misunderstanding of the film-makers about the contradictory

discourse of desire amongst the viewers. This is the discourse which makes them want to read themselves into the film as 'primitives' and they are prevented from doing so by the reminder that, in fact, the natives are objects of Western 'scientific' scrutiny.

There appears to be a marked difference in colonial literature of the time whose conventions clearly include European characters, usually of the colonial adventurer type as in *Lord Jim* or *An Outcast of the Islands* ⁵². This relates to the way in Orientalist paintings, colonial distance is expressed through illusionism ⁵³. It is interesting that these two 'Bali' films do the same as the tourist paintings in indulging in illusionistic distanciation by excluding the modern and ignoring colonial realities. Conversely, comparable colonial literature tends to include European protagonists as well as engaging in debate about inter-racial contact. There appears to be a discursive function in such literature, which in many cases allows a separatist message to emerge. A painting clearly seems to be intended to position the viewer differently, whereby the viewer takes an omniscient position surveying the landscape from outside. There is a veiled ideology of ownership at work in the tourist picture whereas in the colonial novel, conventionally speaking, it seems that there was expected to be a moral to the story ⁵⁴. With a tourist picture it was made easy for a Westerner to imagine a superior position in relation to what is viewed and, in some way, take ownership of the image and the landscape and people it displays. I will explore this idea further in relation to Walter Spies' painting, in the next section.

A picture captures a moment although it could be argued that Spies tried to do more with his paintings in terms of time and space. With the more prolonged exposure to a colonial novel like *Outcast of the Islands* we expect to identify with a 'hero' and thus it was deemed that a Western figure needs to be provided to fulfil that purpose. The inclusion of an avatar as a way of imagining an engagement with the 'Other' seems to be what causes paintings and literature to take different approaches. Perhaps relationships are harder to unambiguously establish in a painting and therefore omission of the external viewer is deemed necessary in the Orientalist mode. However, the films I have discussed, like novels, are narratives, but they dispense with a European hero or even any peripheral European characters. This identifies them, like Spies' paintings, as having an Orientalist function. This function seems to relate to the specific ideological and fantasy discourse relating to Bali, which is intended to highlight the aestheticised 'Other' in the same way as Walter Spies' paintings.

Despite the 'Orientalist' criticism of these films, on another level they are doing something quite subversive and revolutionary, by not putting Western lead actors as

the focus of the film. The audience is being asked to identify with the Balinese characters as heroes as well as villains. This is quite unusual, as it is usually deemed necessary for commercial success to have white heroes and heroines, even in a 'primitive' context ⁵⁵. So, a great deal of cultural mediation and use of hybridised, Orientalist filmic codes are used in these films to reach audiences. However, in one particular and quite important respect, Western audiences are being asked to comprehend a relatively new area of filmic vocabulary which had first been introduced by films like *Tabu* (1931) ⁵⁶ and *Nanook of the North* (1922) ⁵⁷.

Spies and his contacts were by no means the only film-makers involved with the subject of Bali. Following the relative success of *Island of Demons* and *Kriss* there were other feature films which used Bali as location and subject. These varied greatly in quality and to varying degrees and in different ways catered to the ignorance of audiences about the customs and ways of life of native peoples in the colonial world. In particular, the extent of power wielded in the colonies by the Europeans or even their very existence was diminished or ignored. Vickers (Vickers, 1989, p. 104) writes about what he describes as the first 'Balinese' film *Calon Arang* (1927)⁵⁸. Very little is known about this film. It is not known who made it and it appears that no copies have survived. Later, there were productions such as the luridly titled *Balinese Love* (1931)⁵⁹ and *Legong, Dance of Virgins* (1935) ⁶⁰. The notion of corruption of 'unspoiled' native cultures is a constant in many of these South Seas films.

Balinese Love of 1931 ⁶¹ appears to have been a very poor film which was ignorant of Balinese customs and behaviour and which traded almost entirely on generic elements from other films dealing with 'the savage in paradise'. Even the critics of the time recognised the poor quality of this film stating:

This picture is patently a cheap imitation of 'Tabu'. It has not, like 'Tabu' however, photography or local colour to back it up. It's a badly made and poorly faked tale of love among savages.
(*Variety*, Dec 8th, 1931)

In comparison to films like *Balinese Love*, *Island of Demons* and *Kriss* seem more serious 'authentic' Balinese films. Although they tend to ideologise and present Bali in a consumable form for Western audiences, some of the intentions of these films seem quite laudable and maintain an element of relative documentary authenticity.

South Seas Films such as these 'Balinese' productions provided an ultimate escapism for Westerners leaving the horrors of the Great War behind, seeking temporary escape from the effects of the world-wide economic depression. Fear of a darker, other side of the world and by implication of our own darker and primitive side appears to be a strong compelling factor in many of these films which, although they often dealt with dramatically different geographical locations, often shared a short-hand in the filmic language which bridged the gap between viewers and viewed. The extent to which this filmic codification occurred varied from film to film, but was identifiable in all works in these genres of the time and arose from the already familiar visual and narrative language of Orientalist discourse. In this way, even well intentioned documentary film-making was quite disingenuous in, on the one hand, seeking to 'educate' Western audiences about the ways of native peoples and yet presenting quite unlikely scenarios and behaviour by the actors with the probable intention of trying to make the film intelligible to Western audiences. In addition to this, the most important selling point for these films in a commercial sense was the often gratuitous and voyeuristic inclusion of female and sometimes male nudity. This alone is likely to have brought greater numbers of tourists to Bali in the mid to late 1930s. These cinematic images must have been at least partially responsible for the sex-seeking tourists and residents which so outraged the Dutch colonial authorities into seeking to instigate a puritanical purge in Bali of such foreign residents and visitors and thus nullify Bali's growing reputation as a sexual paradise.

'The real Bali': an analysis of the Balinese paintings of Walter Spies

Opinions differ over the quality and significance of the Balinese paintings of Walter Spies, but his work is certainly noteworthy for a number of reasons and in certain respects merits extended discussion. Spies adopts a variety of subjects in his Indies paintings, from apparently narrative or fantasy or mythological subjects to straightforward landscapes for which photography is likely to have been used in varying degrees. Below I will discuss a number of paintings, but will focus on two works *Rehjangd & Iseh im Morgenlicht* which characterise different aspects of Spies' work in terms of visual style and subject matter, but which all reflect aspects of Spies' colonialist discourse. I will explore these works as texts with specific audiences and ideological foundations, some of which relate to the issues discussed in the previous section in relation to Spies' films. Although Franz Roh clearly felt that Spies' early European works were his most important output, this is probably partly due to his lack of awareness of Spies' later work, as well as 1920s European Modernist views of what

might represent significant artistic endeavour. Indeed, Chytry (1989, p. 461) takes the opposite view and sees the early work as an interesting, but less important precursor, to Spies' Asian paintings. However, Chytry views Spies as paradigmatic of German thought, whereas, this thesis views Spies in a particular colonial context, not necessarily occupying a consistent or stable position in relation to ideas of German modernism or colonial discourse.

Spies' paintings combine the photographic with the fantastic in varying degrees, but they also articulate Spies' primitivism and his sexual desire through these fantasies. Spies' adherence to artistic conventions in relation to colonial orthodoxy is also apparent in these works, reflecting not only his own beliefs, but also the primitivist anti-modern fantasies of his clientele, Westerners who like himself sought escape from the modern industrial world. The paintings he produced in Bali vary. Some are apparently very straightforward landscapes such as *Pagodenlandschaft* (1929)⁶² (**fig. 51**) and *Heiliger Wald Bei Sangsit* (1930)⁶³ (**fig. 48**) which could well be derived quite directly from photographs. Other paintings are landscapes with an element of fantasy such as *Iseh im Morgenlicht* (1938)⁶⁴ (**fig. 52**) and some are mythical fantasies, like *Rehjagd* (1932)⁶⁵ (**fig. 53**). In fact it could be argued that all of his works were fantasies, even those apparently derived directly from photographs, as they were views chosen and framed in a way which reflected Spies' own beliefs about what constituted the 'real Bali'; a pre-modern landscape occupied by a single race of racially pure Balinese natives. However, the illusionism, the exclusion of the modern, and the focus on male subjects of his paintings added another layer of discourse to these works which needs to be examined. Over time, Spies' visual style progressively enhanced this Orientalist fantasy of a Balinese arcadia, because the formal experiments, such as multiple horizons, which he seemed to feel free to use in depicting legends and narratives, appeared more and more in his 'ordinary' landscapes. Thus, he created a colonial discourse of possession and desire through metaphors of Balinese fantasy and cosmology through landscape. He created on the one hand a more subtly mystical imagery, and on the other, expressing the contradictory Dutch colonial ideology of *baliseering* combined with the equally contradictory discourse of colonial desire. Spies' work lacks the vibrant directness of the Balinese representations of their landscape. They do not romanticise, although Anak Agung Gede Soberat is an interesting exception to this and seems to have developed a facility to cleverly switch styles and see Bali through the eyes of the Europeans in a way few other Balinese could. This might have been through copying aspects of Spies' work, although his use of perspective and scenes of everyday life were less sentimentalised than Spies' (**fig. 55**).

In paintings like *Blick von der Höhe* (1934)⁶⁶ (fig. 56), and *Iseh im Morgenlicht* (fig. 52), there is much more of a photographic sense of the landscapes of Bali in terms of perspective. However, there is also a sense of Spies applying a formula which he has developed to create a pleasing, effective and quite skilfully constructed composite landscape, using subtle distortions of distance; but it is also slightly mechanical. There is an occasionally facile repetition and almost detached formularisation apparent in some of the works produced by Spies in Bali. A typical example of this is *Flusslandschaft mit Hirten und Kühen* (1929)⁶⁷ (fig. 34). There is a sense that he has settled on this formula as something which appeals to his clientele and is eminently saleable. Nevertheless, when Spies attempts something other than a mechanical depiction and manipulation of familiar treatments of landscape and motifs, there is an extra and interesting dimension to his work worthy of discussion. The *Pflügender Bauern* (1932)⁶⁸ paintings (figs. 41 & 57) combine Spies' customary simplified and stylised elongated figures with an interestingly distorted landscape which has deliberate anomalies of scale, as well as relief features carefully modelled by light. This work interestingly brings together elements of the modelled Balinese landscape as a form of cubism with characteristics of ancient Javanese narrative relief carving (fig. 58), with its flattening of perspective. In some ways, these Balinese paintings are less 'Asian' than others painted in Java, which attempted to depict aspects of life in a less stylised and more objective and engaged fashion.

Rehjagd (1932) is an example of Spies' formal experimentation in Bali and is one of Spies' more imaginative and visually sophisticated paintings. While employing detailed observation of flora and fauna of Bali in what is essentially a 'realist' painting, these elements are employed in a composition which makes use of multiple horizons and distortions of distance which appear to be narrative and allegorical in an obscure and enigmatic way⁶⁹. This work suggests several viewpoints through its multiple horizons, while also suggesting several moments in time. As mentioned above, these multiple horizons were increasingly adopted in Spies' later landscape paintings, becoming a distinctive aspect of his compositional style. Although this work is not 'primitive' in its conception or treatment, its discourse is clearly a primitivist one. The elongated muscular bronzed figure who is presumably intended to be Balinese, does not look Balinese and is perhaps a figure paradigmatic of an idealised noble savage without specific racial identity. It is almost biblical in its depiction of man and nature in a primitive world without the modern. It epitomises Spies' own struggle between his idea of primitive artistic expression as an unsophisticated, unmediated imagery, and his own artifice deriving from his intellect and education. In this work Spies ennobles the simple hunter in a fantasy where the endless landscape belongs to the native who has free

range to hunt and roam. Not only does this work run counter to colonial reality of Bali as a 'living museum', bounded by colonial rule, but in its suggestion of the freely roaming primitive, it runs counter to the civilisation and formal hierarchies of Balinese life. This image is very much a living museum exhibit and the viewers are invited to admire the caged primitivism which Spies depicts as freedom. As with most of Spies' other works, there is no interest in the female figure and the male exhibit is the focus of the artist's attraction and desire. In this sense Spies departs from the more standard imagery of the female nude, which had come to be synonymous with Bali and which might be expected in a work catering for the tourist market. Spies produced work for a tourist market, but his market was a very distinctive and quite exclusive one. It seems that most works were sold to friends, associates and guests and these tended to be from wealthy, well-connected circles. His work certainly seemed to strike a chord with this group. Charlie Chaplin bought a painting, probably *Rehjagd* (fig. 53), from Spies, which Spies refers to in a letter.

He [Charlie Chaplin] has by the way, bought my last picture, he is so delighted with it that he drags it around lovingly with him like a child with a foal of a puppy or something like that.

(Letter, Spies to his mother 1932) ⁷⁰

It is possibly unfair to characterise Spies as only creating for a general tourist market, as the people he painted for were from a similar background to himself, in terms of being affluent, well educated and 'cultured'. Spies also sold his works more widely. Some of his paintings went to European buyers, through his mother. He was also painting for his own tastes, but these tastes were suffused with the 'liberal' separatism he shared with the philosophies of Dutch colonialism in Bali. This vision in its reflection of shared values appealed to others from his privileged Western background. However, the ideological foundations for these works was not always clear in his direct discussion of his work which he did not see as being an aspect of colonial discourse. Bhabha suggests that this type of ambivalence is key to colonial discourse.

This process is best understood in terms of the articulation of multiple belief that Freud proposes in his essay on fetishism. It is a non-repressive form of knowledge that allows for the possibility of simultaneously embracing two contradictory beliefs, one official and one secret, one archaic and one progressive, one that allows the myth of origins, the other that articulates difference and division.

(Bhabha, 1994, p. 80)

Spies appeared to take a view of his painting as being a spiritual expression rather than an expression of colonial desire, separatism and possession. He also felt that he was attempting to articulate something more than a descriptive realism. Spies' conscious attitude towards his own painting was clearly ambivalent in other ways as is indicated by this statement.

The world to me is so full of marvellousness - that I simply can't shut myself against all her seductions and flirtations, coming all the time from every side! How possibly could I concentrate investigating a dance, if a lovely spider just happens to crawl up my leg, I know I have not recorded yet!...It seems absolutely criminal to sit blindfolded in front of one's canvas and contemplate one's own excrement - (excuse this expression, but really!!!) - instead of marvelling at the perfection of movement of a centipede. (Letter, Spies to Mead and Bateson, 1939)⁷¹

This was characteristic of some quite intense introspection regarding his work, its purpose and meaning at this time when Spies was in prison, but it illustrates Spies' difficulty in focusing on one particular activity and shows the lack of boundaries which Spies saw between one activity and another. This restlessness and lack of focus is probably what is behind Carnegie's (1971, p. 63) description of Spies as an 'amateur'. Nevertheless, it could be argued that he had quite cleverly exploited the comfortable colonial environment in Bali whereby he could indulge all of these interests without having to paint on a regular basis. Spies' statement also indicates his ongoing fascination with nature. A lesser-known part of his artistic output was the creation of watercolour studies of sea creatures and insects (**fig. 59**). This is of relevance to the detailed attention he paid to fauna and flora in his paintings. There is an interesting combination of a kind of repetitive, decorative shorthand for some plants and trees, whereas others were treated much more naturalistically. This detail of study differentiates his work from Rousseau who created a more generalised tropicality in his paintings created from imagination rather than study, but like Spies, attempting to idealise the primitive.

The colour is most extraordinary. I can't understand it yet! There are two greens who are fighting each other; a very yellowish one from the strong sunlight from the left shining on distant trees and a road and a village - and then the very bluish green from the sun (or moon) which fell underwater (no motorcar!!), and giving soft reflections on shadowy parts. It is a very strange light everywhere, I must say, and it is rather difficult to keep it silent in places because the contrasts are very strong. Now it already looks quite

exciting. Although nobody has arrived yet, no people, no cows or anything. It is a very 'nakal sekali' picture darling, especially the colour, I think. Lots of fun I am having, and a certain nice feeling - as if it could be my first painting. Would that be something?! I always told my beloved brother, Leo, that I had the feeling I would begin to paint when I was 40! (Letter, Spies to Belo, 1939) ⁷²

This letter was written in prison and perhaps the partial incoherence of the letter betrays something about Spies' state of mind at this time. The descriptions need to be seen in the context that it probably took time to get photographic reproductions of paintings and even then they would be in black and white ⁷³. This explains the details about colour in the paintings. However, this account gives the impression that Spies finds painting to be quite a sensual experience. This along with Spies' attention to idealised male Balinese figures, fits Boon's (1986, p. 237) description of Spies' work as 'erotic'. There is also an ambiguous statement about the motor car. This could be some private joke between Belo and Spies who seem to have had a very close friendship. This implies that a motorcar would be a ridiculous thing to include and is a rare and interesting allusion to the discourse of primitivist modernism in Spies' paintings, which sought to ignore the modern and the colonial as part of the landscape of Bali.

The component factors which constitute Spies' approach to painting seem to be complex and interlocking. It is quite possible that much of his influences in Bali were confirmatory of earlier ideas, rather than seminal. Even the ways in which he was influenced in Bali were a product of being a modern European artist searching for the 'primitive', rather than a more traditional Orientalist, in the nineteenth century sense, as is the case with an artist like Willem Hofker. Nevertheless, Rhodes (1994, p. 85) derives a view from Edward Said of the Orientalist painter using a highly illusionist style to emphasise his position outside the Orient. Although Spies' style is not highly illusionistic as a whole, aspects such as the observation of some plants and landscapes are, as is the use of lighting effects, chiaroscuro and modelling. Spies does not seem to be tempted to imitate the more 'primitive' work of Balinese artists in a direct way, and in fact his work appears to become more naturalistic in the Indies with less resort to naïve representations. Rhodes suggests that:

Colonialism made the need for a description of subject peoples necessary - both of their manners and their way of life - in order not so much that they might be understood, but as a means of exercising control over them. Representations of the colonial subject devised by the West for Western consumption were essentially stereotypes based on the specific administrative needs

of the 'Mother Country'. As a result some writers have provided definitions of Primitivism that reflect imperialistic power gambits operating in the institutions of the West, where the Western gaze is directed towards non-Western peoples. (Rhodes, 1994, p. 195)

This is perhaps going too far in the case of Spies who was probably not overtly imperialistic in a formal sense ⁷⁴. However, this idea does reflect the 'liberal' cultural imperialism of the rulers of Bali at that time and also the compatibility of Spies' own cultural agenda with that of the 'living museum' idea. Also, as a commercially driven painter as well as an innovator of sorts, he adopted a style which would appeal to his establishment clientele. This was achieved by objectifying and distancing the colonised through a certain level of illusion, the removal of the modern and excluding any reflexive inclusion of the viewer. The notion of exercising control is also an interesting one which applies in Spies' case in that his form of 'imperialistic' control was through his sexual contacts. So, at a lower level of imperial contact he was evoking and perhaps invoking the male subjects of his own erotic desires in a similar, but more specific way, as suggested above in relation to the wider colonial project. The paintings which objectified the peasant farmer were stereotypes and they represented a lower level of colonial power relationships at the level of sexual attraction and contact. In respect of his paintings, Spies became the 'master of all he surveyed'.

Although *Iseh in Morgenlicht* (fig. 52) is an example of a fairly conservative and straightforward landscape in terms of its lack of formal experimentation, it also objectifies the Bali in the way that Rhodes suggests for the 'Orient'. It might be described as a classic example of tourist art, mapping an idyllic rural landscape at sunrise, 'unspoiled' by signs of modernity. It contains some typical Spies motifs which include the herdsman with a cow and terraced rice fields leading the eye to *Gunung Agung* in the background. The handling of the paint can be described as photo-realistic, particularly in relation to the banana trees and the village compound. This is an indication of Spies' use of photography, and the observation of beams of directional light coming through the trees on the right of the picture, suggests the use of black and white photography as study material. This attention to light is an example of Spies' awareness of filmic and theatrical lighting which gives the painting the quality of a painted film set or an animated Disney cartoon landscape. Light seems to be an increasingly important aspect of Spies' work and there are clear parallels with his photography, through which he studied the monochrome relationships of light in Bali and these qualities were in turn introduced into his paintings. It seems quite clear that his paintings were not produced *in situ* and that photographs were a key element in

informing his final product. This would explain the slightly unreal colouring of many of the paintings. It also explains the slightly awkward compositional framing of some of his paintings produced in Java, for instance *Heimkehrender Javaner* (1924)⁷⁵ (fig. 28). Although Spies uses colour⁷⁶ in *Iseh im Morgenlicht*, it is muted and limited and the image has the quality of a tinted monochrome photograph. The figures in the picture are secondary to the landscape and are all male. This is where the apparently fastidious realism of the image can begin to be deconstructed and the ideology of imperialism can be examined. This image reflects Spies' own fantasy world populated with 'perfect'⁷⁷ young men, which through his paint, he can admire, dominate and control. This is an example of the discourse of control suggested above, whereby the colonial subject is defined, stereotyped and owned through its representation through realism as 'Other'. Bhabha suggests that this type representation is necessary in order for the colonial self-identification of the Westerner and that he is not necessarily controlling, but is in thrall to his desire for the Other, who at the same time wants to take the place of the coloniser.

To exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus. It is a demand that reaches outward to an external object... This process is visible in the exchange of looks between native and settler that structures their psychic relation in the paranoid fantasy of boundless possession and its familiar language of reversal... It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 44)

In this case this Other has an extra layer of meaning and is more specifically a colonised, desired and 'owned' male Other. In addition to this, what is deliberately absent from this picture is of particular significance. The lack of modernity or the Western in these works reflects Spies' dislike of the real trappings of modernity present in Bali which Spies regularly criticised. It represents the 'real Bali' which Spies noted in his correspondence⁷⁸. There are no roads or cars or corrugated iron roofs. The figures are not wearing Western-style shirts and as in Spies' other works, there are no Western tourists or colonial officials. This is a timeless historicised fantasy of Bali which, on the one hand, denies the political and practical realities of colonialism and yet manifestly expounds the values of the specific brand of *baliseering* separatism which was the colonial orthodoxy of Bali at this time. There is also another way in which Spies might have read himself into this painting, which also carries a wider intent to the audience of the image. It relates to the limited narrative possibilities presented by

painting. Through a literary narrative such as *Lord Jim* (Conrad, 1900), it becomes possible to make explicit the role of the white 'avatar' in the alien cultural landscape and allow them to take on certain characteristics of the 'primitive' in a relatively unambiguous way and thus indulge the primitivist fantasies through identification with this character by the readers. Spies clearly thought that he wanted to be a 'primitive' and also to retain the power of manipulation of the viewer. By including a Western character in the painting as a *Lord Jim* type figure, it would be difficult to explain the level of involvement of the character with the native Balinese figures. The character would be a tourist, and seen as starkly separate, rather than being a colonial adventurer 'going native'. Thus, the limitations provided by the medium of painting, creating a single image would not allow either Walter Spies or his audience with their similar fantasies of vicarious primitivism, to imagine themselves to be unambiguously primitive through such an avatar. Thus, what is created is a contradictory discourse of distancing and desire whereby the viewer is removed from the image and yet desires to be part of the landscape as a simple primitive, while still retaining a position of separate colonial authority over the people and the landscape.

Balinese Influences on Walter Spies

Walter Spies has been credited with being both an aesthetic and an organisational influence on the local Balinese artists – an amateur. Something which has been emphasised less is the influence of those artists on him. There is a Eurocentric implication which arises from this that somehow Spies would have had more to offer aesthetically and intellectually than the Balinese artists. This section examines and questions this popular view and focuses in particular on influences on Spies in the Balinese 'contact zone' ⁷⁹. However, influence which Spies may have gained from Bali cannot easily be separated from more general discussion of his work and thus it will be discussed here.

Spies had a fairly typically romantic view of the Balinese and their art which seems to belie the real colonial and cultural situation, as discussed in previous chapters. Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 69-71) reproduces a translation of a letter Spies wrote from jail to his brother Leo, which is revealing of Spies' beliefs. In this letter, Spies tries to define his art in terms of Balinese mysticism and yet ultimately reproduces a romanticised 'European' discourse. This is at odds with what one might expect from one who is portrayed as having lived closer to the Balinese than most Europeans and, has in fact, studied them and had intimate sexual relationships with them. It seems that

the distance he sought in his relationships is symptomatic of the distance he chose in describing the essence of being Balinese. For instance, he says

And their art is not bare reproduction, not realistic, not sentimental. All the feelings like love, hate, spiritual agony, jealousy and all that rubbish of course they know and have just as we do, but as soon as it becomes a matter of stating it in artistic terms it is sublimated, filtered and sieved and it doesn't turn into some sixth symphony by Tchaikovsky but into a clear, holy fact, almost an abstract formula in which the essence of love itself, suffering itself, the 'dynamics of an experience are captured.

(Letter, Walter Spies to Leo Spies, 1939) ⁸⁰

His comments which articulate the view that all Balinese are artists is surprisingly myopic for one who was lauded as an expert on Bali, but it is not surprising that one who surrounded himself with art and artists, would see art all around him. This letter is full of such statements.

For a Balinese, too (and this because of his primitive, unspoilt nature, his proximity to nature), life is the glorious, holy fact; religion is alive and is there for teaching how to love and live life; and art is alive and is there to praise the holiness of life. Here art is not something standing outside life or belief... That's why almost every single Balinese can paint, almost everyone dance or play in the gamelan, just as he works in the fields or feeds the pigs. And a woman will make the most amazing works of art as offerings for the temple or weave the most glorious gold brocades with exactly the same matter-of-factness with which she bears children, does the cooking or carries on a slanging match with her neighbour. It is all one, it is life and it is holy.

(Letter, Walter Spies to Leo Spies, 1939) ⁸¹

These statements reveal the extent to which Spies essentialises the Balinese as 'primitive', while paradoxically understanding and appreciating the cultural and social sophistication of Balinese society. He admits that they experience the same emotions as Westerners which is perhaps an improvement on Claire Holt's (Holt in Rhodius, 1964, p. 313) notion that the Balinese have no soul. Spies also puts forward the notion that *all* Balinese are artistic, which is a similarly questionable idea ⁸². Some of what he articulates seems reasonable such as the lack of a religious - secular divide in Balinese activities, but is only sustainable as an anachronistic view which ignores the onset of modernity. In fact, even ignoring modernity, it essentialises the Balinese, because, as I have already pointed out, the secular was very much a feature of Balinese life, in terms

of working and producing art for a cash economy. Spies himself was a part of this process, through his marketing of 'creolised' ⁸³ Balinese arts ⁸⁴. It is interesting that he stresses the lack of sentimentalisation in Balinese art as though he is aware of this trait in his own work and is ashamed of it. It is possible that Spies felt a sense of inadequacy in the face of this work. He was not able to achieve what the Balinese could achieve in terms of capturing what he calls "the dynamics of an experience" (Letter, Walter Spies to Leo Spies, 1939) ⁸⁵ without sentimentalising it. It seems that Spies wants to be a 'primitive', but realises that it is impossible to unlearn his own cultural programming and education. He is aware of the strengths of Balinese art and, in terms of its apparent directness, sees it as better than his own. Nevertheless, this admiration clearly does not extend to the sale price of Balinese art in relation to his work ⁸⁶. Thus, despite Spies' formal experimentation with horizons and perspectives, the proximity of naïve or primitive Balinese styles seems to drive Spies towards attempting new levels of virtuosity, in terms of conscious manipulation of visual elements. It has been suggested that there are various ways in which Spies' work was influenced by Balinese artists, but it could also be the case that he was desperately trying to do something which they could not do in order to differentiate his own output from theirs. This adds another dimension to the assertion about Spies' Orientalist illusionism discussed in the previous section.

In the same way that his interest in flora and fauna resulted in the vivid and almost neurotic depiction of plants and animals in his works, it is likely that his work would have also drawn from the decorative arts of Bali. There is a decorative quality in many of Spies' paintings which, although it existed before his arrival in Bali, became much more marked in many of his Balinese paintings. For example, in his treatment of foliage, there is an almost mechanical decorative quality given to it by Spies which strongly resembles traditional Hindu art of both Bali and India. It is also possible that Spies responded to the visual approach taken by Balinese painters, but this treatment by Spies can also be traced back to his previous knowledge and interest in Persian art and also folk art of the Urals. Areas of his earlier European paintings such as *Thüringerwald* (**fig. 43**) employed repetitive decorative motifs in representing foliage, for instance.

Spies displays more evidence in his work of being influenced by the Balinese than is the case of many other European artists of the time. Bonnet adhered rigidly to his academic style of drawing (**fig. 8**), as did artists like Hofker (**fig. 10**). In a programmatic way, Spies sometimes adopted narrative in a way many of his European contemporaries in Bali did not. Carnegie equates Spies' style with the depiction of

sequences of time and narrative. "...the constant preoccupation with film-making may have led him to attempt things on canvas which properly belong on celluloid" (Carnegy, 1971, p. 63). Chytry expands on this idea of cinematic influence and discusses this element of time in relation to music.

If the analogy with cinematographic reality readily comes to mind, this is hardly surprising given Spies's thorough familiarity with the techniques of using stills to create montages of movement. Still Spies himself called on the analogy with music, both Western and gamelan, when explaining his final solution to the problem of depicting time on a two dimensional surface...

(Chytry, 1989, p. 466)

Another way in which Spies was clearly influenced, albeit in a romanticised way, was through the music for which he composed versions of Balinese works for piano.

Alexander Mogilevsky...says he will write to Stravinsky that, all the European and Modern music is senseless child's play compared with what is being done here. Stokovski says the same.

(Letter, Spies to his mother, 1929) ⁸⁷

This indicates a sincere admiration and awe for at least one Balinese art-form which he shares with his musical guests. There is no reason to deny that some form of visual transcription was occurring in the case of Walter Spies' painting as well.

Spies' occasional use of mythological or pseudo-mythological subjects was one way in which Spies was drawn towards Balinese art in his own output ⁸⁸. This is in the same way that traditional Balinese imagery largely reflected Balinese-Hindu mythology. This strand in Spies' work was described by Rhodius as striking an "a-typical note" and not being the "real Spies" (Rhodius & Darling, 1980) ⁸⁹. One particular example of this strand of influence comes from the painting by Spies; *Balinese Legend* of 1928 (**fig. 45**). Contrary to Rhodius' exclusive editorial tendencies ⁹⁰, Spies was very enthusiastic about this group of paintings ⁹¹. Spies wrote descriptive letters of his paintings which appear to try and mask the level of influence which occurred in his work. The way he discusses his works differs dramatically depending on the recipient. The following account is highly descriptive, although not necessarily very objective, as to Spies' intent or influence, probably with a sale in mind. This describes the painting which is also known as *Balinese Legend* or *The Death of Arya Panangsang* of 1929 (**fig. 60**). Spies states:

It is approximately in the categories of the pictures with the deer, the tiger, the crocodile, which Baron von Plessen bought during his time with me. But this is so different from that which you already have that I am not sure if you will like it. It is very fantastic. A fight between two peculiar people on horses in a tropical luxuriant landscape. They have short legs and ugly long bodies and the horses are also not the way horses actually should be. Also, the perspective is different from anywhere in the real world; several small horses and people are in the foreground and one of the men has fallen in the water. The colours are principally green with a lot of yellow highlights on the leaves, grass and people. The whole is somewhat vicious, cruel, but yet still in a light hearted eerie atmosphere. They fight with long red lances. In the foreground are large leaves brightly illuminated. It is absolutely un-naturalistic, but nevertheless almost chillingly realistically painted having something of the old Russian frescos and possibly also from Rousseau.

(Letter, Spies to Mr. Bertilingius, 1929) ⁹²

The second title of this work derives from a later Balinese commentary on this work. It is reproduced by the Neka gallery in Ubud and they have provided a quite different commentary on the painting which focuses on the narrative of a particular Balinese / Javanese legend.

During the seventeenth century, Arya Panangsang fought for control of central Java and killed the husband of Ratu Kalinyamat. She meditates nude in a river until his death is avenged. Jaka Tingkir helps by riding a mare in heat so that Arya Panangsang's stallion chases after his horse, crossing the river, so that he can be defeated. In the battle, Arya Panangsang is seriously wounded in the abdomen by Jaka Tingkir, but he wraps his protruding entrails around the handle of his dagger and continues to fight. When he finally draws out the blade, he cuts his own intestines and dies.

(Neka Gallery, Ubud, Bali, 1998)

It is interesting that if this painting does indeed describe that specific legend that Spies did not intimate this aspect of it to Mr Bertilingius. In fact, he had pointedly stressed the European aspects of this picture to him. The comment about frescos is particularly interesting as this is something which has not been commented on in previous accounts of his work. One must presume that he is referring to Russian folk art rather than church art. This indicates that Spies thought that Europeans would not be interested in the Javanese classical allusion. It also indicates perhaps a certain embarrassment on the part of Spies in illustrating and acknowledging Balinese folklore. This language of mediation also resembles that used by some of the reviewers of film

discussed earlier in this chapter using Western metaphors to articulate and promote the films to Western audiences. It is notable that although using a cultivated 'naïve' style, he has not chosen to adopt anything resembling the Balinese visual vernacular to do this. The result is an odd transcription of a Balinese story into the visual realms of the European folk fairytale illustration. This is another work like *Rehjagd* which attempts to create a timeless escapist narrative fantasy, which reinterprets the myths and landscapes of Bali in an idealised pre-colonial world.

In addition to the mythological, there is an allegorical element to many of Spies' works, which is not necessarily present in his earlier paintings. *Landschaft mit Schattenkuh* (1932)⁹³ (fig. 61), is an enigmatic example of a work which seems to have hidden layers of intended meaning. The shadows being cast against the sky are a clear reference to Balinese *Wayang Kulit* or shadow plays and represents a new, more surrealist manifestation of Spies' normal attention to light and shadow. Rhodius (1980, p. 43) speculated that the relative darkness and reworking of his familiar agrarian motifs of this work was representative of the spectre of war that was brewing in Europe at that time. Perhaps the way in which the influence of Bali and the Balinese can mostly be seen in Spies' work is the suggestion of other dimensions beyond the purely photographic or representational. Some of the works he produced which appear to be routine tourist landscapes, had a certain mythical or allegorical dimension which went beyond the sometimes puerile and voyeuristic eye which informed the work of most of the European artists working in Bali at that time. However, as I have pointed out, Spies makes a more subtle representation of the male figure as an object of desire. Indeed, a particular theme in Spies' Balinese works is his constant repetition of the man and buffalo motif which he uses in *Landschaft mit Schattenkuh*. However, as a paradigm of dreamy rural harmony, it can be traced back to Spies' earlier European paintings like *Baschkirischer Hirte* (1923)⁹⁴ (fig. 42).

The supposed influence of Balinese art on Spies is not characterised as something which was of fundamental importance, in the same way as when writers discuss Spies' influence on Soberat, for instance. This is likely to be a result of his characterisation as the master or guru to his Balinese students. His work can be linked to Balinese art in a visual sense, even though his range of influences is so eclectic. His earlier work can be linked to the 'look' of Baschkirian art, but it can also be connected with medieval European art by painters such as Breughel, as well as modern artists like Chagall and Rousseau. Spies can be seen as being to some extent an inheritor of the tradition of the Grand Tour landscape painters who often travelled less far-afield to the lands of classical history⁹⁵. The depiction of rural Arcadia which resulted could be seen as a

natural reaction in each case, of the displaced artist living in what he believes to be a version of the classical paradise. It does seem to be the case that the Balinese landscape itself influenced Spies and in his work there are also the elements of this Arcadia. Chytry (1989, p. 464) alludes to Bali as the "Brahmin's Arcadia" in Spies' work and refers to Bali as a "concrete 'aesthetic arcady' for the Western sensibility" (Chytry, 1989, p. 468). This parallel is particularly evident in a work attributed to Spies recently discovered as a photograph in Bali (**fig. 54**). It is quite possible that much like the Balinese artists, his style was as much influenced by catering to the paradisaal discourse which was the currency of the tourist market, as the visual and cultural environment he found himself in creating an ersatz folk-art traditionalism at times. In this sense, he was the ideal person to advise the Balinese artists through *Pita Maha* about what was most likely to sell to this audience, as he was particularly successful in this arena.

There is also a more Balinese element which goes to produce a kind of hybrid which is not entirely European nor entirely Balinese. It could be this apparent divergence from any particular European modernist orthodoxy which alienated Franz Roh from Spies' later works ⁹⁶. One particular aspect of his work, which could be related to the Balinese artworks he came into contact with, is his use of multiple horizons and a general flattening of the picture plane. Although this could be described as an aesthetically cubist development, it is equally likely that he was also following aspects of Balinese art. The influence of Balinese and Javanese antiquity on Spies' own work is also worth considering in relation to this. These multiple perspectives and this kind of horizontal rolling out of landscapes which Spies often employed, has striking resemblance to certain Javanese bas reliefs ⁹⁷ (**fig. 58**), some of which may have been seen by Spies. In his letters he expresses admiration for ancient Balinese work in a Javanese style ⁹⁸ and some of his work in Bali revolved around surveying and collecting statues for the Bali Museum, of which he was one of the joint founders. He was on good terms with Stutterheim who was the leading Dutch archaeologist in Indonesia at the time. In fact, Stutterheim himself suggests this as an influence on Spies ⁹⁹. Spies did indulge in certain types of perspectival distortion in his earlier work (**fig. 33**), but this was more in the vein of naïve European and Russian folk art. Chytry put forward an interesting argument relating Spies' compositional approach to his appreciation and understanding of Balinese cosmology.

The inclusion of the holy mountain, Gunung Agung, on his canvases after 1927 is therefore far from being a minor iconographic gesture. As the mainspring of cosmological orientation on the island, Gunung Agung pinioned Spiesian space to an Indic hierarchical order

augmented in accordance with the metaperspectivist capacities of modernist art practice. Spies then drastically simplified the original order. Instead of the traditionally complex Indic affair of multiple circles around a central cosmological locus, he deployed the three worlds of tropical forest, village clearing, and transcending mountain-in-the-cumuli. This structuring of a simplified, if more potentized hierarchy had a metapolitical function. It suggested to the Balinese themselves that at a time of crisis of traditional institutions and values, the orienting pedagogy of the old format could be recuperated through a new organization of time-space based on those three foundational elements or planes of reality to which the Balinese could always repair for their revitalisation...

...Spies did retain the organizational principle of the canvas picture space and the privileged status of the individual observer's point of reference. But within that common frame he began to depict multiple 'windows' positioned within the matrix of the matted space of a jungle that acted both as a composite of individual trees placed in privileged compositional location and as a retort or transformer, for taking in multiple perspectivist wholes within a single picture frame. (Chytry, 1989, p. 463)

This is quite a convincing explanation of one aspect of Spies' visual approach and highlights an important area of intellectual influence from Spies' own understanding of the Balinese belief system. It also describes, the way that these ideas were translated into a synthesis of visual language in a 'contact-zone' which existed not only in an exchange of visual motifs, but also in the world of ideas and beliefs. However, this account is less convincing in its assertion that Spies' art was in some way sermonising to the Balinese. This is rather too patronising and fanciful, particularly as the market for most of these works was European tourists. If Spies was attempting to communicate what he saw as the essence of Balinese belief, it was directed at the Westerners who bought these works. That would also account for the simplification of cosmological codification in a more Western modernist oeuvre, to which Chytry alludes. However, it is much more likely that a generalised, Orientalist discourse was the appeal of such work to its audience, rather than the articulation of Balinese mysticism. It is also possible that Spies referred to Balinese magic and belief in the selling of his own paintings, many of which were sold directly rather than through middle-men.

Walter was also choosy with his sales. One time a rich American came to him. By chance a picture had been completed. The American wanted to buy it and offered a fairly large sum for it. But Walter answered that he couldn't sell it to him, because he felt that his soul wasn't in harmony with those of his guests. This was

despite the fact that Walter's finances were not good at that time.

(H.K. Jacobs in Rhodius, 1964, p. 321) ¹⁰⁰

What is difficult to ascertain from this account was how deeply felt was Spies' explanation and whether he was using the American tourist as a source of amusement for his guests, as well as attempting to build on his own mystique in the name of marketing his own paintings.

Overall, there seems to have been a cross-fertilisation of visual ideas which occurred between Spies and the artists he had contact with. There are small indications of how this might have happened. The lean and stretched figures to be seen in many of Spies' works like *Die Landschaft und ihre Kinder* (1939) ¹⁰¹ (fig. 62) could have been influenced by the creations of Balinese woodcarvers like Ida Bagus Ketut. John Stowell quotes a letter from Spies to Gela Archipenko. He refers to a carving which is:

...made by your Ida bagus Ketut in Mas. He is turning out to be a really great artist, has a completely individual style, absolutely simple, smooth and very like himself. He makes incredibly attenuated, quite fantastic things. Everyone who sees them dies of fright or surprise; quite different from anything else that has ever existed in *Bali*.

(Stowell, 1992, p. 15)

It is quite clear from this passage that Spies regards this work as being original, admirable and surprising. What is clear is the enthusiasm that Spies has for the new and innovative in Balinese art despite his views about ossifying the visual characteristics of 'traditional' Bali.

Summary

Walter Spies can be described as a modernist in terms of being an experimenter and someone who attempted, in certain ways, to overthrow 'perceptual grids'. However, his work combines the conservative with the innovative and it is perhaps through his primitivist perspective, which nonetheless translated less and less into 'primitive' depictions, that he can be regarded as being a modernist. Like other modernists, it was an unsophisticated view of the primitive which informed his approach and created the so-called 'magic-realist' label which has been attached to his work. It is clear that Spies' wished to see himself as a 'primitive' and a non-intellectual. Therefore, any Balinese influence could be seen as being confirmatory of this primitivist tendency.

Spies' work is particularly unquestioning of colonial authority and certain aspects of visual reality in Bali, particularly in relation to the modern and the Western. These two facts are closely linked in Spies' acceptance of the lifestyle that the colonial situation afforded him, yet his denial of colonial contact in his paintings and film projects. Where contact is addressed, such as in *Kriss*, it is condemned as corrupting. However, this is a message to others and does not extend to the possible ramifications of Spies' own contacts, both artistic and sexual. Looking at the 'Bali' films is particularly useful in highlighting the reception by Western audiences, of this separatist primitivist colonial discourse. It confirms the deliberate approach common also to the paintings of Spies, whereby it is pretended that the Western viewer is at a distance and removed from the landscape. It is clear that the underlying discourse of these films was matched in the paintings produced by Spies for the tourist markets. The discourse of the films and the paintings was symptomatic of a shared set of Orientalist views which informed and influenced artistic production. The reviews of the films are particularly useful in assessing received views of the 'primitive', the 'natural', the 'authentic' and also the appetite for material which apparently articulates these ideas to a Western audience. This illustrates the similar ideology underpinning the creation of the films and paintings, as well as their ultimate reception. It is likely that demand for art was ultimately helped by the films through their promotion of Bali as a particular type of tourist destination.

Although he is sometimes characterised as a white man living amongst the natives, Walter Spies was clearly quite removed from them as part of the bohemian expatriate colonial community, entertaining a steady stream of foreign visitors and having numerous casual sexual relationships with young Balinese men. He was conducting what was simply a different type of colonial life. His colonial persona reflects the mediated nature of his visual borrowings and a visual assertion of difference between his works and those of Balinese painters. It is also important to remember that Spies' 'love' of the Balinese was selective and in terms of his sexual relationships seems to have been based on beauty. In the same way, he appears to have been quite elitist in only being involved with Balinese who could edify him through art or music. Also, as this account has demonstrated, the notion that all Balinese are artists is a rather spurious one, but one easily perpetuated by someone who chooses to surround himself with artists. His documented sexual involvement with Balinese youth is probably a contributory factor to the nature of his own work, focusing as it did on male subjects. The marked lack of female subjects in his work is a particularly notable absence for a European painter in Bali, where the Western artist's eye, like the tourist's camera was often focused on a Western perception of Balinese female nudity.

Spies' idea of the 'real' Bali is important and this is clear in the film projects he was involved with, and in his paintings. The 'real' Bali is, in fact, a mythical, historicised Bali: Bali as a form of sexual fantasy is an important element in both his paintings and the film projects with the female nude featuring in the films, but also the male. In the paintings which were exclusively Spies' productions, almost exclusively male figures populate the Balinese landscape. Spies' paintings articulate an idealised homosexual paradise in which ownership is implied and this extends beyond the landscapes to the male figures which populate them. Spies' increased recourse to elements of photographic realism also can be seen as emphasising the position of the viewer outside the Orient binarising it as 'Other'. It is arguable that Spies' recourse to a more traditionalist Orientalism is indicative of his deliberately trying to do what Balinese artists could not do, as he perceived (and admired) Balinese art as 'primitive' and non-intellectual. Despite Spies' apparent attempts to be original and not to absorb visual influences, it is clear that he absorbed influence through images, music, cosmology and landscape, but also through 'liberal' colonial ideology. Thus, Spies was moved by the music, landscape and mythology of Bali and he sought to evoke these in his work through a naïve style he had already developed in Europe. It is possible that certain aspects of visual style were borrowed from the new Balinese art. It is possible that knowledge of aspects of Balinese art enabled him to recognise and exploit already existing tendencies in his own work. This is a much more subtle form of influence, but an integral part of the eclectic synthesis of styles and ideas both Western and 'Eastern' which informed his visual style and which has been somewhat neglected in past attention which has focused on Spies' alleged influence on new developments in Balinese painting.

In my final chapter, the discussion of influences upon Spies will give way to discussion about alleged influence by Westerners on the Balinese and some of the ideological assumptions which underpin certain assertions which have been made. The notion of influence will be discussed along with its discursive construction, and the way in which visual language can be seen to spread in a contact zone in a situation of deliberate cultural intervention as exemplified by *Pita Maha*.

¹ 'Magic realism' is used in this thesis in the art historical sense coined by Franz Roh in the 1920s, (Roh, 1968, p. 112). An interesting line of research beyond the scope of this account would be to investigate the coining and use of the term 'magic realism' in this context in relation to its use to describe the genre of literature which uses the same term. David Macey suggests that its literary usage is post-colonial, but arising in relation to Latin American writers such as Marquez and Borges (Macey, p. 239, 2000). Christopher Pinney uses the term in relation to the Indian painter Ravi Varma. He cites Franz Roh as the originator of the phrase and points out it only gained currency later in Latin America. It "...came to describe a genre of hybrid, anti-positivist, post-colonial literature." (Pinney, 1999, p. 210)

² Post-expressionism is another term to describe those post-war, largely German artists who came after the German expressionists. Although I have described Spies as a post-expressionist, his interest in folk-art and primitivism means that his ideas can also be related to the expressionists.

³ Chytry, 1989, p. 454

⁴ Neue Sachlichkeit refers to the 'new objectivity' identified in German art at that time.

⁵ *Die Zuschauer* (1919). I viewed a reproduction this work at David Sandberg's archive in Berlin. Unfortunately he was unable to provide me with a copy for inclusion in this thesis.

⁶ Unfortunately no images appear to exist of these performances.

⁷ Chytry, 1989, p. 461

⁸ Of course, in 1930s Germany, another different reactionary realism was endorsed by the Nazis, but Spies' work doesn't conform visually or ideologically to this art. Indeed he had left Germany 10 years before Adolf Hitler came to power.

⁹ *Djelantik*, (Exhibition Catalogue), Goethe Institute, Jakarta, 1995

¹⁰ *Balinese Legend*, Walter Spies (1928)

¹¹ Niehaus, 1941, p. 27

¹² 'Gestell' in this instance refers to the framework of ideas supporting modernist ideas at that time

¹³ Chytry, 1989, p. 454

¹⁴ These letters from a large proportion of the correspondence in Rhodius (1964)

¹⁵ Niehaus, 1941, p. 27

¹⁶ This Malay word can be translated as 'sir' or 'lord'. Walter Spies appears to use it slightly disparagingly to mean 'gentleman'.

¹⁷ Letter, Spies to Belo, 22/02/39 L.O.C.

¹⁸ Letter, Spies to his Father, 05/05/1919, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 83

¹⁹ I have quoted reviews of these films quite extensively in this section and this is both to illustrate the range, but also the similarity of discourse present in the reception of *Island of Demons* and *Kriss* films. It is also because copies of these films are rare and difficult to view at this time. The review extracts in combination with the commentary are included to remedy this to some extent.

²⁰ Letter, Spies to his mother 08/04/1929, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 266

²¹ Langer, 1985, p. 45

²² Letter, Spies to his mother, 01/07/1928 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 263

²³ Stowell, 1992, p. 14

²⁴ Examples of this work can be seen at the de Zoete archive, London. It also forms the basis of the book by Hitchcock and Norris (1995)

²⁵ letter, Spies to his mother, 01/07/1928 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 263

²⁶ Lindsey 1997, p. 72

²⁷ Letter, Spies to his mother, 01/07/1928 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 263

²⁸ Soejima, 1997, p. 69

²⁹ Letter, Spies to Frau S, 07/1923, Rhodius, 1964, p. 131-132, translation by Soejima

³⁰ Letter, Spies to his mother, 01/07/1928 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 263

³¹ Letter, Spies to his mother, 04/10/1934 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 342

³² The *barong* is a dance-drama which forms part of the Calon-Arang story. "The priest takes on the benevolent form of the *Barong*, a kind of terrible beast not unlike the lion of Chinese lion dances. As the *Barong* and *Rangda* fight, followers of the *Barong* rush with drawn krisses to stab the *Rangda*, but she turns her magic on them and they try to stab themselves." (Vickers, 1989, p. 105)

³³ A *leyak* is a witch-like apparition which features in the *barong* performance

³⁴ De Zoete & Spies, 1938

- ³⁵ A hypnotic chant performed by groups of men in a circle as part of a dance performance allegedly adapted by Spies (this view is now questioned). It derives from the *Sanghyang* performance and it is sometimes now known as the 'monkey Dance'.
- ³⁶ Rhodius, 1980, p. 37
- ³⁷ This issue will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
- ³⁸ *Amok* is the term adopted by English from Malay deriving from the verb form *mengamok*, which has a very specific meaning relating to a trance-like uncontrollable aggression, which often ends in the death of the aggressor.
- ³⁹ Lindsey 1997, p. 79
- ⁴⁰ Bateson for the attention of the court, 28/02/1939, L.O.C. "It might well be argued that a Balinese even at the age of 50 has not reached the 'age of consent' for dealing with Europeans and Chinese."
- ⁴¹ Laura Chrisman alludes to this type of divisive colonial discourse. "Also in emphasising the ways in which imperialism homogenises and generalises others, there is a risk of overlooking the ways in which imperial and colonial discourses often deploy strategies of exaggerating and playing off differences among diverse others"(Chrisman in Williams & Chrisman, 1993, p. 500)
- ⁴² Fabian, 1983, p. 148
- ⁴³ *Kinematograph Weekly*, April 1934
- ⁴⁴ Eyman, 1990, p. 79
- ⁴⁵ This is an important notion which will be explored further in the next Chapter in relation to 'new' Balinese art.
- ⁴⁶ This review is also very complimentary about the technical aspects of the film such as the camera work and composition. It is likely that Spies had a hand in the visual realisation of the landscapes and ceremonies of Bali which he had already spent time photographing and painting. The technical quality of the film is remarkable when one considers the difficulties which must have existed in working with the equipment of the day on location in a tropical environment like Bali. The equipment also would have had to be imported at great expense.
- ⁴⁷ This will be explored further in the next chapter.
- ⁴⁸ Murnau & Flaherty, 1931
- ⁴⁹ Flaherty, 1928
- ⁵⁰ Stutterheim, 1932, p. 8
- ⁵¹ The narration used the voice of Andre Roosevelt
- ⁵² Conrad, 1896, 1900
- ⁵³ This idea will discussed more fully in the next section.
- ⁵⁴ The critical intentions of Joseph Conrad appear to be less transparent than Collins or Baum for instance and Conrad's work has been the source of debate in recent postcolonial theoretical discussion and perhaps are less easy to reduce to simplistic moral messages.
- ⁵⁵ The Tarzan films are a good example of this
- ⁵⁶ Murnau & Flaherty, 1931
- ⁵⁷ Flaherty, 1922
- ⁵⁸ Film-maker unknown, 1927
- ⁵⁹ Film-maker unknown, 1931
- ⁶⁰ Film-maker unknown, 1935
- ⁶¹ *Variety*, Dec 8th, 1931
- ⁶² *Pagoda Landscape*, 1929
- ⁶³ *Holy Forest at Sangsit*, 1930
- ⁶⁴ *Iseh in the morning light*, 1938
- ⁶⁵ *Deerhunt*, 1932
- ⁶⁶ *View from the heights*, 1934
- ⁶⁷ *River Landscape with herder and cows*, 1929
- ⁶⁸ *Ploughing Farmer*, 1932
- ⁶⁹ Chytry suggests the cosmological significance of these devices and I will discuss this later in this chapter in relation to Balinese influences on Spies.
- ⁷⁰ Letter, Spies to his mother 01/05/1932, Rhodius, 1964, p. 306 [my brackets](my translation)
- ⁷¹ Letter, Spies to Mead and Bateson, 28/01/39, L.O.C.
- ⁷² Letter, Spies to Belo, 22/02/1939, L.O.C.
- ⁷³ Examples of such black and white photographs of his own work by Spies can be found in the de Zoete archive in the Horniman museum in London.
- ⁷⁴ Hitchcock & Norris, 1995, p. 30
- ⁷⁵ Javanese farmer returning home, 1924
- ⁷⁶ Spies was not a colourist of any note, although some of his works like *Sumatrische Landschaft* (fig. 63) and *Preanger Landschaft* (fig. 64) could be described as impressionistic.

These works lack the formalist or social elements of some of his other paintings and interestingly these were both created outside Bali. These were perhaps produced *in situ* or from watercolour sketches. Nevertheless, *Sumatrische Landschaft* does incorporate a more subtle version of the 'visual echo' which can be seen in *Die Landschaft und ihre Kinder* (fig. 62). This impressionism is without a sense of colour and it is a sense of monochrome lighting which is responsible for the visual qualities which emerge from his more innovative works.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 5; where in correspondence Spies admires and aestheticises the young male musicians, commenting on their lack of physical blemishes (Spies 10/05/1935 to Belo and McPhee, L.O.C.)

⁷⁸ Letter, Walter Spies to Jane Belo and Colin McPhee, 10/05/1935, L.O.C.

⁷⁹ The main discussion in this thesis relating to influence will be conducted in the next chapter and that will focus on the Balinese artists

⁸⁰ Letter, Walter Spies to Leo Spies, 17/09/1939 in Rhodius, 1964, p.392

⁸¹ Letter, Walter Spies to Leo Spies, 17/09/1939 in Rhodius, 1964, p.392

⁸² In my interview with Ida Gusti Made Kerti (20/08/98), who was the son of Gusti Nyoman Lempad, he explained that he had become a farmer as he had no talent for art.

⁸³ See my discussion of creolisation and 'para-tourist arts' in Chapter 1

⁸⁴ This will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

⁸⁵ Letter, Walter Spies to Leo Spies, 17/09/1939 in Rhodius, 1964, p.392

⁸⁶ The issue of relative prices for paintings will be explored in the next Chapter.

⁸⁷ Letter, Spies to his mother, 08/04/1929 in Rhodius, 1964, p. 267

⁸⁸ See the discussion of *Rehjagd* (1932) earlier in this Chapter.

⁸⁹ Rhodius, 1980, p. 35. Rhodius clearly preferred Spies' more conventional 'tourist' landscapes.

⁹⁰ David Sandberg, Interview, August, 1999

⁹¹ Letters, Spies to his mother, 02/1928 & 11/1929, in Rhodius, 1964, pp. 257 & 267

⁹² Letter, Spies to Mr. Bertilingius, 11/1929, Rhodius, 1964, p. 267

⁹³ *Landscape with cow's shadow*, 1938

⁹⁴ *Baschkirian Herder*, 1923

⁹⁵ "In the mid seventeenth century a group of Dutch artists brought back to the North an account of Italy in which picturesquely dressed peasants drove their herds along rutted tracks beside ruins mouldering in a golden haze. These were the *bamboccianti*, or painters of *bambocciate* (scenes of low life) who included Van Laer, Berchem, Both, Asselijn and Van Swanevelt. They found their inspiration not only in the Italian landscape but also in an international tradition of painting Italian scenery which had been developed by Flemish artists like Paul Brill and native Italians such as Agostino Tassi and the Bolognese Annibale Carracci and Domenichino. Landscape was soon enjoying a prestige it had not previously known, thanks to the achievements of three more foreign residents: Claude Gellée 'le Lorrain' and two other Frenchmen, Nicolas Poussin and his brother-in-law Gasphard Dughet, also known as Poussin." (Wilton, 1996, p. 39)

⁹⁶ Interview with David Sandberg, August, 1999

⁹⁷ For instance, there is the bas relief in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, from a temple at Trawulan in East Java which employs a similar arial view of landscape and figures which Spies often employs.

⁹⁸ Letter, Spies to his mother, 23/07/1934, in Rhodius, 1964, p. 340

⁹⁹ Stowell, 1992, p, 25

¹⁰⁰ H.K. Jacobs in Rhodius, 1964, p. 321, translated by Geff Green

¹⁰¹ *The landscape and her children*, 1939

Balinese painting, *Pita Maha* and Walter Spies: The Course and Discourse of Influence

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss notions of influence in relation to Walter Spies and Balinese art. I will examine what could be meant by influence in this particular context. I also analyse in which directions influence might have worked and I will examine what the agents of influence might have been. In doing so, I will scrutinise how these ideas have been discussed by the writers who have explored this area and identify conflicts, agreements and attitudes about the development of new Balinese art. In particular, the importance of broader social, cultural and economic change will be examined in relation to individual and institutional influence. The importance of Walter Spies, Rudolf Bonnet and *Pita Maha* will be discussed in relation to their alleged influence and their role in the Balinese art market. Other variables will be examined, such as European education and colonial policy. I will engage in a more theoretical discussion examining the notion of visual-linguistic imperialism and the idea of the development of visual 'pidgin' languages in relation to the 'contact zone' shared by Balinese artists and Westerners. The view of specific agents of individual influence will also be compared with that presented by an assessment of the importance of broader economic and cultural imperatives in shaping visual style for the 'tourist' market. Influence will also be examined from a Balinese perspective, through views gathered from interviews conducted in Ubud and through writings which articulate a non-Western perspective on colonial cultural influence and interference. In examining these perspectives, I will also look at dissent and resistance from Balinese artists, as well as examining other possible ways of viewing the new Balinese paintings which could highlight Western art historical analysis as an ethnocentric discourse.

Baliseering and 'influence' are inextricably connected: *baliseering* or the 'balinisation' of Bali being, paradoxically, a process of external influence on the Balinese culture designed to protect the Balinese from damaging their culture through external influence¹. To reconcile this paradox at the simplest level, it is necessary to distinguish between 'positive' and 'negative' 'influence'. This idea is at the heart of the reinvention of 'traditional' Bali by its colonial policy makers. It is also at the heart of the philosophy of *Pita Maha* and those Westerners and Balinese who curated the work marketed by this group. However, this chapter seeks to illustrate that influence is a product of contact. Therefore, the 'contact-zone' inhabited by Balinese, tourists and colonial residents

represented a zone of influence often beyond the control of policy or organisations. In fact, contact and therefore influence was already a fact of colonial life. This chapter examines how that influence manifested itself and examines the formal aspects of influence as represented by *baliseering* and its cultural manifestation in the world of paintings through *Pita Maha*. It will examine this group in relation to other more organic processes of influence in the 'contact-zone' of inter-war Bali as represented by the tourist market for souvenirs.

Balinese painters and the influence of Walter Spies

The legend of Spies and his influence on new Balinese painting, although not necessarily created by Hans Rhodius, is a myth he has actively sought to perpetuate over the years. The tone and substance of the following account typifies the discourse which seeks to position the white man as father figure to the colonial subjects. I suggest that this type of causal discourse represents a fanciful over-simplification of the process of influence and cultural contact which resulted in new innovations in Balinese painting.

One day while Spies was living there, a local lad, still very young and filled with curiosity, crept up to watch the artist at work. What he saw was something quite different from the usual drawings of gods and heroes in the traditional style of Bali. Here began the friendship between Anak Agung Gede Soberat and Walter Spies. Soberat brought several of his own drawings to show Spies who said to him one day: 'Maybe you could try drawing something else for a change; for example, something you see around you every day, like a farmer going out to the ricefields with his cow, or a woman selling her wares at the market.' Soberat took the hint and became the first pupil of Spies. After a time he brought his cousin, Anak Agung Gede Meregge along. So very gradually the younger Balinese generation followed the path of selecting new subjects and drawing more open compositions with first attempts at perspective. This often meant the appearance of a distant Gunung Agung - one of Spies's favourite subjects - in the upper part of the picture. Naturally, many characteristic traits of the traditional style were retained, such as the rendition of the rich, luxuriant vegetation; but here, too, one finds echoes of Spies in the use of sunlight reflected from the palm-leaves and an increased emphasis on the circle on the surface of the water.

(Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 31)

This apocryphal story is a key element in attributing artistic styles to Walter Spies and needs to be deconstructed and re-examined. This account, with its paternalistic nuances, tells us a great deal more about Hans Rhodius and his preoccupations with promoting Spies, than about the development of new Balinese art. The way the story is told subjugates the creative role of the Balinese themselves. It is far from clear that Spies suggested that Soberat should adopt scenes from everyday life as his subject matter even though this version of events was also suggested by Soberat's son ². Kalam also provided more details about his father which presented him in rather a different way. Soberat was already an accomplished and respected artist in terms of ornamentation of temple objects, cremation towers and *barong* masks. His work was very much in demand in places like Gianyar, for royal occasions. The work was often done co-operatively in teams and he had often worked with one of the best cremation tower builders of the time, Made Karé. Soberat clearly had a hunger to learn new visual styles as well as a variety of traditional styles. His desire to learn to paint (in the European sense) appeared to derive from an awareness of the commercial promise presented by selling paintings to foreigners. When seen from the Balinese point of view, Soberat is no longer a naïve and unsophisticated boy, beholden to the artistic foreigner, but an established, talented and respected artisan in the Balinese tradition. It could be argued in fact that Soberat did borrow ideas from Spies, but this was in the less important area (to him) of tourist art produced for cash. It is equally possible that Spies borrowed from Soberat and others with his inclusion of *Gunung Agung* ³ in his paintings, for instance, rather than the other way around, as suggested above. Paradoxically, new Balinese painting has been presented as a form of modernism which, as discussed in the previous chapter, has been characterised in a Western context as often featuring an abandonment of perspective rather than its adoption. New Balinese art has tended to feature the (partial) incorporation of perspective. All the indications are that although Spies did utilise perspective in his own work, he rebelled against it in certain modernist ways. Also, his own tastes in art suggest that this academic approach was not one that particularly appealed to him. Viewed in this way, some of his work could be described as agnostic medievalism. The use of perspective and art-school draughtsmanship by the Balinese is much more easily attributable to Rudolf Bonnet. The notion that Walter Spies suggested the depiction of *Gunung Agung* or that this was somehow copied by the Balinese is questionable as it is highly likely that *Gunung Agung* would have been an obvious choice for depiction by Balinese as a site of sacred significance.

In fact, it is through colour that Spies might have had the greatest impact on the few occasions when Balinese artists might have seen his work. Despite the probability that

most artists would have had access to photographic and magazine images, most of these would have been in black and white. There is some debate about whether Rudolf Bonnet encouraged the use of colour, as suggested by Höhn (1994, p. 48), who writes that Bonnet knew these tinted works sold better than the monochrome pictures. Geertz however, suggests that Bonnet encouraged artists to work in black and white as these sold well ⁴. Thus, it is difficult to gauge exactly why so many works were in black in white, but it is likely that they did sell well and that economic forces would have rendered coloured artists' paints too expensive for most Balinese artists. Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 75) suggests that Spies introduced green to the palette of Balinese paintings and again the implication is that this was a new development in Balinese painting. However, Hinzler (1986, p. 403) clearly states that in some of the works produced for Van der Tuuk in the late nineteenth century, green was already in use.

Spies' contemporaries appear to share the view that Spies influenced Balinese painting. Like Belo quoted earlier, they also seem to feel that this exchange was a positive contribution. Mead describes Spies' influence in relation to his attraction to young Balinese men.

The young men who have known Walter Spies marry and are happy. They have children and are proud of them; they continue to carve and paint and make beautiful things as Walter Spies has taught them to do.
(Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 1939)⁵

Mead goes beyond alluding to any vague kind of influence and specifically says that Spies taught the artists. This statement also implies that they were not capable of making beautiful things before Spies 'taught' them how. This second quotation from Mead's correspondence to Spies indicates the kind of editorial control which was being exercised by Spies in the process of this 'teaching'.

We have the picture of you that Paul put up on the place of honour, to preside over all the changing exhibits of Balinese pictures and Balinese togogs ⁶ and to explain why Balinese art hasn't gone completely to the bad under tourist impact. I hope that very soon you will be back to preside over it again and prune their worst bright ideas away.
(Letter, Margaret Mead to Spies, 1939)⁷

It is interesting that here she acknowledges that the Balinese have ideas, but she suggests that the ideas and approaches which the Balinese are perhaps most

enthusiastic about, are being suppressed through either disapproval or non-selection for exhibition by *Pita Maha*. She does not specify more clearly what these 'worst bright ideas' are. Nevertheless, her comments clearly indicate the kind of cultural imperialism being operated by Spies, Bonnet and possibly their Balinese collaborators, Lempad and Sukawati. Bateson also indicates that these two artists were active in encouraging art in their particular region.

About paper - many thanks for offering to get it, but that is easy enough here - These Spieses and Bonnets have seen to it that good paper is available for their Balinese pets - and our pets are able to draw on the supply.

(Letter, Gregory Bateson to his mother, 1937) ⁸

Again, the superior position taken by the visitors is clear here with the use of disparaging terminology. They obviously had a shared discourse of referring to the Balinese as their 'pets'. Although this is probably intended as a humorous and slightly ironic term of endearment, it indicates underlying attitudes towards the Balinese and their own position under a colonial regime in relation to them. This quotation also illustrates the importance of materials to the Balinese in producing paintings. In this way, the influence of Spies and Bonnet is illustrated, not in the sense of providing a particular visual stimulus, but simply through providing materials on a more regular basis. The work of Hinzler (1986, p. 34) indicates that innovation and creative ideas can be a result of simply having the materials. In the case of the artists working for Van Der Tuuk, they experimented with new subjects, styles and motifs. It is also clear that materials would have been available to artists outside the circle of Bonnet and Spies and that art dealers probably also supplied artists with paper and paints. Therefore this form of influence is unlikely to have been unique to Spies, as is illustrated by the nineteenth century images from the Van Der Tuuk collection.

This illustrates how problematic it is to simply characterise Spies as taking a 'principled' and detached approach to Balinese art. It seems clear that he was more concerned with the idea of 'quality' rather than the preservation of the traditional, in this context. It seems likely that this was a source of debate ⁹ and perhaps Spies' curiosity, like that of Mead, Bateson and Belo, caused him to experiment on his human subjects or 'pets', despite his more 'noble' curatorial and museological tendencies. It might have been very tempting to see possibilities in Balinese art from a European perspective which are not thought of by the Balinese themselves and to suggest experiments which conform to a Western aesthetic code. When regarded from this point of view, the idea that Spies suggested the subject of 'everyday life' to Soberat takes on a new feasibility.

However, even if this is the case, it seems unlikely that this and other new departures in Balinese painting, can be attributed as arising entirely from one Western source, as is often suggested. In one of the few books on Balinese art, *Balinese Paintings*, Djelantik subscribes to a fairly traditional view of Spies' 'influence' on local artists and suggests that:

Balinese painters in Ubud and nearby villages saw the work of these Europeans and tried to copy their styles. Walter Spies did not like this at all, but out of curiosity asked them to try painting scenes from daily life in the village and from nature.
(Djelantik, 1986, p.4)

If Spies did not like the copying of European styles, why would it have been any better to persuade the local painters to change their normal subject matter? There is undoubtedly a disingenuous and Europeanised agenda which is being applied here. Copying of styles was a traditional Balinese approach to learning to paint, rather than through direct observation. It is even dangerous to attribute a more naturalistic, less formalised approach to painting in Bali to Spies, as artists like Gusti Nyoman Lempad (**fig. 67**) were clearly already moving in this direction before the arrival of Spies. The styles adopted by some of the new artists certainly resemble that of Lempad. Darling asserts that Lempad did not have to "acknowledge a debt to anybody". (Darling in Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 69). Thus, it is quite clear that a discourse of influence attributing change to Walter Spies is questionable and such a narrow view of the processes at work in Bali at this time does not describe or explain the emergence of new styles and innovations in Balinese art.

Notions of influence

Having discussed and questioned the idea of Spies as a primary causal agent of influence, it is useful to consider how the idea of 'influence' might actually be expanded in the context of Balinese painting. Astri Wright (1994) whose book examines more contemporary Indonesian art and issues, nevertheless discusses the notion of influence in a way applicable to the situation in Bali, during the 1930s, as well as more widely.

Any question of influence must explore nuances of meaning ranging from the 'wholesale, detail-by-detail copying' of one artist's work by another, including a discussion of the reasons for the copying and the context within which this was done. It may have been a

study exercise, an act of forgery, an act of magical/mystical recapturing of power, or an act of homage. On the other hand it may have been a partial adaptation of foreign forms selected because of their affinity to pre-existing artistic categories and synthesised with a selection of these, or it may have been an instance of parallel, unconnected creation of similar forms and styles, stimulated by cultural/psychological/artistic processes that are not fully explicable but that are processes that are observable in global histories of art.
(Wright, 1994, p. 5)

This definition is useful in the way that it acknowledges the importance of possible mystical or religious motivations in influencing art-work. At the same time, it also addresses the possibility of parallel developments in art which are not the product of direct contact or causal influence, but which relate to broader cultural factors. In particular, Wright posits the notion of global histories of art suggesting the dangers of Eurocentric secularised bias which through its 'scientific' distance cannot fully appreciate or encapsulate the meaning or significance of sacred or religious art. However, this account is still largely bounded by the artistic and the cultural when looking at influence and stops short of addressing the social or the economic factors in the development of new artistic styles in the Balinese context. Importantly, it suggests that there are a number of processes which might be possible and that the creativity and innovation of the artists is important. It also indicates that influence can also be part of the process of innovation, rather than the passive position which is implied by the discourse which describes Western paternalists as being directly and benevolently responsible for artistic innovation in Bali.

The idea of 'influence' is key to the political ethos during the 1920s and 30s in Bali and it represents a repeated theme amongst anthropologists and writers in the 1930s, who either overtly or covertly supported the idea of the 'living museum', with its notion that it is possible or desirable, to halt the onward march of progress of the modern and modernism in specific controlled enclaves. This would, of course, continue at the same time as fundamental reforms and manipulations which although intended to maintain tradition, in effect, actually helped to undermine it ¹⁰. This *baliseering* view is essentialist and superficial, and tends to value appearances over values. This notion of ossifying a culture denies the possibility that cultures develop and reform despite attempts at social engineering. In fact such attempts can themselves precipitate change ¹¹ and contact with a modern industrialised world will accelerate that process, just as it did in European rural communities during the Industrial revolution ¹².

The 'liberal' *baliseering* colonial model assumes that those who instigate the policy can identify what comprises 'good' or 'bad' influence. Key to the notion of influence is Europeans' fascination and fear of the interface between themselves and other racial and cultural groups.

...these are the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness. But they are also, as I have shown, the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects.
(Bhabha, 1994, p. 88)

There is a paternal and patronising urge amongst administrators and aesthetes alike to protect and nurture peoples who, to them, represent a more 'primitive', 'simple' and 'natural' version of themselves ¹³. The possession, control and representation of technology is treated as the preserve of the ruling colonial class. Thus, by and large, it is deemed necessary to treat colonised peoples like children who need to be led in order to understand themselves. The argument appears to be that it is, in fact, important that colonialists influence the indigenous people, in order that they should absorb 'superior' values, but without losing their naïve primitive simplicity. However, it is important not to assume that this attitude was exactly the same under different colonising powers. This is evidenced by the film review (1932) referred to in the previous chapter where the British reviewer finds the Dutch '*baliseering*' view being proposed in the text of the film to be unfamiliar and unusual ¹⁴. Not only can colonial policy differ by colonising nation, but significant differences can occur within a particular colony. In fact, the Dutch East Indies itself can be seen to encapsulate differing styles of colonialism under one administration, if one compares the different administrative approaches towards Bali and Java. This inevitably generates different forms of discourse and different forms of resistance and dissent amongst the colonised ¹⁵.

Jane Belo indicated that this debate about influence already existed in the 1930s amongst the Western aesthetes and that there were divided opinions regarding the ethical and moral aspects of 'interfering' with Balinese art.

The influence of White men living in the district on the arts, plays, certain ritualistic dances, etc. (the "prostitution" of the arts has been in question now for some years, and it cannot be doubted that white men who are artists exert an influence which can be considered good or bad - that is a question of taste. But Walter's

influence has tended to help the Balinese to profit from the visitations of the tourists, not to profit himself and that the Balinese should profit is in line with the Government's ideas, I believe, for it has ever since the depression been trying to find ways to improve the economic standing of the Balinese. The "craftsmanship department", whatever it is called, even sent Resinck there for 6 months or so to study ways and means to bring the export figures up to the import...) (Letter, Belo to Witsen Elias, 1939) ¹⁶

She makes the general point that white artists exert an influence and she cites Spies in particular, but suggests that his intentions are altruistic and his interventions help the Balinese. She acknowledges that influence could be 'good' or 'bad', and also that this assessment is a matter of taste. A key aim of this chapter is to examine the nature and effect of Spies' 'contact' and to look at how 'good' or 'bad' this supposed influence was, or indeed whether contact can actually be equated with influence in any simple sense. It will also examine the possible inaccuracies with which the idea of influence has been portrayed in relation to Walter Spies, new Balinese painting and Bali itself.

In the second (more objective) part of the book by Hans Rhodius and John Darling (1980), written by Darling, he questions some of the usual assumptions made about Walter Spies; those which relate to the passage and direction of influence in the context of Walter Spies and his relationship with Balinese art and its more modern developments. He mentions a number of areas worthy of further research and he also makes some contentious assumptions. Some of these have now been explored by researchers such as John Stowell (1992), Anthony Forge (1993) and Hildred Geertz (1994). Darling's statements make a useful starting point in defining some of the questions which surround the position and importance of Spies as an implementer of a colonial agenda and policy at that time.

Many wider questions still remain to be explored. Stutterheim was concerned about the effect formal schooling might have and urged caution. The new art sprang up in Ubud, Batuan and Sanur, but not elsewhere. Both Sanur and Ubud had close contact with European residents, but this is not the case with Batuan. Can any causal links be established? What sort of instructional material was used in visual form, and what access did the artists have to, say, reproductions of European works of art? Why should the scenes of everyday replace the traditional subjects when religion was, and still is, very strong in spite of the earlier eclipse of the courts? What sort of influence was exerted by the anthropologists investigating the 'natural society'; Bateson, Mead, Belo, Stutterheim, Goris etc.? Spies and Bonnet were not the only

painters, but little has been said about the others,
particularly earlier visitors.
(Darling in Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 67)

At various points in this chapter, I deal with the questions being raised by Darling. I will look at the issue of schooling and paternalism particularly in relation to the role of Rudolf Bonnet. I will look at geographical factors in a broader scope than that suggested by Darling with particular reference to the perspectives provided by Geertz, Forge and Hinzler. Not only is Darling's assertion about Batuan's isolation questionable, but the focus on painting in only a few areas ignores previous contacts and developments in other areas. As well as broadening the geographical scope of the debate, I will also consider new Balinese art as a response to broader social, cultural and economic imperatives, which are not necessarily attributable to specific individuals no matter how romantically appealing their biographies might appear to be. The focus on particular individuals in relation to the idea of influence as an apparently linear causal process will also be questioned in the context of contact and exchange which has already been discussed in the previous chapter in the discussion about Balinese influences upon Walter Spies. Additionally, I will address the ideas of the secular and religious through Darling's proposal that the theme of 'everyday life' was something new in Balinese art and culture. Also in relation to religion I will explore the ethnocentricity of the discourse which ghettoises 'primitive' art which might be devotional rather than conceptual or stylistically referential in a Western modernist sense.

New Balinese Art and Visual-Linguistic Synthesis

Ironically, the stated aim of *Pita Maha* was to remedy the artistic debasement attributed to commercially sold Balinese tourist art. This was attempted through imposing Spies' and Bonnet's own ideas of quality on Balinese art. Admittedly the results of *Pita Maha* artists are often pleasing and intriguing to the Western eye, but what also has to be remembered is that there are many other works outside the scope of *Pita Maha* which are equally interesting and engaging, such as those sold by the Neuhaus brothers in Sanur through what was an unambiguously commercial operation¹⁷. Whereas the *Pita Maha* project can be seen as being a directly paternal imposition of a visual-linguistic imperialism, the free market influence can be seen as a more indirect process of linguistic adoption which was a product of power and money relationships between the Westerners and the Balinese people. The notion of art and language provides an interesting analogy with which to examine the output of Balinese artists at this time.

This notion also provides a useful framework within which to discuss the effect of changes in artistic practice as part of an imperialist linguistic discourse.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Paula Ben-Amos talks about tourist art as being a form of pidgin language and its form and function in the Balinese context seem to fit very well within her definition.

...the creation of a 'contact' art which is not (to paraphrase the linguistic usage) the native language of either participant. The concept of 'interference' is particularly relevant here. The formal and symbolic structures of both art traditions (looked at in the broadest sense) are different enough to be mutually unintelligible...What seems to be happening on a visual level is not the taking over *in toto* of another aesthetic but the gradual evolution of a system which can meet the minimum requirements of both producer and purchaser.

(Ben-Amos, 1977, pp. 128-129)

She explains that the range of uses of such art is reduced and there are not the functions of religion, social, political and decorative usage which more traditional forms might have. Again this describes very well the process which occurred in Bali preceding the intervention of the curatorial hand of Spies and Bonnet, whereby the secular and the sacred experienced a new separation in forms of painting. The idea of 'contact' art fits in with the notions of influence as a product of contact discussed earlier. From this, Mary Louise Pratt's (1992, p. 6) notion of the shared colonial arena, which also borrows from the notion of 'contact' languages, encapsulates this idea. The development of a dialogue between producer and consumer, can be seen in the quotation from A. S. Wadia (1936, p. 66), discussed in Chapter 3 and compared with the imagery of Soenia. (fig.26)

Lewis (in Cooper, 1982, p. 215) suggests that there are four main factors which are at work in any language-spread situation which apply very well to the situation of tourist art in Bali.

- 1) language attitudes, for instance the strength of efforts to maintain a threatened language or to restrict the functions of an indigenous language.
- 2) The nature of the between-group interaction, e.g. geographical contiguity, ease of communication, conquest, colonization, the nature of the relationship between the colonizing Centre and the Periphery.
- 3) Modernization, including the intensity of economic development, the degree of external exploitation of

- indigenous resources, urbanization, demographic features such as the degree of education of mobile and stable population groups;
- 4) The political theories and religious and cultural characteristics associated with a language, especially the distance between the spreading language and other languages in contact with it with respect to these theories and characteristics.
- (Philipson, 1992, p. 78)

Many of the factors mentioned above apply to the development of styles of tourist art in Bali during the late 1920s and early 1930s. *Pita Maha* can be seen as attempting to restrict the functions of the language of tourist art, as well as making an effort to maintain what they saw as a threatened language. The contact with the colonisers, in terms of tourists, would have been a factor in the development of tourist art, and the contact of certain individuals with people, such as Spies, Bonnet and Covarrubias as well as Van Der Tuuk before them, might also have been a factor. Modernisation was a key factor because in fact the *baliseering* project, despite purporting to preserve tradition, was in essence a form of modernisation, in the way that it reorganised Balinese society and introduced new communications in terms of roads. It also influenced education in schools. The last factor is less clearly applicable. However, the connection between artistic production and religion was certainly a factor, if only in the way that a religious-secular divide emerged, despite the continuance of religious subjects in many of the artworks produced. This is particularly evident in those produced for *Pita Maha* by artists such as Ida Bagus Madé Togog (**fig. 68**) and Gusti Nyoman Lempad (**fig. 67**).

Wollen (1993, p. 201) suggests that although the idea of tourist art as a form of pidgin has been challenged, it deserves further examination and in relation to the processes considered in this account, it is a very useful framework for examining Balinese tourist art and the way this was additionally mediated by the *Pita Maha* project. The idea of tourist art as pidgin is something more than a metaphor, but something less than an empirical absolute. Robert Young, in alluding to colonial contact in general and later sexual contact in particular, seeks to validate the idea of pidgin languages as both a product of, and illustrative of the process of contact and influence in a colonial context.

...the most productive paradigms have been taken from language. Pidgin and creolized languages constitute powerful models because they preserve the real historical forms of cultural contact. The structure of pidgin – crudely, the vocabulary of one language superimposed on the grammar of another – suggests a different model from that of a straightforward power relation of dominance of colonizer over colonized.

Thus, tourist art in the 1930s Balinese context, when seen as a pidgin language is also paradigmatic of contact and influence in the colonial context. Young's characterisation of a pidgin language as not representing a simple one-way power-relationship, is important in relation to ways of seeing the development of tourist art. This differentiates it significantly from the mediated output of *Pita Maha* artists, which I propose introduces an inequitable imperialistic power dynamic into the equation of exchange. Although this cannot be characterised as simply a one-way process, the stated aim of regulation and control of new artistic forms complicates the equanimity of linguistic development suggested by the term 'pidginisation' which implies a language which is shared and developed by both parties. It is clear that pidgin languages are negotiated in their creation by the different participant language groups ¹⁸, as was the case with items produced directly for the tourist market. In the case of *Pita Maha*, its development was formalised and mediated with criteria being introduced for its grammar and its vocabulary. Certain subjects and the presentation of those subjects and motifs were acceptable. This situation fits with Peter Wollen's (1993, p. 196) construction of the idea of 'para-tourist arts'. There are important elements in this theory which was at least in part informed by his knowledge of the *Pita Maha* project ¹⁹. Wollen parallels the mediation and formalisation of Balinese painting with creolisation and, like Young in relation to pidgin languages, he also emphasises the two-way process involved in creolisation, as discussed in Chapter 1 ²⁰.

This is important as, on the one hand, *Pita Maha* can be portrayed as an imperialistic venture imposing Western models on the work of artists coming from a largely divergent cultural and philosophical background. However, on the other hand, these artists can be seen to be developing the opportunities and limitations to gain advantages for themselves. This argument should not be forgotten, as the artists would have spent much more time in the company of one another than in the company of their Western visitors and their development of ideas and approaches will have developed in this context. Nevertheless, the limitations and structures were still there and whatever advantage the Balinese artists gained through their own creativity and ideas, it was still framed within an imperial agenda.

The notion that the interests of the Balinese were being protected by the Europeans, would have represented a trademark of patronage and quality to a rich and well-educated foreign buyer. However, to the consumer who specifically wanted an 'authentic' piece not created for a tourist market, the notion of a Europeanised 'quality control' system or a commercial imperative to visual style might be unacceptable. But

in Spies' time, such collectors appear to have been quite rare, as in the case of A. S. Wadia discussed in Chapter 3.

For the most part, tourists were uninformed and possessed no great knowledge of Balinese culture; they preferred to buy works which for them were comprehensible. Of necessity, this then resulted in a shift of orientation towards the generally understandable content and, conditioned by this, also to new forms.

(Höhn, 1997, p. 33)

Höhn clearly feels that the commercial influence was of paramount importance to the development of new style and content in Balinese paintings and that this was directly attributable to the superficial understanding that visitors would have had about what Balinese painting might mean. Due to this monetary imperative and stylistic shift from visual language understandable to the Balinese, which was complex in its narrative codes and characters, a much simpler format was devised whose message was much less complex and therefore easier to understand, by what were in this context, the visually 'illiterate' foreigners. A pidgin language could be a source of amusement to those foreigners who might see the pidgin as an entertaining but ultimately degraded manifestation of their own language. This might account for the negative responses of Spies and his associates to unmediated tourist art. This visual language and those using it may have been less valued than the output of established European modernists like Spies, for instance. It seems likely that there would be an incomprehension and therefore lack of interest in the native languages. This is directly comparable to the traditional forms of painting in the *Kamasan* style, for instance, which have generally been valued less highly by tourists than the apparently more accessible and generic 'pidgin' of tourist art. More specifically, this language as well as corresponding to some visual conventions such as perspective and modelling, was also designed to describe the Bali which the tourists thought they were seeing and experiencing. Effectively, this was a skilful interpretation of the tourists' own internal tropical island fantasies. The Balinese could also see and experience an entirely different Bali inhabited by magic deities, demons and witches (**fig. 68**). Indeed this vision of Bali seeped into many tourist works and this representation of Bali must have overlapped in some ways with some tourists' perception of the island as well, but it is unlikely that such images would have been read in the same way. Overall, the gulf in perceptions, as today, must remain large. A depiction of *Rangda* might appear as a mysterious and ugly creature to an outsider, but to a Balinese, this would also have resonances which would relate to religion, myth and ritual. John Stowell suggests that all forms of Balinese art both old and new were incomprehensible to tourists.

While it [new Balinese painting] was more acceptable to the Balinese than the carved figures, the tourists found it as strange as the conventions of the classical or Wayang style of Klungkung... [my brackets] (Stowell, 1992, p. 36)

This is rather a strange assertion made by Bonnet and reported by Stowell which does not explain the popularity of these works and the adoption of the new styles by Balinese artists. Nevertheless, if 'strangeness' is what the tourists were interested in and that was to be found in both forms of art, it poses the interesting question of why adopt a new style which will sell just as well as the old one? One answer could be that there was a pleasure and interest by the artists in experimenting and exploring new ideas for their own sake and not just to satisfy tourist demand. This is quite likely as the artisanal pride exercised by artists for traditional tasks is often likely to have been transferred to the production of paintings as well.

The language of art in this context is interesting and comparisons can be made to identify what it is that 'spoke' to the European consumers of Balinese art. Perhaps it is worth making the point that there are many visual aspects in common today with the ways that European people might have consumed visual material in those days. However, there was generally less exposure to visual material in its global variety, than that which is available today. Therefore, Western perception of art would generally have been bound more by localised conventions in their homelands. Having said this, visitors to Bali also largely comprised the more affluent, mobile and 'educated' elite of the time, albeit an education steeped in European Romanticism and Orientalism.

Geographical factors

Since John Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 67) wrote the piece quoted earlier, John Stowell has conducted some very detailed biographical research and has helped to clarify and unearth new details, as well as connecting events which previously were not substantiated. However, when taking a wider view of artistic production, as suggested by Anthony Forge (Forge in Clark (ed), 1993), which considers the whole of Bali, the focus on Ubud seems to become less important. It is crucial to remember that the majority of tourism was focused around the North of Bali at this time and it is only fairly recently that the south of Bali has become the arrival point for tourism centred on Kuta, Legian, Sanur and Ubud. These new tourist numbers have made Ubud a much more prominent tourist destination and so bring into focus many of the ideas and myths

about art in Ubud (inevitably involving Walter Spies), which then have also come to symbolise art in Bali as a whole. There is a retrospective justification and causality which has been adopted based on today's Balinese art world. It is important to assess geographical isolation and the extent to which it is a factor in this situation. The road system in Bali linked the main parts of the island together and, for instance, Spies could access his home by unpaved road quite easily ²¹. It is likely that as soon as communications were improved, new cultural and commercial links would have developed, including greater contact with tourists and the visual material and commercial stimulus they provided. Batuan is in the south, but Darling's assertion that Batuan did not have close contact with foreigners is highly questionable, as Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson spent time there, specifically commissioning large numbers of works of art ²². However, Darling's general point about the impact of anthropologists is relevant in Batuan. Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet had dealings with Batuan ²³. Kaspar Niehaus cites Rudolf Bonnet's account of his own influence in Batuan.

...only I.G. Soberat had worked for a while with Bonnet. According to him I Patera had been strongly influenced by him and that he and I Ngendon have started a painting school in Batuan.
(Niehaus, 1939, p. 172)

Although Darling is correct in questioning some of these ideas and opening up the parameters within which the exchanges which occurred actually took place, his apparent assertion that painting only appeared in Batuan, Sanur and Ubud is narrow in terms of his timeframe ²⁴. It is also contradicted in terms of geographical scope by Forge.

The Neuhaus collection which originally comprised more than 300 pieces was put in the Kirtya Liefrink-van der Tuuk which is now the Gedong Kirtya in Singaraja... The works come from all over Bali and while there are only a few Ubud works, there is a substantial body of work from Batuan.
(Forge, 1993, p. 24)

Forge indicates that in fact there was production of paintings all over Bali before and during Neuhaus's time. It is only subsequent developments, such as the continued presence into the 1970s of Rudolf Bonnet and the general development of Ubud as a cultural tourist centre and sales-point for art, which has redirected the focus towards Ubud as the centre of painting in Bali. J. Kats lists the centres of modern art in Bali and, interestingly, this list does not mention Ubud at all.

There are a number of centres of modern art in Bali. The most outstanding up to the present is the village of Mas in South Bali, with names which are gradually becoming known both in and outside Bali, such as Ida Bagoes Ktoet Gelodog, Ida Bagoes Poetoe, I. Geremboeang, I. Rodja, Ida Bagoes Njana. Other centres of modern Balinese art are Batoean and Padangtegal. (Kats, 1939, p. 48)

Finally, Hinzler's discussion of the works created in the nineteenth century for Van Der Tuuk also questions the geocentric notion of artistic development which has grown over the years. She provides examples of works produced by artists from the north and south of Bali and innovations were already visible in both areas.

It is important to notice that innovations in colour palette, style and composition can be observed in North Bali as well as in South Bali at the end of the 19th century. Most laymen writing on Balinese art (for instance Visser 1937) in the 1930s claim that these innovations were restricted to artists living in the regency of Gianyar and ascribed them to Spies and Bonnet. (Hinzler, 1986, p. 35)

This account emphatically challenges the orthodox view which restricts innovation and change to specific geographical locations and indeed to specific periods in time. It is clear that a canon of discourse attributing change has created a focus which has meant that all innovation has been attached to particular names and places and times for which attention was focused in the 1930s. This has obscured many of the other less visible developments in art at other places and times in Bali. However, it is not only the geographical discourse which has become distorted, but also the discourse pertaining to the themes used by Balinese artists in their work, and their origins such as 'everyday life'.

The theme of 'Everyday Life'

Darling asks why scenes of 'everyday life' replaced traditional subjects and this again raises the myth that this idea came from Spies. Perhaps it might have been a suggestion by Spies based on what he had already observed as a tradition in other art forms. However, it is much more likely that this particular approach arose more organically from a number of different sources as part of a long-established Balinese thematic tradition. Darling's idea is an over-simplification and involves too narrow a

characterisation of Balinese art and painting in particular. It assumes that 'everyday life' is not a traditional subject and also that traditional practices have been replaced. In actual fact, it is fairer to say that diversification occurred. Kats, predates Darling's idea on this subject, although Kats acknowledges a diminished precedent.

Therefore, in place of religious art, he ²⁵ turned to profane subjects, figures from daily life, such as a man with a fighting cock, a woman bathing, a woman with a child, animal groups like fighting birds, an owl with tortoise and snake, a dog with a duck, fishes, crickets, etc... It is true that a number of these subjects also appear in Balinese "classical" art, but the modern conception has infused new life, and, moreover, the range of subjects had been increased in every direction.
(Kats, 1939, p. 47)

The notion of 'everyday life' is more emphatically discussed by Stutterheim as a traditional subject.

As to the fact that the Balinese artist is a realist first, we can readily discover this feature in his representations of scenes and figures from daily life often found in temples and elsewhere.
(Stutterheim, 1932, p. 7)

Adrian Vickers reinforces this idea that 'everyday life' is part of an already established thematic tradition in Balinese art and the folk tales about *Pan Brayut* are cited as a good example of this. Curiously, Vickers characterises Stutterheim as denying this idea.

Traditional art was static, the new art dynamic, according to Bonnet, Bali's foremost archaeologist, Willem Stutterheim and the other writers on Balinese painting. The content of Balinese art, they argued, had changed from Hindu mythology to scenes of everyday life, which allowed for originality and self-expression. This was not really true, as traditional paintings have always included scenes of daily life, either as the subject matter in legends such as *Pan Brayut*, the story of a raucous commoner family, or as little border scenes on the bottom of mythological images. Experimentation with new media and styles had also been going on in Balinese art since the nineteenth century.
(Vickers, 1989, p. 113)

It is clear that the endlessly repeated key claim made by commentators such as Rhodius (1980) ²⁶, that everyday life represented a new theme in Balinese art, is

extremely misleading and contributed to the Spies myth. It is probable that Rhodius did not know very much about Balinese art and that is why he did not discuss this in this book. It is a facile and often repeated story that Walter Spies suggested to Soberat that he should depict 'everyday life' and thus new Balinese art was born as I discussed above. It has become a key story, which seems to have distorted and obscured the complexity in the development of modern Balinese art and denied a sufficient acknowledgement of the achievements and perspectives of the artists themselves.

Even Soberat's son retold this story to me ²⁷ as an explanation of Spies' role in the development of new Balinese art. Although his reiteration of this tale adds credence to the idea of Soberat being taught by Spies, the problem arises when this idea is extrapolated to extend to all new Balinese painting. As an art lecturer in a modern globalised world, this view has possibly derived from books like Rhodius & Darling (1980) which continue the European discourse of the 1930s. This is illustrative of the postcolonial power of Eurocentric discourses which can recolonise the histories and art histories of post independence nations and ultimately diminish the perceived talents, abilities and initiative of the indigenous artists.

If Spies suggested the idea of everyday life to Soberat, it is just as likely that it was as a result of Spies having seen other paintings by Balinese artists which had made this very logical transition within the Balinese tradition. It has to be remembered that the Balinese have multiple modes of cultural expression which are tied into spiritual and religious belief, but there also exist alongside these forms, the more down-to-earth traditions such as folk stories. There are often crossovers from text to dance to pictures and back again, in terms of visual motifs and ideas, as well as in terms of the depiction and enactment of narratives. It is because Western documented accounts have been produced about this encounter between Spies and Soberat that a convenient causal explanation was created and it seems that few have questioned it.

The peripheral and subordinate nature of this type of 'everyday' subject to religious or mythological scenes when the two occur together (**fig. 66**), indicates the presence of the sacred and mundane in Balinese cosmology. However, it also indicates that these scenes of 'everyday life' have a subordinate role and importance to the power and mythology surrounding the gods. This is a useful indication of the probable status to the artists themselves of the scenes of 'everyday life', which they were creating for the tourist market, as opposed to other forms of communally sanctioned artistic and cultural activity. This is an important point as it is too easy to adopt the Eurocentric view of the outsider to the point of undervaluing quite a different perspective with quite different cultural and religious priorities. In this sense, the perceived danger to the

output created largely for tourist art could be seen as mistaken and of little importance to the Balinese, if there is no debasement of their own cultural and religious life. Therefore, the issue of controlling subject and 'quality' is framed within a Western agenda rather than a Balinese one ²⁸.

Rudolf Bonnet and Art Education in Bali

Considering Rudolf Bonnet's role in *Pita Maha*, it seems pertinent to ask why it is that he is less well known than Walter Spies. Spies' fame in the 1930s is well documented ²⁹. It must result from the connections Spies had with the rich and famous Hollywood set of the 1930s, through his connections with Murnau during his lifetime, and, after his death, with the apparent romance and pathos of his life story. Ida Bagus Rai ³⁰ was annoyed when asked about Spies and asked why I did not want to know about Bonnet, who over the years must have had a more profound influence on local artists, simply because of the many years he eventually spent in Ubud after the death of Spies. This long-term influence results from his methods of teaching anatomy and technique in a traditional European art school tradition.

Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 67) raises the question of education and again the idea of isolated, 'authentic' artistic production is brought into question. He appears to be focusing on whether artists were taught, how they were taught and to what degree this occurred. Some answers already exist. Jane Belo, in her article on Balinese childrens' drawings indicates the degree to which drawing of a secular and Western kind had already been introduced in the schools.

Some years ago I was asked to collect a number of drawings by Balinese children of from four to ten years, to be shown in an international exhibition of children's drawings. In those days before the movement for free drawing in the schools had been instituted, the school children were directed to draw tables, cupboards, and lamps. I was therefore forced to seek out children who had never had paper or pencil in their hands. Nevertheless, the drawings which these children produced, when they were exhibited in New York in 1934, attracted a great deal of attention from artists and educators. There were numerous notices in the press, stating that the work of the Balinese children, with that of the Mexican children, outdistanced in interest the work from the various European and American countries represented. The qualities in these drawings which made them stand out from the work of other children were the strict stylization of the forms, the dramatic portrayal of demons, witches, and mythological

beasts with gaping mouths and glaring eyes, the decisiveness of the line, and the free and spontaneous recklessness of composition, combining uproarious action with balanced, if rudimentary, sense of design. (Belo, 1970 [research, 1937], p. 241-242)

John Stowell (1992, p. 12) suggests that Spies and Bonnet carried out experiments with local artists by providing them with paper and European artist's materials; this might have been a catalyst in the development of art in Bali. He also discusses the issue of formal schooling in greater detail.

Bonnet wrote again to Kunst in April 1933 to request the removal of an art-instruction booklet *Gauw en Goed* ('Quick and Good') from the programme of the Junior Secondary School at (H.I.S) at Klungkung. Bonnet and Charlie Sayers had been asked to judge an art competition at the school which made use of this booklet, originally written for Dutch schools in the Netherlands East Indies. The pupils were required to produce copies of portraits of the queen, the Governor-General and Willem II. Bonnet thought the results were appalling. 'It was all too clear that the drawing talent of Balinese boys expresses itself in an ornamental, decorative style and that a naturalistic landscape style and portraiture is foreign to them and shall always remain so. This can scarcely be otherwise; Bali would not be the Bali we admire and love if it were different.'

(Stowell, 1992, p. 29-30)

Although his objections are probably justified, this should probably be on the grounds that this type of art teaching should not be imposed on anyone, from any background. However, this is not the grounds of his exasperation. This is a very revealing quotation in the way it highlights the essentialism of Bonnet's perspective on the Balinese as artists, which assumes innateness in aspects of their creativity and a difference which means that somehow they cannot and should not grasp Western concepts. This seems ironic, when considering his own ultimate approach to teaching Balinese artists which seemed to involve elements of European art school traditions such as the teaching of anatomy. As one Balinese painter puts it:

Before the coming of Bonnet, people didn't know the right or the wrong way to paint.
(Interview, Wayan Sukada, August, 1998)

This communicates an apparently neo-colonial stance on the part of a Balinese who probably inherited this view from his teacher, the artist Ida Bagus Rai, who was himself a 'student' of Bonnet. The notion that there is a 'right' and 'wrong' way to paint, reflects

the colonial absolutist notion that there are 'positive' and 'negative' influences on the Balinese. Like Spies, Bonnet clearly felt that his views could provide a 'positive' influence and presented his teaching in this way.

Despite the educational regime, Jane Belo claims to have found 20 subjects who had not held pencil and paper before in the Gianyar district, which was also the general region in which Spies and Bonnet lived. This suggests that at least some of the young artists they dealt with had avoided the curricula provided by the compulsory education system. However, many of the younger artists are likely to have had visual stimuli other than those provided by Spies and Bonnet. Darling raises the issue of contact with reproductions of European works of art. The availability of other mechanically produced images, photographs, magazines and the like should also be considered. It is dangerous to assume that the only visual influences and stimuli available to indigenous artists would have been from within their own visual traditions or from foreign artists working in their midst. Geertz has suggested a few sources of influence.

The Batuan painters had seen some Western pictures, but how many and how often is uncertain. Important, perhaps, were the occasional small commercial pictures-advertising images on objects like matchboxes, illustrations in foreign magazines, and drawings in the new Balinese children's schoolbooks.
(Geertz, 1994, p. 10)

Some interesting recent research by Gittinger (2000, p. 227) into batik designs of the 1930s indicates the incorporation of comic book images in Javanese fabric design, specifically characters from the *Flash Gordon* comics. Gittinger has also demonstrated the presence of these comics in Java during that period. Walter Spies himself indicates the presence of such foreign printed material in Bali in his correspondence, speaking of the children's *barong* dance in Ubud.

The costumes are also lovely, made of all kinds of bits of 'The London Illustrated' and packing paper for matches etc.
(Letter, Spies to Belo, 1939) ³¹

An important aspect of the presence of Western visual stimuli is whether the mere presence of such things would provoke an interest in new visual forms and approaches and thus prompt artists to start copying motifs, photographic images and Western-style perspectives. Jane Belo (1970, p. 251) mentions that the children she worked with ignored visual material hanging on the walls where they worked, and instead, focused on the most dramatic scenes from *Wayang Kulit* performances they had seen.

Although Belo tends to diminish the influence of new visual material in her experiments, Klaus Höhn shows that there could sometimes be quite dramatic responses to new visual stimuli.

I Made Djata who was among the first artists in Batuan to take up the new style relates that he abandoned painting in the Kamasan style because he wanted to portray his work in what he called a 'photographically similar' manner, that is to say, using more natural proportions in spatial interrelation.
(Höhn, 1997, p. 36)

It seems clear that the stimuli available to Balinese artists were various and only some of these arose from formal education, or perhaps informal education from artists like Bonnet and Spies. The idea that Bali was 'primitive' and unsullied by Western influences and Western visual stimuli is refuted by the examples above. Thus, the complexities of visual exchanges engaged in by the Balinese painters goes much beyond the suggestion of Rhodius's apocryphal story about Soberat included earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, the styles and approach adopted by artists to present everyday life for instance, sometimes came under the scrutiny of the editorial eye of the *Pita Maha* group. This exerted an influence of a different kind offered by education or magazine photographs.

The Influence of *Pita Maha*

John Stowell's account (1992) is probably the most detailed and carefully researched essay on the subject of *Pita Maha*, with a great number of useful facts about the specific course of events relating to the development of new artistic styles. He also explores the relationships and opinions of various people involved with the group in Ubud. A very convincing argument is made that Spies rather than Bonnet, was the most important creative catalyst, but Stowell's account also acknowledges the apparent spontaneity of many of the artistic developments by Balinese artists. This account perhaps over-emphasises causality in its attempts to get to the facts and it also falls into the trap of over-personalising the development of new Balinese painting through its biographical approach. This approach focuses less on intangible factors such as the wider cultural, hierarchical and political change in Bali during this period. Certainly most of the points which are made by Stowell, are substantiated through documentation. However, by focusing so closely on Ubud, *Pita Maha* and the figures involved in this circle, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion than that other factors in Bali such as the availability of foreign visual material, economic and cultural change, and art

schooling were largely irrelevant. The self-fulfilling prophecies extant in his account are highlighted by his statement.

All over the world, the history of art is the history of what appears in major collections. In public collections of Balinese art, inasmuch as the works are identified and reasonably dated, it is by and large always the same names which keep recurring for works of this time.

(Stowell, 1992, p. 46)

Much of this recurrence of names is due to their defined collectibility, which in turn has been defined by art 'experts', such as the arbiters of *Pita Maha* in the late 1930s.

Much of what has been said regarding Walter Spies' interactions with Balinese artists has been concerned with what his influence was on their artistic output. The focus has been particularly on the *Pita Maha* group of artists which provided a Western model³² of a school of artists created ostensibly with the stated intention of promoting quality art work amongst Balinese artists, as I described in Chapter 2. However, what this organisation did was to create an extensive and effective marketing network for artists associated with *Pita Maha*, including Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet. As I argued in Chapter 2, it was founded in response to the perceived reduction in 'quality' of artworks produced by artists. Less clearly articulated is that the paintings were produced largely for the 'tourist market' which probably considered them to be 'traditional' in some way. However, as well as imposing a set of subjective values and criteria to the works chosen, *Pita Maha* helped reinforce a stereotypical idea that all Balinese were artists by nature. It also imposed and encouraged the further development of an already developing hybridised visual language or 'pidgin', which was palatable and comprehensible to a Western audience. In order to discuss the nature of influence, it is useful at this point to furnish some more detail about *Pita Maha*. The background to its formation is clarified by Stowell who paraphrases Bonnet and says that:

Bonnet concludes his survey by appealing to the more experienced Europeans (the government authorities) to do more to protect the Balinese from an indiscriminate following of Western ways until such time as they realise that in doing so they are endangering the good elements of their heritage. Aware that the new consumerism and heavy taxation have led to severe shortages of cash, he sees that people are in general ready to sell anything and that craftsmen will skimp their work if they can still earn money. But he also knows that good art needs time and reflection to develop the legacy to the past, and so he hopes the

Bali Museum can continue its efforts at conservation and encouragement.
(Stowell, 1992, p. 40)

Stowell gives a detailed account of the establishment of the *Pita Maha*. It is clear from Stowell's account that it was the dealers like J. A. Houbolt and the Neuhaus brothers who were partially responsible for the foundation of *Pita Maha*, as these dealers were clearly seen as providing a negative influence on artists and the art market itself. The commercial art dealers started applying pressure on the Bali museum for introducing what they saw as unfair competition to their business in the low commissions which were charged. In her fieldwork notes, Margaret Mead describes *Pita Maha* thus:

Pita Maha is a society, a guild of Balinese plastic arts, founded in January 1936 by Mr. W. Spies. The first aim of the society is to stimulate art and the second to protect the art from the bad influence of tourism and commercialism and to be interested in the material welfare of the members. Their works are submitted to a strict examination by connoisseurs. Such an examination at the same time serves the interests of the buyer. For the society charges only a small percentage to cover the expenses.
(Margaret Mead, fieldwork notes, undated [probably 1939])³³

Mead introduces some key terms to which she clearly ascribes absolute values. She is clear that in this context there is such a thing as 'bad influence' and that it comes from tourism and commercialism. She clearly sees her own presence in Bali as being something different and more worthy than mere tourism. The notion of relying on connoisseurship in this context is anachronistic. However, 'connoisseurship' as a term does seem particularly appropriate in relation to this particular situation with all the associations of snobbery and subjective selectivity associated with it. It is worth remembering that two of the four key members of *Pita Maha* were Balinese and the inclusion of Lempad and Sukawati introduced an element of royal and high caste patronage to the project, which would probably have helped to add prestige in the eyes of Balinese artists. Lempad, as senior artist to the royalty of Ubud, would have commanded respect. It is worth mentioning that, as well as attaching some artistic value and artisanal pride to the products they sold for cash, the *Pita Maha* artists might also have been motivated by status. This came through being involved with a project which was prestigious because of its royal patronage and recognition of their work. This has not been discussed in previous accounts and is of value in a caste-ridden society which puts great store on hierarchies and the privileges they could bestow.

It seems likely that Sukawati who was educated in a European school and who worked for the colonial government would have been particularly aware of Dutch cultural-political policy in Bali at this time. What is less clear is the criteria being imposed by the selection panel. In his discussion of the etymology of the term *Pita Maha*, Garret Kam indicates the supposedly traditionalist thinking behind the organisation.

...the artists' guild known as Pitamaha (Great Vitality, Strong Determination) in 1936. The name was chosen appropriately, for as an epithet for Bhatara Brahma (God of Creation) it evoked a suitable 'patron deity' for the artists. Pitamaha also means 'ancestor', which called upon the ancient heritage and artistic legacy of *Bali*.
(Kam, 1993, p. 42)

Mead lists *Pita Maha* exhibitions in a wide variety of locations³⁴. For instance, there were exhibitions in Balikpapan in Borneo in 1936, and at art societies in Bandung and Batavia in Java in the same year. In 1937, There was also an exhibition of paintings and woodcarvings in the museum of Asiatic art in Amsterdam which moved on to the Hague. In 1938 there was an exhibition in the 'Calmann' art gallery in London and also one at the Kunstzaal van Lier in Amsterdam. She lists 13 exhibitions, in all, between 1936 and 1939. Stowell suggests (1992, p. 44) that there were more than 16.

An early *Pita Maha* catalogue (November, 1936) for an exhibition at the Bandoengsche Kunstkring³⁵, in November 1936, provides some interesting insights into the approach of *Pita Maha* in its selection of works. There are very few reproductions, but the titles indicate a preponderance of religious titles indicating a narrative depiction of Balinese literature and religious mythology, such as the Ramayana. There are, however, other works which are more clearly reflexive, such as the depiction of a *Baris Dancer* (1935) by I Toepelen or a landscape *Tropical Forest* (1932) by I Ngendon or *Landscape with Figures* (1934) by D. G. Soberat. These works represent the celebrated 'new' themes of 'everyday life'. Thus, the secular does make an appearance and is presented as a modern concept in Balinese terms. It is interesting that this modern concept seems acceptable, but not necessarily a modern motif such as a motor car³⁶.

It is probably inaccurate to characterise *Pita Maha* paintings as 'tourist art', but rather as a product of European highbrow reaction to tourist paintings. It is clearly an attempt to limit the style and subject matter of artists in the name of legislating 'quality'. The way that the *Pita Maha* work was marketed and sold, based on the model of the Bali Museum³⁷ before it, was in a context of selling something as new, but also closely connected with Balinese tradition, as these gatekeepers saw it. This included the lack

of modernity as a subject or motif in these new works³⁸. The early sales were made at the Bali Museum full of antique and 'traditional' artefacts collected by Spies, but also others who were less well known³⁹. The later works were sold at exhibitions marketed more to 'cultured' colonial residents than to more transient tourists. Again, these exhibitions included quality-controlled craft artefacts, as well as the 'new' paintings on paper. The naming of artists is an important product of *Pita Maha* and the status that many artists achieved through being individual artists exhibiting through *Pita Maha*, has undoubtedly helped to continue their fame and success as painters in more recent years. It is important to remember that *Pita Maha* also included arts and crafts and Stowell (1992, p. 46) suggests that there were a number of female weavers whose work was included in the exhibitions for sale, whose names were not recorded.

'Quality control' is a term used by John Stowell (1992, p. 5) and John Darling (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 77) in describing the principle role of *Pita Maha*. This term is interesting in its industrial connotations⁴⁰. The invention of *Pita Maha* has also paradoxically been described as an antidote to the mass-production being organised by certain art dealers⁴¹ for the tourist market. In this way, the idea of 'quality control' can be seen as an acknowledgement of the existence of an industrial process like that described in Chapter 2. The name *Pita Maha*, meaning 'ancestor', adds a gloss of the 'traditional' to an industrial process which actually makes it intrinsically modern. Although this meaning was probably intended to symbolise an adherence to older artistic values, it is rather disingenuous in masking the entirely different stylistic direction and commercial intentions behind the output of *Pita Maha* behind a veneer of traditionality. The artists wanted to make money and *Pita Maha* allowed a select few artists to do so, but in the process created a hierarchy amongst the artists, based on, firstly, their selection for exhibition and secondly, the price for which their works were sold. This resembled much more closely a Western model of selling art. To use an industrial paradigm, the process can also be seen as a form of international standardisation. This is relevant in the way in which certain forms of representation developed in starkly divergent ways from the Balinese visual vernacular. Changes came through the use of perspective, modelling and a general move towards a more thematic approach, articulated through a more representational visual syntax. This was opposed to what was previously a more symbolic and narrative approach to the visual arts, which related to belief and cosmology, rather than Western realism and perspective. Balinese traditional painting also had a different religious or narrative purpose addressing Balinese cultural needs rather than those of foreigners. This type of art was not bought and sold by the Balinese, but was created largely through religious obligation⁴².

Another important element in the development of *Pita Maha* comes from taking a wider view of the economics of the time. Under the Dutch colonial regime, during the depression, ways of making money and educational opportunities were severely limited. The definition and cultural ghettoisation of the Balinese as 'natural artists', meant that this would have been one of the few ways that individuals could have earned much needed income. In this way *Pita Maha* can be seen as a form of institution designed to visually formalise the stereotypes imposed administratively by colonial government and reinforced by the published writings of artists and writers visiting the Island in search of paradise.

***Pita Maha* and the Market for Balinese Paintings**

In the light of the issues of commercialism raised in the previous section, it is relevant to examine the art market. In relation to the forces generally influencing artistic production in Bali at this time was the commodification of art and the creation of a new, more Western style (cash-based) art market for the tourists who visited the Island. The foundation of *Pita Maha* could be regarded as the creation of a marketing board for a 'better' class of new Indonesian Art. This category of work would then have become removed from the traditional role of painting. Painting was now mediated to fulfil a new function as an earner of money. At the same time, it provided a window through modern artists' format, media and supports (mainly paper) for tourists to view the Island of Bali in an exotic and yet comprehensible visual language. The subject matter for the paintings allowed Westerners a vicarious, mythologised view of Balinese life and traditions. These forms would have been more comprehensible than *wayang* codes of painting to those European tourists who were curious about such things. These works were different enough from Western styles to satisfy the tourist desire for the appearance of 'authenticity' and 'otherness'. This desire is strikingly similar to a portion of the market for art today with the tenacious idea that it is possible to buy a piece of unspoiled and yet comprehensible piece of native tradition which is 'uncorrupted' by contact with the West ⁴³.

Pita Maha provided many of these artists with materials and marketed their work, but it has to be remembered that the market already existed. There was already a thriving business in tourist artefacts in Singaraja in the north and Sanur in the south. There were entrepreneurs, both Balinese and European, such as Patimah in Singaraja and the Neuhaus brothers in Sanur. If one subscribes to a free market view of quality, then

it could be argued that these artists and painters would have succeeded and therefore been equally prolific without *Pita Maha*. Indeed, it appears that many artists did not rely on *Pita Maha* alone to sell their works, and some were not involved with *Pita Maha* at all.

Neuhaus was a crucial patron who maintained the viability of the productive system. They relied on him to buy most of their output. Walter Spies was to them almost unknown and of no importance.
(Forge, 1993, p. 24)

Anthony Forge provides a different and in many ways more useful overview of *Pita Maha*. He steps back further from the question and looks more widely both geographically and in terms of time to decide on the role of foreigners in the development of new art in Bali in the 1930s. In many ways, for Forge, the debate is about the importance and influence of wider social, cultural and economic forces relative to the power of individuals and institutions in moulding artistic practice and output in Bali. It is almost inconceivable that Walter Spies would have had no influence at all on any artists he had contact with. It is really a question of how powerful or extensive might that influence have been, what the nature of that influence was and whether market forces were actually a much more powerful imperative in fuelling innovation and quality in Balinese painting at this time. It is doubtful whether the perceived danger to the quality of art in Bali was a particularly important one. This view is largely a Western, commercially oriented perspective which linked art with commerce in the 'contact zone' largely ignoring the robustness of 'traditional' non-commercial, religious artistic activity. Therefore, the notion of Spies and Bonnet as the guardians and rescuers of Balinese art should also be reconsidered. Although Spies expressed a deep admiration and inspiration deriving from Balinese spirituality and magic, his own work was cleverly tailored to tourist demand. At this time, there is no evidence that levels of aesthetic attainment and quality were suffering from a Balinese point of view within their own vernacular cultural context and the integration of artistic practice of various sorts into everyday life and religion would have had their own imperatives for quality and artistic commitment. However, this artisanal aspect of Balinese artistic life would have been much less visible to foreigners. Taken from this point of view, non-secular art was a largely banal exercise to gain money from tourists, which had no intrinsic spiritual value and therefore no aesthetic or social value within a Balinese context.

It seems doubtful whether the art which was produced and sold to tourists would have been significantly worse in terms of Western ethnocentric aesthetic judgements had

Pita Maha not existed, particularly as the tourist market continued and *Pita Maha* works were not necessarily exhibited in places where tourists were likely to be found. It is important to remember, that the plastic and artistic skills of Balinese artists were not exercised only in producing tourist art, but in creating their own ceremonial and religious art. Standards of expectation in this area would often have been exacting out of reverence for the gods and the dead. This alone would have been responsible for the maintenance of skills and artistic culture and also would have been much more fundamentally important to the Balinese artists and consumers themselves. The debate has been quite artificially shifted from a localised discourse and marketplace, to the prioritisation of a new art created for the tourist market which was designed to 'speak' a 'pidgin', which articulated the paradisaal language of discourse of the European visitors, as well as adhering to Westernised models of commodified art rather than ritual or religious art. Western capitalism is key in this discourse as the arrival of a cash economy and consumer goods created a new demand for money. However, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, means of earning money were limited under the colonial *baliseering* system ⁴⁴.

It is likely that the intentions of Bonnet and Spies would have been 'liberal' and 'ethical' ⁴⁵ in trying to help the artists. Their views could be characterised as 'enlightened colonialism'. For the chosen Balinese artists, this would have resulted in an increase in their incomes and status. However, despite this 'elevation' of the paintings to the status of an art form in a European gallery context, the prices were still a fraction of those charged by European artists. An example of a more expensive work would be *Bratajoeda* by Ida Bagus Gelgel at 17.50 guilders. He was the silver medal winner at the colonial exhibition in Paris of 1932 and so was one of the better known Balinese artists ⁴⁶. This contrasts with a painting by Bonnet, for instance which might cost 850 guilders ⁴⁷. This is a stark reflection of two entirely different economies at work under colonial system, with the labour of indigenous artists being worth a fraction of the labour of their European colonial counterparts. The consumers are asked to admire the works of the 'best' Balinese artists, but not to the point of competing with the work of the 'more sophisticated' European artists. They are put in a different category both in art historical terms, but also in economic terms. Objectively speaking, it is hard to justify such a disparity which is constructed on ethnic lines rather than on grounds of 'quality'. Vickers (1989, p. 114) has provided an alternative valid perspective by suggesting that many of the Balinese artists were much more talented than Spies. It is notable that the prices fetched by these artists were also much less than those expected by Walter Spies' for his own work, for instance.

From the catalogues one can also learn that paintings first ranged in price from f25 to f3.50 with an average price of f11. Within two years, prices were generally about three times higher than these, with the rare item going above f100. By comparison, a European painter could usually command about f300, while Bonnet could ask a top price of f850 and Spies received f2,500 for his painting, *The Landscape and its Children*, in 1939. (Stowell, 1992, p. 48) ⁴⁸

In an interview ⁴⁹ Professor Kalam, the son of Soberat, stated that his father only received 300 guilders for a painting, whereas Spies would receive 3000 guilders. This is an interesting point as although the specific amounts could be questioned when compared to the documented prices above, the enormous disparity of one thousand percent remains. What is also notable is that Kalam should remember this. It seems that this disparity could have been a point of discussion and dissatisfaction in his household.

Thus, market forces provide an interesting indication of how 'tourists' valued the output of a European artist with his Europeanised mediated vision of the Indies, compared with a Balinese artist producing work which is intended to provide what he thinks is wanted by the European buyers. So although the art was being promoted for Western 'tourist' consumption, there was a tacit understanding of the 'otherness' of the output of the Balinese artists which made them curiosities rather than 'real art' in the European Modernist sense. It is important not to categorise the work of the *Pita Maha* group as simply 'tourist art', as the works were often exhibited outside Bali in Java and even in Holland ⁵⁰. This somewhat changed the status of the works from a simple tourist shop or street stall commodity to a type of gallery art. In addition to this, a more Western paradigm of the 'named' artist was transplanting the 'anonymous' artist in this context. These works had the added prestige deriving from a selection process, which was attached to works being marketed in this way. Many of the buyers of the works would have been colonial residents of the Indies and not necessarily short-term tourists. Articles in magazines such as *Cultureel Indie* and *Jawa* would have also catered for the more cultured colonial residents such as those living in the big cities of Java. They would also have distribution in Holland amongst those interested in the art, culture and ethnology of the colonies. One particular problem in assessing the validity of the *Pita Maha* project is the paucity of descriptions and examples of the tourist work which Spies and Bonnet so derided. Their dislike manifested itself in a dismissal of the works and thus, there seems to be very little discussion of the works. Stowell (1992, p. 41) cites an interesting example of some European entrepreneurs employing people to alter paintings bought from Balinese artists to make them more saleable to tourists.

Examples from two travel writers ⁵¹ quoted in previous chapters, help to provide an impression of what types of arts and crafts were on offer as well as the description by Spies and Goris (1930s) ⁵².

It seems fair to say that there was a wider variety of subjects and visual approaches than those appearing in *Pita Maha* exhibitions. This greater variety can be seen in the works from Batuan and Sanur collected by Mead and Bateson, which included a greater number of sexual subjects and acknowledgement of the modern in Bali. This indicates that some tourists were less concerned about modernity reflected in the works they bought, than Spies or Bonnet. However, the discourse of various visitors in the travel writings discussed in this thesis still indicates a desire to imagine and project a pristine fantasy view on what they saw in Bali.

...and beautiful Bali itself seemed to have, for the time being, evaporated into thin air. For here were Balinese men and women strolling about the paved streets fully dressed, and Dutch officials and businessmen rushed about the roads in the latest models of stream-lined and air-flow cars. The spacious frontage of a building with 'Bali Hotel' painted in huge letters of gold on its imposing façade, after the grand-hotelish manner of the West, came next, and completed my disenchantment. But an hour ago I was leisurely moving in a land of temples and caves and coco-nut palms, with beautiful bare-bosomed Bou-Lou adding a touch of romance and mystery to the old-world scene around...
(Wadia, 1936, p. 65)

It could be argued that any Western-style gallery system imposes a set of subjective values and criteria on the works it chooses to exhibit and sell and that these are largely dictated by the market for these works. However, this situation takes on a new ethnocentric dimension in this particular cultural context where there is a much greater cultural and visual-linguistic distance between the producers and consumers of the art works. In the case of painting for the tourist market, cultural and visual-linguistic synthesis appears to have occurred through a process of free-market osmosis, deriving from the general marketplace for tourist art. However, *Pita Maha* attempted to moderate the market by placing paternalistic and curatorial influence on the works which were chosen. It is questionable whether the *Pita Maha* project was as much about creating 'better' quality souvenirs for the benefit of Western tourists, as increasing the welfare, prestige and quality of Balinese artists. Despite the fact that *Pita Maha* saw themselves as nurturing the best quality Balinese art, 'quality' is clearly a

relative concept in this colonial context, where quality is not necessarily defined in relation to indigenous values or criteria.

Conflict in Pita Maha and the autonomy of Balinese artists

Highlighting dissent and resistance in Bali, Nordholt comments:

I would like to mention a remarkable protest against the official hierarchy on Bali: a small booklet published in 1939 by a teacher, Gusti Nyoman Wiryasutha. He cast doubt on the legitimacy of the caste system – the *catur wangsa*, or four hierarchically ordered groups – by pointing out that it originated in the political strategy of thinkers (brahmans) and warriors (satria) who were bent on keeping conquered people in an inferior position. The author saw this same principle repeated in Europe, where the Germans placed themselves as Aryans above the Jews. On Bali it meant that the Dutch were the true nobility – *triwangsa* – while the Balinese in fact amounted to no more than powerless and subjugated *sudra*. His conclusion therefore was that the Balinese should not look upon themselves as divided into separate groups (*wangsa*), but ought to unite as one nation (*bangsa*). The booklet was outlawed immediately.
(Nordholt, 1996, p. 311)

This account presents a rarely recorded example of the existence of resistance in Bali during the 1930s. It is important as an expression of an informed and dissenting subaltern voice. It belies the notion that the Balinese were isolated and uneducated in Western political concepts and thinking and it also shows the drive towards more dissenting and radical thinking in Bali at that time.

Although the booklet stops short of suggesting decolonisation, it is the identification of the Balinese as sharing the experience of subject people rather than being partially subject or free to be ‘traditional’ as the Europeans wanted them to be, which is significant and by implication it challenges the tenets of colonialism. It is important to realise that dissent against the Westerners was not only possible, it existed, and that this anti-imperialism also applied to projects of cultural imperialism. Although the recorded instances of dissent and resistance are few, they create a different picture to that of the harmony normally portrayed by Bali’s Western residents and visitors. Ranajit Guha (1997, pp. 1-4) discusses the historical validity of addressing the common existence of such resistance in India and uses the term ‘pre-political peasant

insurgency' to describe such events. Although colonial conditions were not the same in Bali, the normative idea that such resistance is insignificant because it does not subscribe to a politically coherent historical causality, is challenged by Guha. He also makes the point that to characterise such incidents as 'isolated', 'spontaneous' or 'unorganised' in historical accounts is to follow the colonial 'discourse of power'.

The discourse on peasant insurgency thus made its debut quite clearly as a discourse of power. Rational in its representation of the past as linear and secular rather than cyclical and mythic, it had nothing but reasons of state as its *raison d'être*. Drafted into the service of the regime as a direct instrument of its will it did not even bother to conceal its partisan character. (Guha, 1997, p. 3)

Rudolf Bonnet and Walter Spies both acted as gatekeepers of the *Pita Maha* group and, although they were joint founders of the group along with Cokorda Gedé Agung Sukawati, his brother Cokorda Gedé Raka Sukawati and Gusti Nyoman Lempad⁵³, it appears that their choices of art work and artists to be exhibited were the key factors in determining what was exhibited. They as Europeans, knew what would be appreciated by the largely European audiences for the various exhibitions which were organised. They also knew the kinds of works which more wealthy tourists were likely to buy, particularly if work was exhibited and presented (packaged) in an appealing way, such as in the *Bali Museum*. *Pita Maha* was inevitably an elitist group which, far from forestalling the influences of tourism on artistic production, simply diverted the focus for that production towards a particular art market. This situation also caused problems with artists who perhaps did not want to co-operate with Spies and Bonnet and wanted the opportunity to do things in their own way.

John Darling suggests that the *Pita Maha* was not resumed after the war, because it "...would not have been the same without Spies" (Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 85). This is a questionable assumption which probably overvalues the influence of Walter Spies. It ignores the political climate in which nationalism was becoming much stronger in Indonesia as a whole and it is likely that, by that time, many ordinary Balinese were weary of interference from colonial figures and also their own traditional rulers. This was after successive invasions by Dutch soldiers, Western colonisers, tourists, and the Japanese⁵⁴. There were also risks for Balinese who were seen to be fraternising with Europeans⁵⁵ in this post-War period. A great deal of bitterness existed after the many killings and massacres which had occurred at the

hands of nationalist, Dutch and pro-Dutch Balinese, during the divisive inter-communal fighting which immediately followed World War II.

From late 1945 through 1948 political conflict on Bali was chronic and frequently violent. With the exception of one large scale battle in which ninety-six died in one day, all of the casualties fell in close guerrilla combat, in ones and twos, some stabbed, others beheaded or burned in their houses, the lucky ones shot. After December 1945 the fighting took place primarily in the villages and rural areas. There were no forward lines of combat, no safe areas or impenetrable mountain sanctuaries. It was a war in which nobody could remain neutral.

(Robinson, 1995, p. 95-96)

Although these events occurred after *Pita Maha* and after World War II, it is also a reflection of underlying conflicts which must have existed and grown during the period of the 1930s. This was a period when nationalism was already growing in neighbouring Java and many of those ideas were arriving in Bali. A group of painters sponsored by a royal family known to be collaborators with the colonial regime ⁵⁶ and beneficiaries of *baliseering* policy, in partnership with their European 'guests' ⁵⁷, are likely outwardly, to have been shown deference by ordinary Balinese. However, this deference often must have concealed jealousy and resentment.

Pita Maha is often characterised as a harmonious brotherhood of artists ⁵⁸, but friction and disagreement was probably always a characteristic of the group, just as it can be seen today in friction between different factions of the art world in Ubud. In particular, there is friction between artists and those selling their paintings ⁵⁹. Recent demonstrations ⁶⁰ by student artists in Denpasar against the hegemony of the modern Balinese artworld and Gallery system (the descendents of *Pita Maha*) also illustrate this dynamic. It is clear that the influence exerted on painters was not always a benign one. There were conflicts which arose as a result of the pressures being applied by Bonnet in particular, in trying to impose his ideas about an artistic school on the *Pita Maha* painters:

Bonnet attempted to inspire I N. Ngendon to immerse himself in the new style in painting, but this led to a violent disagreement because I N. Ngendon had no desire and ultimately did not accept Bonnet's suggested ways of doing things. I Ketut Tomblos was present during this confrontation, and according to him I N. Ngendon was very annoyed by Bonnet's suggestions and naturally maintained his own style which he thought was right.

It is worth remembering that not all Balinese painters would have felt any compulsion to resist the pressures being exerted on them to conform to Bonnet's subtle manipulations. However, this account does indicate an individualism and freedom of thought which, perhaps has been denied and misrepresented in some accounts, which characterise the Balinese as little more than children.

...Margaret Mead's remark that the Balinese treated Walter Spies's work with the kind of awe they reserved for the miraculous, suddenly kneeling when they encountered one of his paintings.
(Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 35)

Although this account may have been based on a genuine observation by Margaret Mead, it is characterised as a generalised reaction by all Balinese. It helps to create a slightly ridiculously deified position of Spies in relation to the Balinese, as well as presenting the Balinese as being simple and unsophisticated. It follows the notion that somehow these people needed to be led by a Westerner. It is also questionable whether this account is based on one event and then generalised in the retelling. It is also possible that the significance and intent of this behaviour might have been misinterpreted by Mead. This ideology behind this type of interpretation of events is much more overtly articulated in an article of the time in the colonial art magazine *Cultureel Indie*.

These inexperienced people of Bali are helpless without any European leadership. Walter Spies, who is not only a great artist, but also a great human being; who has guided these people of *Bali* (he is a well respected man), is one of those who are supposed to guide these artists.
(Niehaus, 1939, p.180)

Interestingly Spies complimented Niehaus on this article in a letter ⁶¹ and was clearly happy with this view of himself. This suggests that Spies actively sought to perpetuate such a view of himself in relation to the Balinese.

Gusti Nyoman Lempad's role in *Pita Maha* is a particularly interesting one in that it seems clear that some of his output such as his 'pornographic' work (**fig. 40**) would not have been acceptable to *Pita Maha*. He must therefore, have produced and sold work outside the *Pita Maha* structure also using visual language which conformed to a 'pidgin'. Thus, as a selector of work for *Pita Maha* and as someone who sometimes operated outside its goals, he had an ambivalent position. This questions, to some

extent, his own commitment to the goals of the *Pita Maha* project and perhaps suggests even a certain scepticism towards their necessity or efficacy. However, it is also possible that he saw that there was an opportunity for both approaches. He may also have taken the position more similar to Spies, that it is important to use a position of power or influence to dictate ideas which they themselves did not necessarily adhere to. Lempad might also have had more pragmatic reasons for complying with the project. Vickers comments on a dispute Lempad had with Prince Cokorda Raka Sukawati who was a member of *Pita Maha* and who "...reserved Lempad's daughter as a concubine, but did not marry her." (Vickers, 1989, 142) He also alludes to Spies helping Lempad, when forced to borrow money against his own rice fields by another Sukawati brother. Thus, Lempad and others like him clearly had to be careful about how they expressed dissent.

Thus, it appears that during and subsequent to the inter-war period, there was a lack of acknowledgement of dispute, dissent and resistance amongst the Balinese in their colonial environment in a general sense. This discourse was focused on the microcosm of this social and political environment, as represented by the cultural-colonial sphere. It is only by gathering together apparently isolated accounts, that a more realistic view can be constructed which runs counter to the theme of artistic and hierarchical harmony which allegedly existed in the cultural and artistic hierarchies such as *Pita Maha*. Such discursive selectivity has contributed to the glorifying of the roles of the Europeans working in this environment such as Spies and Bonnet.

Summary

With the arrival of tourists, the Balinese painters and performers suddenly found themselves with new audiences and were often ready to accommodate what they thought the foreigners wanted. This involved the development of new styles and the creation of new visual pidgin languages which operated in the contact zone occupied by tourists and the Balinese. However, this pidgin was further refined and perhaps constricted by the imposition of a system of 'quality control' which attempted to formalise the production of new Balinese art and to 'creolise' the new language of tourist art creating a 'para-tourist art' for consumption by tourists, but also a more gallery- and exhibition-oriented marketing of paintings and other artefacts. The development of tourist art was, on the one hand, a commercial venture in response to a cash economy and the new burdens of colonial taxation, but after the onset of the Depression, new imperatives for earning money further stimulated the market. The

contact implied by pidginisation also allows the process of influence. It is clear that influence is a complex process which can take many forms. Although the influence of Spies and Bonnet through images of their work, must have influenced a few paintings, other factors must also have played a crucial role in stimulating new approaches, just as they had started to do in the late nineteenth century in the works produced for Van Der Tuuk. These factors are the provision and availability of materials like paper, and the increasing availability of photographic, graphic, cinematic and other visual materials. Everyday life became a common theme in the painting, but was a logical progression from more traditional depictions of everyday life in *lontars* and other visual forms. This progression diminishes the alleged impact and significance of Spies who only suggested this idea based on what was already happening, in the same way as he had utilised changes which were already underway in the *ketjak* dance when he made the film *Island of Demons* ⁶². The significance of the influence of the royal family of Ubud should not be underestimated, as we must consider why, when there were artists all over Bali, that it was only in places like Ubud that this type of influence appeared to arise. It has to be remembered, however, that if one subscribes to the view that commercial demand was the most responsible for the development of new art forms, then the importance of individual influence can be greatly diminished. In Sanur and Batuan, there were no royal families patronising the work and yet new forms developed regardless.

There is an important question which is difficult to answer and which would help to clarify the nature and importance of the relationship between Balinese and foreigners. It is the hypothetical question of whether new Balinese painting would have flourished regardless of whether Spies and Bonnet arrived in Bali. There is evidence to suggest that tourist demand rather than the mythologised canon of the influence of particular romanticised European individuals would have yielded similar results, both in terms of quality and the overall development of these tourist forms over the last century. The highly developed base of artisanal and artistic skill and discernment developed around traditional religious practices over the centuries is likely to have resulted in similar results whoever had marketed the work of the Balinese artists. The perceived threat to traditional skills and output identified by Spies is questionable. Since Indonesia's independence, Ubud has developed as a key village for the production and sale of Balinese paintings and artefacts. Its central position represents a process of industrial development. It is largely an accident of history, but one which can be traced back to the invention of *Pita Maha*. This, combined with the efforts of Hans Rhodius, has perhaps been partially responsible for the retrospective focus on Spies' work and his apparent influence on Balinese painting as a whole. In fact during the key development

period of the tourist market in the 1920s and 1930s, influence and encouragement for the production of painting came from all over Bali in many different manifestations essentially driven by market forces. Along with the effort of Hans Rhodius, it is the hegemony of existing documentation by Western establishment figures of Spies' time and the subsequent development of Ubud which has created this focus.

This brings into question the various notions which Spies and Bonnet were alleged to have as regards not directly teaching artists and therefore somehow not interfering with the 'natural way'. This, firstly, assumes that the natives were 'blank sheets', that is that what they were producing was something untouched and preserved from outside influence. This notion is ludicrous when looked at in the commercial tourist context and the context of the use of new materials such as paper. The importance of the influence of outside media such as magazines, matchboxes, movies and schooling, should be considered. It is also apparent that Spies and Bonnet did try to teach certain artists. However, this should be seen as small and insignificant engagement at a time when paintings were being produced on a much larger and wider scale for the tourist trade and largely under the impetus of the Balinese painters themselves. It was the filter of *Pita Maha* which identified what to some extent would be recognised as new Balinese art for posterity.

Influence is a complex concept to deal with and as the previous discussions in this chapter have illustrated, it tends not to be a one-way process and can have the effect of supporting ideas and approaches as well as undermining others. The notion that influence can easily be identified as 'good' or 'bad' is a concept which denies the possibility of cultural relativism. With the radically different value systems which existed between the colonialists and the Balinese in Bali in the 1930s, it is difficult to see how European ideas of quality are sustainable without ascribing to a universalist aesthetic philosophy. Influence, as a process of exchange, seems to be a more useful position to take. Thus, Wollen's idea of 'creolisation resulting in a para-tourist art, which, to some extent fulfils the needs of the subaltern, as well as the so-called cultural imperialists, seems to represent a more tenable position. However, this idea can result in denying the inequitable power relations in Bali at that time and it also denies the position of the rulers like the Sukawati brothers who were themselves effectively part of the colonial establishment, representing a blending of cultural values. In Chapter 6, I illustrated the degree and nature of influence which was absorbed by Walter Spies from his contacts with Bali and the Balinese. This discussion indicates the way that 'contact' equates with 'influence'. The 'contact-zone' the Balinese occupied with the West and the modern presented much more complex and numerous contacts than the few individuals which

previous discourse has tended to focus on in order to ascribe significant developments in Balinese art. It is not that these figures like Spies are not part of significant change in a certain region and time period, but that they are only a part of much wider social, economic and political processes which characterised the Balinese contact-zone in the 1920s and 1930s. However, in the arenas of the 'contact-zone' of tourist buyers and *Pita Maha* mediated output, the artists tended to be corralled into following particular 'traditionalist' rules. This is despite paradoxically being deliberately separated from other artistic endeavours because of *Pita Maha*'s fundamentally non-'traditional' nature. In addition to this, the traditionalistic rules were selective in only partially adopting traditional motifs, values and techniques, much in the same way as Balinese colonial *baliseering* reorganisation on traditional lines fundamentally reordered and modernised the structure and function of Balinese society.

¹ See Chapter 2.

² Interview with Professor Anak Agung Rai Kalam, August 1998

³ *Gunung Agung* is Mount Agung, the most sacred place in Balinese Hinduism.

⁴ Geertz, 1994, p. 13

⁵ Letter, Margaret Mead to Witsen Elias, 02/03/1939, L.O.C.

⁶ A *togog* is a carved wooden figure.

⁷ Letter, Margaret Mead to Spies 18/06/1939, L.O.C.

⁸ Letter, Gregory Bateson to his mother, 07/06/1937, L.O.C.

⁹ Letter, Jane Belo to Witsen Elias, 07/04/1939, L.O.C.

¹⁰ Robinson, 1995, p. 14

¹¹ Robinson, 1995, p.14. "Beneath the apparent *rust en orde* of the colonial period [in Bali] (1908-42), Dutch policy exacerbated old social and economic tensions and gave rise to new ones." [my brackets]

¹² "It [the industrial revolution] transformed the lives of men beyond recognition. Or, to be more exact, in its initial stages it destroyed their old ways of living and left them free to discover or make for themselves new ones, if they could and knew how." (Hobsbawm, 1968, p. 80) [my brackets]

¹³ "There is a crucial difference between this *colonial* articulation of man and his doubles and that which Foucault describes as 'thinking the unthought' which, for nineteenth-century Europe, is the ending of man's alienation by reconciling him with his essence. The colonial discourse that articulates an *interdictory* otherness is precisely the 'other scene' of this nineteenth-century European desire for an authentic historical consciousness" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 91)

¹⁴ Robert Herring, *Close Up*, 1932, p. 115-117

¹⁵ Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Pramoedya, 1999, p. 104) describes the escalation of the active nationalist movement in Java in 1923, which clearly developed earlier and more actively than that in Bali. Other factors such as religious organisations, the specific nature of Javanese colonial subjugation and the longer period of Javanese colonisation, would also have been factors in the differences which existed between Bali and Java.

¹⁶ Letter, Belo to Witsen Elias, 07/04/1939, L.O.C.

¹⁷ See Chapter 2.

¹⁸ Romaine, 1988, p. 24

¹⁹ Wollen, 1993, p. 199

²⁰ Wollen, 1993, p. 196

²¹ Sukada, Interview, August, 1998

²² The works commissioned and collected by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson are explored by Hildred Geertz, (1994)

²³ Höhn, 1997, p. 44

²⁴ See chapter 2

²⁵ In this instance Kats uses 'he' to refer to Balinese artists in general.

²⁶ Rhodius & Darling, 1980

²⁷ Kalam, Interview, August, 1998

²⁸ This will be discussed in the next section on the influence of *Pita Maha*

²⁹ Covarrubias, 1937, p. xxi; Koke, 1987, p. 49

³⁰ Interview with Ida Bagus Rai, August 1998

³¹ Letter, Spies to Belo, 28/01/1939 L.O.C.

³² Joan Weinstein points out that the Dresden Secession of which Spies had been a member in Germany had "...bureaucratic rules and regulations, along with restricted, juried exhibitions..." (Weinstein, 1990, pp. 112-113) This is a clear model from Spies' own previous experience upon which the *Pita Maha* could be based.

³³ Margaret Mead, fieldwork notes, undated [probably 1939], L.O.C.

³⁴ Margaret Mead, fieldwork notes, undated [probably 1939], L.O.C.

³⁵ Bandung Art Society

³⁶ Issues relating to modernity and its representation were discussed in Chapter 3.

³⁷ Vickers describes the foundation of the *Bali Museum* thus: "Through their work on two new institutions, Bonnet claimed, he and Spies helped to shape the proper development of Balinese art and to protect it from the destructive influence of tourism. The institutions were the new Bali Museum, destined to be the ultimate instrument of cultural preservation on Bali, and the Ubud-based artists' association of *Pita Maha*. The Museum, beside preserving Balinese art, acted as a clearing house for work which they selected as the best of Balinese art". (Vickers, 1989, p. 113). "The committee of the Museum included Resinck himself, an artist and engineer, Grader,

the K.P.M. tourist agent, Spies, Bonnet, Goris, and the Regent of Badung, the Prince of Satria." (Vickers, 1989, p. 224). Bonnet appears to have been more involved in the day-to-day running of the Museum (Stowell, 1992, p. 31). It also appears that rather than being founded together, *Pita Maha* was instigated later than the Museum due to conflicts arising from works being sold from the Museum and accusations of abusing a competitive advantage through undercutting commercial art dealers. (Stowell, 1992, p. 42)

³⁸ Issues relating to modernity and its representation were discussed in chapter 3.

³⁹ Yates, (1933 p. 58) mentions a Dutch artist named van Moojen was collecting masks for government museums

⁴⁰ Quality control is introduced into an industrial process to maintain overall quality and to root out sub-standard items for retail and is a crucial aspect of modern mass production.

⁴¹ Darling in Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 77

⁴² Interview with Ida Bagus Rai, August, 1998.

⁴³ "...just as the mass media create and maintain celebrities for mass consumption, tourism provides pseudo events and inauthentic attractions and destinations for credulous consumers." Hitchcock in Hitchcock & Teague, 2000, p. 3

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2

⁴⁵ Dutch 'ethical' policy grew up from concern arising from liberals in the Netherlands and in the colonies as to the treatment of the Indies natives (Ricklefs 1991, p.151). *Max Havelaar* (Douwes Dekker, 1860) was a novel particularly influential in Holland, highlighting ill treatment and corruption in nineteenth century colonial Java.

⁴⁶ The extension of the 'living museum' to the exportation of the Balinese and their culture as colonial exhibits in the West at the Colonial Exhibition in Paris is an interesting event beyond the parameters of this study, but possibly worthy of further post-colonial examination.

⁴⁷ Catalogue for Bandoengsche Kunstkring exhibition, *Europeesche Schilders op Bali*, November, 1939 (catalogue viewed at the Walter Spies archive in Leiden)

⁴⁸ Stowell uses 'f' to signify guilders

⁴⁹ Interview with Professor Anak Agung Rai Kalam, August 1998

⁵⁰ Margaret Mead fieldwork notes, Undated probably 1939, L.O.C.

⁵¹ The account by Yates, (Yates, 1933, p. 25) is discussed in Chapter 2: Wadia's account (Wadia, 1936, p. 66) is discussed in relation to Soenia's painting of tourists in Chapter 3.

⁵² Goris & Spies, 1930s, undated and unnumbered – used in chapter. 2

⁵³ Neka & Kam, 1998, p. 19

⁵⁴ Pramoedya, (1999, p.160) writes of his joy (albeit short-lived) at the departure of the Dutch colonisers when the Japanese invaded Java.

⁵⁵ Koke, 1987, p. 287

⁵⁶ Tantri, 1960, p.238. Tantri carried quite a specific bias as someone who had fought on the side of the Indonesian Nationalists after World War II, but it is relevant that she comments on the colonial loyalties of Gede Raka Sukawati mentioning his French wife as an influential factor.

⁵⁷ Interview, Agung Rai, August 1998. Agung Rai referred to Spies and Bonnet as *tamu* or 'guests'.

⁵⁸ Darling in Rhodius & Darling, (1980, p. 77)

⁵⁹ Interview, Ida Bagus Rai. August, 1998

⁶⁰ "On 23 and 24 February this year, a group of art students belonging to an organisation called Kamasra (Keluarga Mahasiswa Seni Rupa: lit. Family of Art Students) gathered in the centre of the capital to stage an 'art action' which sent ripples through the local art world. As it turned out, certain institutions within the art world suspected that the action, dubbed 'Breaking Down Hegemony', had been staged to deliberately offend them". (Prasetyo, 2001)

⁶¹ Letter, Spies to Niehaus in Rhodius, 1964, p. 386

⁶² See Chapter 6.

The hagiographic discourse of Hans Rhodius (Rhodius and Darling 1980) on the work of Walter Spies, through its elevation of the importance of Spies in relation to Bali, provided the starting point for this thesis. I have explored and deconstructed the popular discourse which this view reflects. If Spies is examined in relation to the fairly narrow cultural and touristic clique which he inhabited, he could be seen as important and the portrayal of Bali as being driven by its artistic culture; this has helped to elevate Spies in a popular view of Bali. I have developed arguments which contextualise Spies in broader terms. These have involved questioning ideas about what is actually meant geographically by 'Bali' in art-orientated accounts. They have also involved an approach that addresses the colonial history of Bali and which highlights economic, and political issues which identify Spies as part of much larger social processes, rather than viewing him as the key instigator of cultural policy and change in Bali. I have demonstrated that the discourse surrounding Walter Spies' role in the development of painting in Bali attributes too much importance to his role. This appears largely due to the apparent romance of his personal story and the way it has been told, which has many elements of romantic imperial literature, such as Conrad's *Lord Jim*. The mundane and sometimes exploitative realities of Spies' real existence have been obscured by the romanticised accounts made by people fleeing Europe and America during the Depression, and who were often transitory visitors to Bali. They were selectively blind to the possibility that, to the Balinese, Bali was not the paradise that had been portrayed to Europeans, and that the work created by Balinese artists, often criticised or ridiculed by Westerners, expressed elements of dissent. This work represented an interest in the new and the modern which was quite legitimate and yet discouraged by Western critics.

I have questioned the traditionally sanitised and aesthetically oriented views of the work and influence of Spies. Post-colonial theoretical perspectives, especially those of Pratt, Young, Spivak and Bhabha in the 1990s, have provided support for an interpretation of events sympathetic to subalternity, resistance, exchange and localised perspectives. Nevertheless, this investigation has also addressed the problems in reconciling the identification of hegemonic aspects of colonialism with a perspective which values Western and Balinese artistic practices equally, through an acknowledgement of mutual exchange. This account is necessarily multidisciplinary, in its reference to painting, film, literature, ethnology and colonial history, not to mention explanatory structures drawn from linguistics, to discuss and explain the process of influence, exchange and modernisation in Bali in the 1920s and 1930s. This has

allowed me to examine the nature and range of discourse concerning Bali, Balinese art, Walter Spies and his work in texts ranging from the colonial era to the present.

The *puputan* has been examined as a key emblem in the discourse of difference, which had been the cultural underpinning of *baliseering* and cultural colonialism in Bali. I have explored the effects of the resultant tourism and the economic imperatives which spawned the industry of tourist arts and crafts. This led me to a debate about the anonymity and individuality of artists and the advent of the 'named' artist in Bali, all of which I have demonstrated are important aspects in the consumption of 'indigenous' tourist arts. This is connected to attitudes about authenticity and what is 'real' in a situation where 'tradition' is effectively being reinvented. The *Pita Maha* group is paradigmatic of a paternalistic colonial reaction to perceived debasement of 'tradition'. It is also an example of how an apparently causal Eurocentric focus of events can arise from the existence of an identifiable and visible structured institution connected with European figures. This appears to reify and embody Balinese art in a way comprehensible to Western viewpoints, which is easier to detect when compared to less visible creative, social and political processes. These processes had a wider and more profound, but less identifiably tangible, effect on art and society overall.

The conventions of tourist painting have been examined with a particular emphasis on the 'modern' as a visual element. This relates in particular to the idea of Bali as a traditional, pre-modern culture. This denial of the 'real' in terms of roads, tourists and European colonisers, contrasts with Djelantik's assertion that myth and religion were more 'real' than observation to Balinese artists. However, as I have demonstrated, an unmediated observation of the modern, often synthesised with the mythical, represents a genuine strand of tradition in Balinese art, which falls beyond narrowly defined Western views of traditional art. The depictions of Europeans and their technology can be seen as a form of resistance through mimicry, as a response to change. The European discourse regarding corrugated iron roofs, for instance, is very revealing of the ideology that sought to aestheticise people, landscapes and the depictions of those landscapes. I have identified an ethnocentric agenda, which is concerned with appearances over cultural continuity and development. This is expressed in the *ersatz* orthodoxy of *Pita Maha* paintings and in the Balinese paintings of Walter Spies.

My focus on Walter Spies could be regarded as problematic in relation to one of my key aims - to validate the work of Balinese artists, in spite of, rather than because of, Western 'paternalists' and 'animateurs'. Nevertheless, I contend that, through examining the construction of the 'Spies myth', this perceived role has been explained

and challenged. By providing a brief biography of Spies' position in relation to German modernist thought, the primitivist discourse associated with modernism has been shown to apply to Spies. This also explains his arrival and continued presence in the Dutch East Indies. Through Spies, I have examined the actual nature of colonial contact in Bali and its relationship in this instance to projects of colonial cultural paternalism, the discourses of which I have shown have continued to inform modern popular discourse on Walter Spies and Balinese art. I have demonstrated how Spies' sexual contacts can be linked with his paintings and his purported influence on particular painters. The discourse and lifestyle of Spies, his friends and associates, has also been useful in profiling the 'liberal' colonial ideology, suffusing colonial life in Bali with its selectivity, contradictions and justifications of colonial privilege and inequalities, purportedly in the interests of the Balinese.

In this account, I have focused on what might be described as exceptions in modern Balinese art such as the homo-erotic work of Lempad. This has represented a deliberate emphasis on the largely silent or unrecorded subaltern voice in Balinese art. The violence of the images in question is notable when viewed in relation to the correspondence around Spies' trial and the overall situation of the marketing of Bali as a tourist destination with sexual overtones. The image of Bali as a tranquil paradise and with undisturbed tradition is clearly challenged by some of the non-sanctioned imagery such as Lempad's. I have also brought into question the assumption that Bali was a paradise for the Balinese themselves, with evidence of Balinese hardships. The behaviour and arrest of Spies is a necessary part of balancing my biographical construction. It has highlighted the ambivalent nature of colonial contacts, especially by those like Spies, who supported *baliseering* cultural separatism and yet selectively nurtured sexual and cultural contacts. I have demonstrated that, although Spies genuinely had an affection for Balinese culture, he exploited his position within the colonial framework, and the nature of this exploitation illuminates the nature of colonial power-relations in Bali during this era.

When examining Spies' creative output, I have focused on his paintings and film projects and have examined the colonial discourse and ideology embedded in these works. I have also examined the Primitivist and Orientalist message in these works, with roots in much earlier Romantic and Classical paradisaal traditions. I have examined Spies as a modernist and explored whether such a term can usefully be applied to an artist whose output and associations only partially relate to existing Western 'family trees' of artistic influence. I contend that notions of modernism which focus on its primitivist tendencies, are appropriate to describe the work of Spies. 'Modernism' is

also appropriate if it addresses Orientalism as a product of modern thought and ideology. In addition, the notion of Modernism as experiment and as challenging perceptual grids can also be applied to Spies, but as I discussed in Chapter 6 this was not done in any fundamentally conceptual manner. What is most interesting about the work of Spies and other Western artists was their acceptance and articulation of the discourse of colonial authority and ideology. Like the orthodoxy adopted in the language of Balinese tourist art, Spies also shunned motifs of modernity in line with his idea of the 'real Bali' which differs from the 'real Bali' of the Balinese artists, as proposed by Djelantik. The discourse of the film *Kriss* (1932) is particularly telling in articulating the tenets of *baliseering*, but also in highlighting Spies' own ambivalent role in relation to the Balinese. The film's message is one which presents 'contact' as a corrupting influence and yet Spies' own numerous sexual and cultural contacts are in direct contrast to this representation. The contradictory pretence of colonial cultural policy is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in this example. Equally ambivalent, is the modernist primitivism of Spies and his attempted denial of his own intellect which I discussed in Chapter 6. His assumption that 'intellect' did not play a part in Balinese creativity was also clearly part of this primitivism, which could only understand indigenous art as instinctive rather than intellectual.

The male object is an important element of Spies' subjectivity. As in the Bali films, the Balinese landscape becomes a repository for erotic fantasy, but unlike most of his European contemporaries, Spies largely limits this to the male object. Although it could be argued that Spies is ennobling the Asian 'savage' through distanciation and Othering of the objects of the painting through its exclusion of the colonial overlord, Spies is claiming Western ownership of the people and landscape in the same way that his discourse which tries to control the appearance of the landscape and people, assumes ownership. However, this ownership does not address that a 'contact zone', where mutual cultural exchanges and influences might occur. In Chapters 6 and 7, I have demonstrated that such influences can be seen to be quite numerous in the case of Spies. Although he appears to have played down any such influence, I have demonstrated this in relation to the visual arts of Bali and the music, mythology, cosmology and landscape of the Island.

Influence is a complex process and I have suggested that, although an individual like Spies exerted an influence, much broader processes of which Spies was ultimately only a small part, were responsible for the new developments in Balinese painting. It is clear that the economic imperatives created by colonial taxation and the Depression, as well as a whole range of new visual stimuli in the inter-war contact zone, were

responsible for the development of a new visual awareness amongst the Balinese. Although Walter Spies' work may have been seen by a few artists who may have copied aspects of his work, to extrapolate a wider causality from Spies to Balinese painting as a whole seems untenable. The spread of a new and developing 'contact' language of tourist art was clearly underway. In terms of content and subject, this limited innovation to some extent, with the perceived demand for the 'traditional' which excluded the modern. This is despite the fact that incorporation of the modern and the new was very much a part of traditional practice. Similarly, the theme of 'everyday life' widely attributed to Spies, has also been identified as an existing strand of Balinese artistic tradition.

A key factor in the kind of discourse that seeks to attribute quality and innovation to Western *animateurs*, is a systematic undervaluing of a non-Western culture to innovate and revivify itself without Western-style institutions which apparently impose a quality control system such as that provided by *Pita Maha*. Similarly figures like Walter Spies represent familiar European avatars, through which Westerners try and understand the people and art arising from quite fundamentally different world and religious views. Thus, it is rather too easy to conceptualise the developments of new localised forms of art through such a figure. The very fact that this study takes an interest in paintings on paper created for cash tends to ignore the artistic and artisanal skill exercised for non-commercial purposes. Thus, the impression could be created that the values informing such work are of less importance than the gallery and exhibition work, which provides the main focus of the Balinese art discussed in this thesis. In fact, it appears that a key aim of *Pita Maha* was to control new forms of art as a form of Modernism, which needed to be separated from traditional forms of art, while still employing arbitrary criteria of tradition combined with certain 'acceptable' aspects of the modern. In other words, as with the discourse which attempted to create the appearance of tradition for the Balinese and their landscape, the paintings were presented as traditional artefacts, yet 'creolised' through a formalised Western gallery system. This system dictated acceptable style and content through a process of selection. I contend that the *Pita Maha* project was essentially a venture in cultural imperialism which was a product of the discourse of *baliseering* and that Walter Spies while supporting this 'liberal' colonial ideology, took a very selective view based on his own pleasures and colonial privileges. Furthermore, despite its allegedly altruistic intentions, *Pita Maha* is less significant in the development of Balinese Modernism than its retrospective evaluation has tended to suggest. The creative and innovative abilities of Balinese artists have tended not to be stressed in the development of this style. In addition to this, the sale of tourist art was a secular activity, which was a peripheral addition to the other more

culturally embedded artistic activities of the Balinese, and which to them had little overall significance. The debate and measures are all about European preoccupations about retaining and preserving a traditional 'authentic' Other through which Europeans can define themselves, either through direct identification with a perceived lost past or through defining through difference, the superiority of their own modern and privileged world.

These works of 'new' Balinese art highlight the majority of the artistic output by Balinese and Europeans alike, as a narrowing of creative, expressive and discursive possibilities. Such possibilities represent more accurately the Balinese cultural and political priorities in a century of nationalism, modernisation and economic development. Thus, the notion of south Balinese tourist art of the 1930s as representing a form of modernism is flimsy, if innovation in a global context is a criterion. This is partly because, the more recognisably Modernist works in the European sense, which show a more critical and reflective engagement with issues of the modern, have largely been marginalised. This happened through the neo-traditional ethos synthesised by the 'pidginisation' of tourist art. This 'pidginisation' developed from the growing tourist demand for 'traditional' art and artefacts. This was then further distilled through the 'creolisation' of tourist art through the *Pita Maha* project which imposed a more formal selection process on the art which was being sold. It is important to note that, from a Balinese point of view, 'tourist' art has little importance in relation to activities of symbolic and religious significance to the Balinese. This religious perspective should not be minimised or marginalised, as a way of contextualising the importance of tourist art and the modern overall. It is clear that, in the 1930s, there was an open syncretic engagement with the modern in the realms of ritual art created for the Balinese themselves, as is evidenced by the examples of the aeroplane model as part of a funeral pyre discussed in Chapter 3. The conventions of tourist art and the relegation of the modern object, encouraged the Balinese to depict and 'see' themselves and their landscapes and culture through the lens of the European visitor and their Orientalist discourse.

It might be better to see the works which deal with the modern in Bali as highlighting colonially and neo-colonially defined 'rules' of representation. Rather than being an aberration, they should be seen as forming a contiguous and key part in Balinese artistic tradition and development. These are significant for what they discuss and represent, and for the way in which they contextualise the idealised, mythologised and 'authentic' approach of other works produced in Bali. The discontinuity of the modern subject has limited, for a great number of years, a more interesting and committed

critical engagement through art, with ideas and issues related to colonial occupation, modernisation and later the 'neo-colonial' occupation represented by tourists. The reflex of many artists to respond to new stimuli has been deadened and constrained by these subtly imposed rules of the 'picturesque'. The result, in terms of Balinese paintings, has often been a bland neo-traditionalism. However, these limitations have not prevented the genuine talents of many Balinese artists from being demonstrated themselves. It is clear that some of these painters have chosen to ignore the 'taboo' of the modern motif. The occasional inclusion of motifs of modernity can be seen as a form of resistance to the Westernised view of the Orient, but they can also be seen as a record of the 'contact zone'. I have demonstrated that these works represent a continuity with tradition, rather than an aberration. It is only now that artists are beginning to re-engage and revisit ideas and approaches which had been left behind for many years for a constructed notion of Balinese cultural orthodoxy. It is fair to say that this orthodoxy has served the Balinese economy as well as those in power through tourism and Western touristic expectations. Nevertheless, it is a passive orthodoxy of acceptance and not one which is likely to serve the Balinese well in the future, and it is probably healthy to reassess culture through art, rather than attempt to fossilise creative output as cultural and social practice itself. Change is undoubtedly continuing in the 21st century with the new generation of artists, some of whom are challenging *Pita Maha's* inherited art establishment values in Bali. These works are also appreciated by modern Western viewers and buyers of this art.

A possible future study might examine whether the discourse of consumption of such syncretism has changed over time. It would be informative to examine whether the amusement induced by such imagery today, differs ideologically in its source from that expressed by Bali's inter-war colonial residents, who clearly assessed this work in relation to a paradisaal aesthetic. In a modern context, a polarised view of Asian perspectives and Western ones cannot necessarily be very clearly drawn and it might be better to characterise the Romantic exclusion of the modern, as an urbanised view. It is clear that, at present, the demand for this view of the Island of Bali is one which is in demand from urban Indonesians as well, who seem to indulge in the European modernist yearning for a pre-modern paradise. This is evident as one factor in the modern Asian market for Walter Spies' works, as well as for Indonesian artists in the now 'traditional' mode of tourist art.

Walter Spies was influenced by the people, the art, music, stories, religion and landscapes of Bali, and the present commercial value of his work has much to do with his existence and output in the Dutch East Indies. It is likely that he would be barely

remembered in the canon of pre-war Modernism had he remained in Europe as a minor post-Expressionist painter, who also dabbled in other artistic areas. The success and growing fame of Walter Spies has much to do with his own opportunism in creating a 'bohemian' enclave within a convenient colonial regime and also through the influence upon him provided by the Balinese and their cultures. The promotion of this through advocates, such as Hans Rhodius in particular, has perpetuated colonial discourses and maintained a certain neo-colonialism in relation to Spies and his biographical construction. This study has highlighted the curious situation whereby, on the one hand a lesser known artist is represented as being significant, but not based on his geographical participation with particular European artists, artists groups and exhibitions. Thus, a lesser (subaltern) figure to that canon is highlighted, balancing the emphasis on particular leading and influential individuals and attempting to globalise the parameters of art historical investigation. However, on the other hand in the context of Balinese cultural history, this study has questioned Spies' perceived cultural importance in relation to other subaltern figures. There are layers of art historical imperialism, firstly, regarding artists who are considered as significant in German Modernism and then, which questions the importance of this 'minor figure' in the context of Balinese Modernism.

An important finding of this thesis is that artistic ventures that have significance to a belief system, yet have no apparent relationship to art markets or identifiable modernist traditions, tend to be viewed as insignificant as they are not relevant to secular Western artistic culture. They can be relegated to an Enlightenment view of art history which separates the history of art into the binarism of 'primitive' and 'sophisticated' and which may not appropriately translate into a world-view of art. In a world that is increasingly globalised and homogenised, it is not possible (or desirable) to entirely essentialise or separate one artistic tradition or cultural context from another. However, to assume that criteria which are devised in the West to assess art can serve a more globally useful function is questionable, and this also relates to one of the dilemmas of postcolonial theory. Various questions are raised by my discussion such as: can a specifically Asian cultural viewpoint exist? Can it be simulated? Does globalisation mean that in fact we share global critical perspectives, despite their European origins? Postcolonialism itself has been criticised for being fundamentally Eurocentric even when executed by researchers and writers with 'Third World' origins.

This thesis has highlighted the need for a global art history and for methods which can examine art world-wide with equanimity. However, within such an approach it might be necessary to employ very localised criteria, to properly understand and appreciate the

significance of particular localised visual products. To this end, the continued use of post-colonial theory, anthropological approaches, historical materialism and linguistic paradigms, such as the development of art as language spread, might allow a further move away from the discourse of art history, which in concert with the art market, promotes the discourse of connoisseurship and the hagiolatry of individual artists. I suggest that such an approach might be termed a 'viral' art history. An examination of art as text which carries discourses which can be compared to those of literature and film for instance is also an approach which has value and which prevents the decoupling of art from other social and political approaches. Non art specialists may be interested in the artists and their psychological motivations as Romantic individuals and although this idea is a construction, it continues to be promoted by works such as those by Rhodius. It is difficult to dispel such ideas quickly as belief systems are widely employed in the West and elsewhere, which appear to require and mystify the creative genius as a defining structure, in a similar way that the Oriental Other has also fulfilled such a binaristic purpose of Western self-identification.

Art history that purports to be 'scientific' carries secularised assumptions which, although addressing faith, belief and ritual, does so at a distance. This is ethnocentric in the same way that a perspective based on faith could be seen as subjective. However, there is also a danger that by characterising the possibility of an entirely different viewpoint, non-Western viewpoints are essentialised as exotic and Other. If such viewpoints exist, they also validate the primitivist mystification and essentialisation of the 'Orient', which characterises the colonial discourses examined in this thesis. Regarding all texts, visual or otherwise, as significant, provides the opportunity to deconstruct them and to examine their ideology. Thus in challenging a persistent set of ideas and supplanting them with new historically informed perspectives, a new discourse about the subject has been explored. A further passage of time and ideological change is likely to bring new views which might challenge those presented in this thesis. However, there are some fundamental issues behind post-colonial thinking that are based in fighting global inequalities and injustices. The challenging of the 'epistemic violence' in colonial or neocolonial discourses is an important part of questioning global inequalities, raising awareness, deconstructing Western perspectives and, ultimately, seeking to achieve greater levels of global equality and respect for difference.

It could be argued that colonialism in its many forms has had the greatest global impact in recent history and, thus, postcolonial critical viewpoints can be applied to all Western cultural forms in recent history, not only those which appear to be directly referential to

colonialism. European art history might benefit from further re-examination in this way. Eurocentricity and geocentricity in art, art criticism and art history could be examined and a specific study could be undertaken highlighting instances of Western art historical analysis as an ethnocentric discourse. On a more localised basis, future studies arising from my research might focus upon: a specific study of Gusti Nyoman Lempad his art and his role in *Pita Maha*. This would also provide the opportunity to explore ideas about traditional divisions which tend to study 'traditional' art as ethnographic (craft) and Western visual culture as art history (art). Anak Agung Gede Soberat could also be regarded as a subject for such a study. Another avenue of exploration might be a more detailed exploration of the various ideas of 'Magic Realism' in relation to art, but also in its relationship to literature. The impact of colonial and 'South Seas' films and their discourse upon the attitudes of 'Western' and 'Eastern' audiences right at the end of the colonial era might also provide fruitful further research.

Rather than examining the work and influence of Walter Spies in isolation, this study has explored political, social, economic and cultural factors which represented the world in which Walter Spies lived. This has been contrasted with the popular discourse about his role in Bali and the factors which produced and perpetuated it. This discourse has been questioned and identified as Eurocentric, and the Spies myth has proved tenacious in relation to the traditions of colonial literature and post-colonial discourse. The assumptions which have been made about Spies also reflect widely held assumptions about colonialism in general which routinely undervalue subaltern voices. Walter Spies undoubtedly had an effect on the Balinese people he had contact with, but the effects were much more varied and less widely important than subsequent popular discourse has suggested. As well as being autonomously creative and culturally resilient, the Balinese also influenced Spies. Ultimately, the debate relating to his importance can only be sustained in the service of a particular localised cash-driven tourist industry for paintings and the galleries which sell them. The advocacy of Hans Rhodius has helped to serve this industry.

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Interview with Ida Made Yasana 10/08/98 (30 mins)
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Interview with Ida Gusti Made Kerti 20/08/98 (45 mins)
Interview with Wayan Sukada 20/08/98 (30 mins)
Interview with Ida Bagus Rai 21/08/98 (60 mins)
Attempted interview with Ida Bagus Made 22/08/98 (10 mins)
Interview with Nyoman Meja 23/08/98 (20 mins)
David Sandberg, Berlin, 10-12/08/99 (360 mins)
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Archives

David Sandberg Archive, Berlin, Germany
Walter Spies Archive, University of Leiden Library, Netherlands
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The British Film Institute Archive, London, UK
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Sheffield Hallam University Library, Sheffield, UK
Sheffield University Library, Sheffield, UK
University of Leiden Library, Leiden, Netherlands
National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK
Singapore National Library, Singapore
British Film Institute Library, London, UK
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Museums & Galleries

Horniman Museum
Agung Rai Gallery, Peliatan, Ubud, Bali
Neka Museum, Ubud Bali
Bali, Museum, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia
RijksMuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
RijksMuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, Netherlands
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Images

The full details of the images come after this bibliography. The figures themselves can be found on the accompanying CD* and on the World Wide Web at:

<http://homepages.shu.ac.uk/~scsgcg/map.htm>

A visual chronology of most of Spies' paintings for which images exist, can be found at:

<http://homepages.shu.ac.uk/~gcgreen0/index.html>

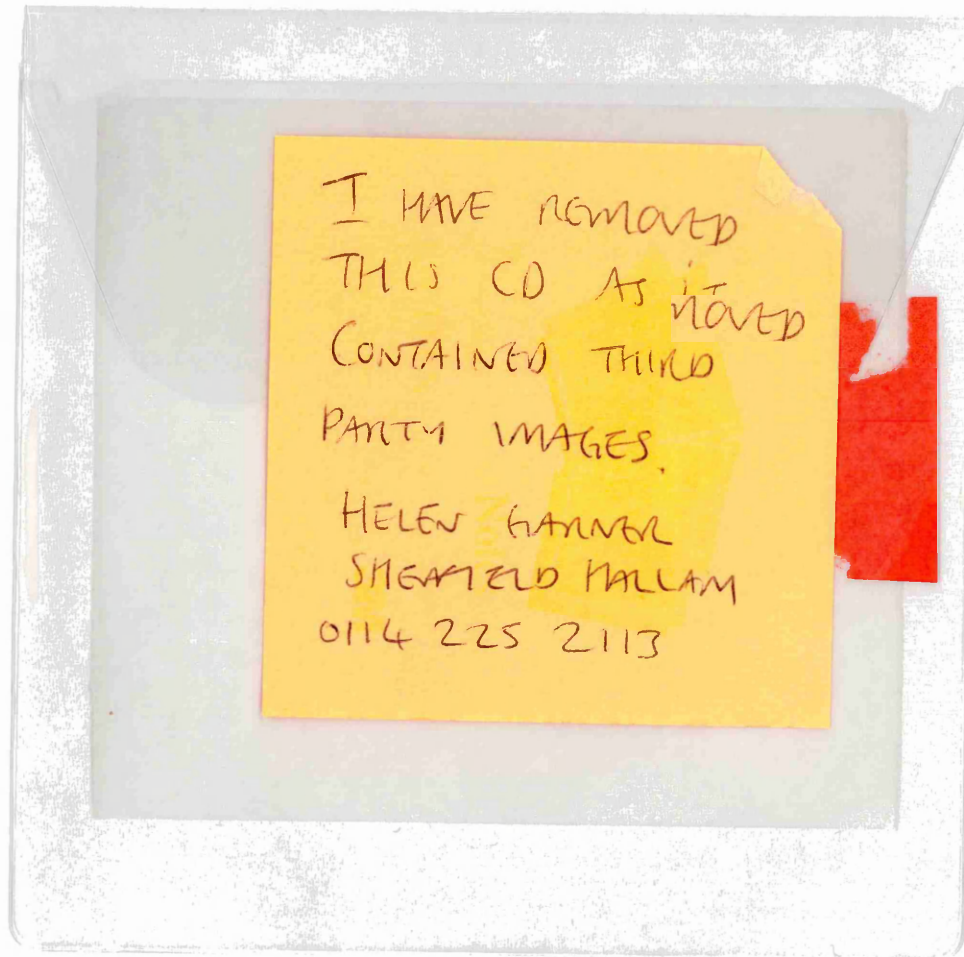
*To view images from the CD, open the file named **map.htm** on a computer which has an internet browser installed. Images and their details can be viewed by clicking on the numbered thumbnail images displayed on that page.

Images

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Details of images referred to in this thesis

fig. no.	artist	title (or description)	date	medium	size	source
01	I Ketut Gede	Musicians accompanying the barong performance	Late 19 th C.	Polychrome, watercolours and ink on paper	43 x 34.5 cm (divided in half)	Hinzler, 1986, p. 188
02	Ida Bagus Nyoman Rai	Badung Massacre	Undated, 1960s?	Black Ink on Canvas	122 x 146cm	www.museum.org.sg/nhb.html (URL now defunct)
03	Anon	The Death of Abhimanyu	Late 19 th C.	Mineral pigments, indigo and ink on bark cloth	100 x 106cm	Neka & Kam 1998, p. 13
04	Anak Agung Gede Meregeg	Stag and Hind by a River	1934	Coloured inks on paper	29.5 x 47.5 cm	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 74
05	I Ketut Ngendon	Village scene; cowherd, mother feeding child.	mid 1930s	washed pen and ink on paper.	49 x 41 cm	Haks & Maris CD, Image no. 410
06	I Poegeg	Eleven deer in a group.	Around 1937	washed pen and ink and watercolour on paper.	25,5 x 34 cm	Haks & Maris CD, Image no. 178
07	Walter Spies	Dorfstrasse (Road on Bali)	1928	Oil on canvas	75 x 45 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 63
08	Rudolf Bonnet	Portrait of a Javanese man, Jogjakarta	1937	Pastel	46 x 37 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 49
09	Adrien Le Mayeur de Merpres	Portrait of Ni Polok	mid 1930s	Mixed media	N/K	Haks & Maris, Lexicon, 1995 No.C.246
10	Willem Hofker	Ni Kenyung	1941	Pastel	53 x 52 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 89
11	Ida Bagus Kembang	Bathing, village scene	1934	Inks and Balinese paints on paper	50 x 68 cm	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 62
12	Anon	The Dutch Sailor in Klungkung	Probably early 20 th C.	Photograph of statue	N/K	Gorer, 1936
13	W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp	Drawing of Cyclist at Meduwe Karang temple	1937	Drawing of Bas Relief	N/K	Spruit, 1995, p. 17
14	Anon	Cyclist at Meduwe Karang temple	Taken 1998	Photograph of Bas Relief	N/K	Photo by Geff

						Green, 1998
15	Anon	Cyclist at Meduwe Karang temple	Taken Early 20 th C.	Photograph of Bas Relief	N/K	Zondagsk ind, 1993, p. 24
16	W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp	Copy of a KLM Aeroplane	1937	Drawing	N/K	Spruit, 1995, p. 22
17	Anon	Flying Boat decoration on house	Probably 1930s	Photograph	N/A	Hitchcock , 1988, p. 165
18	Anon	Outer walls at Pura Dalem temple at Jagaraga	Possibly early 1920s	Photograph of Bas Relief	N/K	Photo by Geff Green, 1998
19	Anon	Outer walls at Pura Dalem temple at Jagaraga	Possibly early 1920s	Photograph of Bas Relief	N/K	Photo by Geff Green, 1998
20	Anon	Outer walls at Pura Dalem temple at Jagaraga	Possibly early 1920s	Photograph of Bas Relief	N/K	Photo by Geff Green, 1998
21	Dewa Ketut Baroe	Soldier beheading Balinese holy man	1930s	Sketch, drawing	N/K	Geertz, 1994 , p. 98
22	Anon	Image of Dutchman with big nose at Pura Dalem temple at Jagaraga	Possibly early 1920s	Photograph of Bas Relief	N/K	Photo by Geff Green, 1998
23	Anon	Dutchman carrying off Balinese woman	Late 19 th C.	Drawing, probably ink on paper	N/K	Vickers, 1989, p. 84-85
24	Anon	Fusion of Balinese and European elements at Pura Dalem temple at Jagaraga	Late 19 th C.	Photograph of statue	N/K	Photo by Geff Green, 1998
25	Ngendon	Goodbye and Good Luck to Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson	1938	washed pen and ink on paper	N/K	Geertz, 1994 , p. 4
26	Ida Bagus Soenia	Tourists in the market with tourist artefacts for sale	1936	washed pen and ink on paper	23 x 37 cm	Haks & Maris CD, Image no. 38
27	Walter Spies	Transformationsakt (Transformation Trick)	1920	Oil on canvas	58 x 47 cm	David Sandberg
28	Walter Spies	Heimkehrende Javaner (Javanese Farmer returning home)	1924	Oil on Canvas	65 x 95 cm	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 22
29	Walter Spies	Laterna Magica (Magic Lantern)	1926	Oil on canvas	37 x 59cm	Goethe Inst. Jakarta, Exhibition catalogue , 1995, p. 23

30	Walter Spies	Flusslandschaft mit Hirten und Kühen (River Landscape with Cows and Cowherd)	1929	Oil on Canvas	101 x 83 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 54
31	Anon	A meeting in the Lempad Gallery between Hans Rhodius and Balinese friends of Walter Spies	May 1980	Photograph	N/A	Rhodius & Darling, 1980, p. 53
32	Walter Spies	Das Karussell (The Carousel)	1922	Oil on canvas	80 x 105 cm	Rhodius, 1964, S. 55
33	Walter Spies	Der Abschied (The Farewell)	1921	Oil on canvas	79 x 106 cm	Goethe Inst. Jakarta, Exhibition catalogue , 1995, p. 26
34	Walter Spies	untitled	1905	Watercolour on paper	8.5 x 6 inches	Diana Spies Pope, USA
35	Anon	Photograph of the filming of Island of Demons	1931	Black and White Photograph.	N/A	Diana Spies Pope, USA
36	J. Korver	See Bali	1939	Poster	N/K	Haks & Maris, Lexicon, 1995 No.C.304
37	Miguel Covarrubias	Two Balinese Women Bathing	1930s	Oil on canvas	67 x 52 cm	Haks & Maris, Lexicon, 1995 No.C.258
38	Walter Spies	Waringin mit 2 Jungen Baliern (2 Balinese bathing)	1928	Oil on canvas	72 x 57 cm	Catalogue for Sothebies , Singapore , 1997
39	Anon	A scoutmaster and his boys	ca. 1930	Black and White Photograph.	N/A	Collection of the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam.
40	Gusti Nyoman Lempad	'Terbican Oleh' (erotic scene)	1936	washed pen and ink heightened with gold and orange on paper.	25.5 x 33 cm	Haks & Maris CD, Image no. 334
41	Walter Spies	Sawahterrassen mit Pflügenden Bauern (Rice Terraces with Ploughing	1932	Oil on canvas	13 x 30 inches	Rhodius, 1964, S. 534

		Farmer)				
42	Walter Spies	Baschkirischer Hirte (Baschkirian Cowherd)	1923	Oil on canvas	69 x 90.5 cm	Rhodus, 1964, S. 69
43	Walter Spies	Thüringerwald (Thüringer Forest)	1923	Oil on canvas	60 x 76 cm	Haks & Maris, Lexicon, 1995 No.C. 222
44	Otto Dix	Goodbye to Berlin	1927/8	Oil on canvas (central part of Big City triptych)	N/K	Willet, 1978, p. 116
45	Walter Spies	Balinesische Tierfabel (Balinese Legend)	1928	Oil on Canvas	81 x 66 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 68
46	Walter Spies	Traumlandschaft (Dream Landscape)	1927	(probably) Oil on Canvas	N/K	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 24
47	Walter Spies	Tatarenfest (Tartar Festival)	1922	Oil on Canvas		Rhodus, 1964, S. 508
48	Walter Spies	Heiliger Wald Bei Sangsit (Holy Forest at Sangsit)	1930	Oil on Canvas	21.5 x 25.5 inches	Rhodus, 1964, S. 533
49	British Lion Films	Pressbook cover for Island of Demons (Black Magic)	1934	Printed Leaflet	N/A	BFI archives, London
50	British Lion Films	Pressbook images for Island of Demons (Black Magic)	1934	Printed Leaflet	N/A	BFI archives, London
51	Walter Spies	Pagodenlandschaft (Pagoda Landscape)	1929	Oil on Canvas	88.5 x 103.5 cm	Rhodus, 1964, S. 532
52	Walter Spies	Iseh im Morgenlicht (Iseh in the morning light)	1938	Oil on Plywood	120 x 150 cm	Goethe Inst. Jakarta, Exhibition catalogue , 1995, p. 21
53	Walter Spies	Rehjagd (Deer Hunt)	1932	Oil on Canvas	50 x 60 cm	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 44
54	Walter Spies	The Travelling Salesman	N/K probably late 1930s	N/K probably oil on canvas	N/K	Agung Rai Museum, Peliatan, Ubud
55	Anak Agung Gede Soberat	Farmer bathing cow, and woman gathering water	1936	Tempera on Canvas	46.5 x 61.5 cm	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 89
56	Walter Spies	Blick von der Höhe (View from the hights)	1934	Oil on Canvas	71 X 99.5 cm	Rhodus, 1964, S. 561
57	Walter Spies	Pflügender Bauer (Ploughing	1932	Oil on canvas	20 x 24	Rhodus, 1964, S.

		Farmer)			inches	535
58	Anon	Javanese narrative relief carving at Candi Surawana	800 AD (approx)	Bas relief	N/K	Wagner, 1959
59	Walter Spies	Study of a Dragonfly	undated	Gouache & pencil	13x 18 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 67
60	Walter Spies	Balinesische Legende (Balinese Legend or Death of Arya Panangsang)	1929	Oil on Canvas	80 x 65 cm	Haks & Maris, Lexicon, 1995 No.C. 224
61	Walter Spies	Landschaft mit Schattenkuh (Landscape with cow's shadow)	1938	Oil on Canvas	N/K	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 42
62	Walter Spies	Die Landschaft und ihre Kinder (The landscape and her children)	1939	Oil on Canvas	62 x 91 cm	Rhodus & Darling, 1980, p. 48
63	Walter Spies	Sumatrische landschaft (Sumatran Landscape)	1941	Oil on Wood	48 x 60 cm	Goethe Inst. Jakarta, Exhibition catalogue , 1995, p. 24
64	Walter Spies	Preanger Landschaft (Landscape at Preanger)	1923	Oil on Canvas	45 x 80 cm	Spruit, 1995, p. 58
65	Walter Spies	Calonarang	1924	Oil on Canvas	58 x 46 cm	Goethe Inst. Jakarta, Exhibition catalogue , 1995, p. 18
66	I Reneh	Bima berada di pasar (Bima arrives in a Balinese Market)	1938	Plywood & tempera	N/K	Photo by Geff Green Puri Lukisan Museum Ubud, Bali
67	Gusti Nyoman Lempad	Five men dancing with birds in their mouth	1936	washed pen and ink and watercolour on paper.	32.5 x 38 cm	Haks & Maris CD, Image no. 149
68	Ida Bagus Made Togog	Mythological scene with a Rangda.	Undated, probably 1930s	washed pen and ink, crayon and watercolour on paper.	47 x 36 cm	Haks & Maris CD, Image no. 111
69	Anon (modified by Geff Green)	Map of Bali	N/A	N/A	N/A	Robinson, 1995, p. 12

Thumbnail images



fig01.



fig02.



fig03.



fig04.



fig05.



fig06.

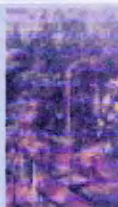


fig07.



fig08.



fig09.



fig10.



fig11.



fig12.



fig13.



fig14.

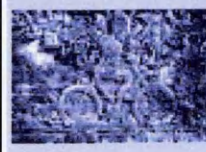


fig15.



fig16.



fig17.



fig18.



fig19.



fig20.



fig21.



fig22.



fig23.



fig24.



fig25.



fig26.



fig27.



fig28.



fig29.



fig30.



fig31.



fig32.



fig33.



fig34.



fig35.



fig36.



fig37.



fig38.



fig39.



fig40.



fig41.



fig42.



fig43.



fig44.



fig45.



fig46.



fig47.



fig48.



fig49.



fig50.



fig51.



fig52.



fig53.



fig54.

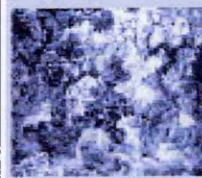


fig55.



fig56.



fig57.



fig58.



fig59.



fig60.



fig61.



fig62.



fig63.



fig64.



fig65.



fig66.



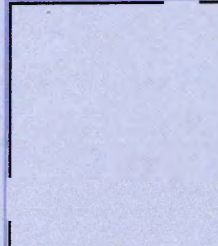
fig67.



fig68



fig69



Glossary

Amok	<i>Amok</i> is the term adopted by English from Malay deriving from the verb form <i>mengamok</i> , which has a very specific meaning relating to a trance-like uncontrollable aggression, which often ends in the death of the aggressor.
Baliseering	<i>Baliseering</i> is a Dutch term referring to the 'balinisation' of Bali, whereby Bali's 'traditions' were preserved through restructuring and reorganisation of Balinese society.
Barong	The <i>barong</i> is a dance-drama which forms part of the Calon-Arang story
Batuan	A village in South Bali noted for the distinctive style of painting.
Brahmin	The royal and priestly caste of Bali.
Gandroeng	<i>Gandroeng</i> is a dance which is the precursor of the <i>kebyar</i> dance.
Gunung Agung	Mount Agung, the holy mountain in the centre of Bali, important as a central reference point in Balinese cosmology.
Jaba	<i>Jaba</i> is a Balinese word for 'low class' commoners.
Jagaraga	Jagaraga is a small village in North Bali not far from Singaraja
Kamasan	Kamasan is a small town in South Bali which also gives its name to the 'traditional' style of painting which was associated with that village.
Kenapa	A Malay word meaning "why?"
Ketjak (or kecak)	A hypnotic chant performed by groups of men in a circle as part of a dance performance allegedly adapted by Spies (this view is now questioned). It derives from the <i>Sanghyang</i> performance and it is sometimes now known as the 'monkey Dance'.
Kraton	The <i>Kraton</i> is the palace of the Sultan in Jogjakarta in Java.
Kriss	As well as being the title of a film, this is the ornate dagger with a zig-zag shaped blade which is found traditionally all over Indonesia and Malaysia.
Leyak	A <i>leyak</i> is a witch-like apparition.
Lontar	A <i>Lontar</i> is a leaf of the lontar palm upon which is inscribed Balinese religious and historical texts.
Nakal	<i>Nakal</i> is a Malay word meaning 'naughty'.
Nakal sekali	<i>Nakal Sekali</i> is a Malay expression meaning 'very naughty'.
Ngarased	The meaning of this word is unclear. The context of this word suggests that it might be a word-play to make the word 'harassed' sound like a Balinese word.
Ngipoek	<i>Ngipoek</i> is to flirt as if in a love scene from a dance.
Pita Maha	<i>Pita Maha</i> was the group founded by a group including Spies to market Balinese arts and crafts.
Puputan	<i>Puputan</i> is the ritual mass suicide traditionally practiced by Balinese Kings, their families and retinue in the face of military defeat.
Puri	<i>Puri</i> is the word for 'palace' or 'royal dwelling' in Balinese.

Raja	A <i>raja</i> is a king.
Rangda	<i>Rangda</i> is an ugly creature of Balinese mythology with a long tongue and long pendulous breasts. Rangda is often included in Balinese dance enactments.
Sapoet handoek	<i>Sapoet handoek</i> refers to towels worn as loincloths by Balinese men.
Satria	The Balinese caste of the warrior kings
Singaraja	A town on the North coast of Bali
Soesa	Malay word for 'Difficulty' or 'difficult'
Sudra	<i>Sudra</i> were the lowest 'farming' caste who formed the majority and the <i>Triwangsa</i> were the three upper castes of <i>Brahmin</i> , <i>Satria</i> and <i>Wesia</i> .
Tingal idoeep	Malay expression for 'Stay alive'
Toewan	This Malay word can be translated as 'sir' or 'lord'. Walter Spies appears to use it slightly disparagingly to mean 'gentleman'.
Togog	A <i>togog</i> is a carved wooden figure.
Triwangsa	<i>Triwangsa</i> is a generic term which groups together the three Balinese high castes of <i>Wesia</i> , <i>Satria</i> and <i>Brahmin</i> .
Ubud	A village in the Southern Balinese district of Gianyar Where Walter Spies settled.
Wayang	<i>Wayang</i> means a dramatic performance which can include human actors or puppets. It has also been used to refer to the traditional style of painting whose characters resemble characters from Wayang Kulit.
Wayang Kulit	<i>Wayang Kulit</i> is the Javanese and Balinese shadow puppet theatre.
Wesia	The Balinese caste of court officials and knights.

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY
LEARNING CENTRE
PSALTER LANE CAMPUS,
SHEFFIELD, S11 8UZ.