Sailing Memory's Shores: Dynamics of Place in the South Pacific

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My 90 year-old Uncle Preston just loves cars. Some people can tell you where they were or who they were with when they heard the news of a cataclysmic event like 9/11. My uncle can tell you what car he was driving; and what car you were driving. His memory for vehicles is truly his "auto-biography." It's quite a contrast to how most people link memory with places that are fixed in the landscape, and yet it is a predictable product of American car culture. Uncle Preston got me thinking about the dynamics of memory and place; how place can be highly mobile and take memory for a spin. Or is it that memories are restless passengers?

Anthropologist Keith Basso (1996:1) has written lyrically about Apache landscapes, showing how "wisdom sits in places." Uprooting some ideas about memory and place, this article offers a reminder that wisdom doesn't always sit, and that places on the move can provide a way of talking about possibilities, feelings, and potentialities in and around us for hope, fear, life and death. Taking memory and place for a ride, not by car but by an equally material form of transport—boats—I recount two journeys that sail memory's shores, one a risky voyage in a small boat setting out from Tonga in 1906, the other a trip of surprising and life-threatening violence in 1957.

It is easy to forget that boats were the cars of settler culture in what Hau'ofa famously called "a sea of islands," and water was the road people settled beside. Shipping was the car talk of those times and places. Boats enabled expatriates' roots and routes, making possible both settlement and the mobility of colonial control.[1]

This article is a product of my own roots and routes. For many years, I have written about meanings of place, how people create meanings in and through space, how they place and are placed by their memories (see Rodman 1987, 2001a). I've focused on how feelings resonate in rocks, trees, houses, solid ground, and how the atmosphere of places resonates in and among people. Yet, even places do not sit still. Vanuatu is the island nation, halfway between Sydney, Australia and Fiji where I began anthropological fieldwork when, prior to 1980, it was still the Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides. There, rocks, and even whole islands, are said to move. Such movement is not unique to Vanuatu or even to the Pacific Islands. Doreen Massey (2006) has reflected on the movement of English rocks. Celeste Ray (2010:8) notes that, "if not treated properly [Irish holy] wells can get up and go to a new location. Empowered to curse as well as bless, wells are sentient," a notion that fits right in with current thinking on affect as encompassing animate and (previously thought to be) inanimate entities.

People in Vanuatu also are a swirl of movement if one observes over time how they move around and between villages, co-creating spaces of belonging, and of separation (Rodman 1985, 2007a). When I collaborated with ni-Vanuatu researchers on the history of domestic servants known as house-girls, they told stories of movement, stories and journeys that intersected and doubled (Rodman 2004, Rodman et al 2007b). Rich with emotions around race, gender, work, desire, fear, and justice, these stories, in the words of one participant, "connect all our islands."

While stories connect the islands, for millennia boats were the only way to materialize these connections. The first canoes arrived about three thousand years ago. The first European explorer, Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, mistook the islands for the yet-to-be discovered great southern continent in 1606. Captain Cook charted the islands in 1774, and by the 1860s ships regularly took islanders off to work on sugarcane plantations in Australia and Fiji. Settlers, traders and missionaries soon followed, and the creation of the joint Anglo-French Condominium in 1906 was a response to competing pressure from French and English-speaking settlers for civic order. One of the few things everyone seemed to agree on was a preference for waterfront sites convenient to the boats that were their lifelines for communications, supplies and protection. The water was their highway. Small islets close to the coast of a larger, arable island were preferred for settlement as they seemed to provide safety from indigenous attackers. In World War II, the American military built a network of roads on the two most-settled islands, Santo and Efate, but elsewhere most road access remains limited to rough dirt tracks. Air travel between islands is now a popular option for those with money, but boats are still the default for inter-island transport and canoes are the cars for many ni-Vanuatu commuters.

Another Word for Hope

Place and memory lend themselves to re-examination in terms of the portable places that boats and people co-create. James Clifford (1992) would have called this co-creation "traveling culture" in the 1990s. Today, anthropologists speak of the intertwining of affect, emotion and memory. Brian Massumi's 1987, translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, as well as his own writings (2002a, 2002b) have helped to shape this new field. Emotion is personal whereas affect is interpersonal. As Curti succinctly puts it: emotion becomes "a holding pattern of affect along lines of memory;" the body becomes, "a force which actively re-creates remembering and forgetting through its capacity to affect and be affected. And with this understanding comes great transformative potential for critical research into the politics of memory and place" (2008:108). Affect describes fields of intensity entwining humans and the seemingly inanimate. Affect is also the maneuverability or "wriggle room" inherent in movement, thought and space; it is "the 'where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do' in every present situation" (Massumi 2002:3). Affect, then, is another word for hope. What piques my interest is the intersection of anthropology of space and place with interdisciplinary (but emanating from social geography), international (but British Commonwealth in flavour) studies of emotion, affect, space and movement.[2] Boats may seem odd ways to think about such things, but let us sail the seas of memory, and see how we enjoy the ride.

Although I first arrived in the islands by boat, an old cargo and passenger ship, the *Caledonien*, my research focus was on land tenure and the meaning of place. Living in a hill village on Ambae Island in the north of the archipelago, I began, with a lot of help from an old chief, Mathias Tariundu, to understand how place grounds and gives rise to multiple, contingent, cultural and personal meanings (Rodman 1987, 1992). Mathias led me through the rainforest pointing out the site where a palisaded village had stood, rocks that marked the extent of his land, towering cycad palms that had been planted at his childhood ceremonies. Obviously place for him was not background, as anthropologists had tended to treat it in ethnographies. In some ways, place was the foreground and the dynamic content of crucial cultural practices including the acquisition, use, and transmission of land. More importantly, place was not simply a landscape, whether background or foreground; I came to see how place is alive, how it is always socially and culturally constructed, and how place is both multivocal and multilocal.

I went on to write about "houses far from home," the spaces of British colonial families in the islands (Rodman 2001a). Memory attached to interchangeable places in the "traveling culture" that was colonialism. Couples would reminisce about an event, then ask each other, "Where was that? In the New Hebrides or the Seychelles? Or was it Monserrat?" In such circumstances, "one's things—china, furniture, photo albums, books, and so on—were the portable places of memory that made a house overseas feel homey.

After that project, aware of silences and absences, I focused on some people in-between indigenous and expatriate worlds: the descendents of settler families. Settlers were far less visible in the colonial record than missionaries and even indigenous people. Other colonizers often took a dim view of settlers, stereotyping them as people of dubious morality (for example, some sold alcohol and ammunition illegally to islanders). Yet, settlers, far more than colonial officers and more than most missionaries regarded the islands as home. Many had children with island women. To borrow historian Greg Dening's (1980) phrase, settlers "crossed the beaches," permeable boundaries between expatriate and indigenous worlds. Some of their descendants have continued to live in the islands for four, five, or more generations. Today they are caught between one state, Vanuatu—in which they can no longer own land—and other states (Australia, France), where some live in what they regard as exile.

Although "affect" had not then assumed theoretical currency in anthropology, it was exactly this shifting terrain of uneasy emotions that was so evident in my research with and about such settlers in the 1990s. This article is one of a number of attempts that I have made to understand the racialized interplay of a discourse of emotions—notably fear and desire—among participants positioned differently in the processes of colonialism in the New Hebrides. In "The Heart in the Archives" (Rodman 2003), desire and fear quite literally rode roughshod across racial, cultural, national, and gendered boundaries, disquieting government officials, missionaries, chiefs, and a cuckolded indigenous husband, as well as the English father and Tongan mother of one John Stephens, who happens to have been the father of the central figure in this article.

A man named Wilfred Stephens sets my course in the sea of settlers' memories. Wilfred was born in Vanuatu, as was his father, John Stephens, before him. Unlike Chief Mathias, who taught me about place in Ambae, Wilfred could not own land in Vanuatu. Wilfred had no ni-Vanuatu blood and the fact that he was one-quarter Tongan did him no good. Since independence, all land has reverted to the customary owners; that is, people who have four ni-Vanuatu grandparents and who can demonstrate their connection to the place in question. Settlers, and the places where their families have lived for generations, are caught in-between, *citoyens manqués*, landless in their homeland.

Wilfred remembered with boats the way my Uncle Preston does with cars. He was not alone. Many settlers told me their life stories in terms of boats. Settlers, male and female, moved on the margins of the official colonial world, and on the fringes of the ni-Vanuatu peoples' world. Such margins in Anna Tsing's (1994) sense are sites that highlight instabilities of cultural conjunctions (viz Sahlins 1981). The margins are productive places to explore both the forces that constrain such people as Vanuatu settlers, and that provide them with what Tsing (2005) would later call "friction" for gaining traction with ideas. Some ideas from the margins gain followers, like the secessionist rebellion led by Wilfred's cousin Jimmy Stephens in 1979. Other ideas, like the stories in this article, suggest more subtle shifts in individual and collective meanings.

Settlers' cultures travelled, on boats and by shortwave radio, as plantations kept in touch with each other and the world of commerce and government. They were traders as well as planters. Boats featured in women's stories nearly as much as men's. Not only did they travel on boats, women managed their own plantations and stores, and plied their own boats on trading voyages among the islands. A boat was essential to provision settlers themselves, as well as the indigenous villagers. It supplied the plantations with labourers. It collected copra (dried coconut) by the bag from indigenous producers and by the ton from home plantations, and took it all to market. More than a means of transport, boats plotted the course of people's lives, each boat laying a track of time and memories on an imaginary chart, the seascapes of a particular life-world.

Wilfred told me the "boat biography" of his family when I visited him in Queensland, Australia in 2003. Sixty years old and retired from work in a petroleum refinery, Wilfred lived in a little apartment full of music stuff—guitars, amplifiers and cassette tape players. I encouraged him to remember his family history—perhaps the ethnographic process is all about getting people to remember (Fabian 2007:132)? In response, Wilfred told me stories and played me a 25-year-old tape-recording his father had made.

Ready and Willing

Wilfred's first boat story that sails memory's shores is one I had heard many times before, a tale widely told with varying degrees of detail and historical accuracy. It is the story of Wilfred's grandparents, Tom Stephens and his wife, Sela Tubou, sailing a small boat from Tonga to the islands now known as Vanuatu. This story's popularity among the old settler families affirms, reshapes, and asserts individual and group identity.[3] For individuals, and for the collectivity, as I will explain, these are tales of hope and assertions of identity.

Was Wilfred's grandmother, Sela Tubou, really a Tongan princess? Many doubted her claim to royalty, but agreed that she had a regal bearing. If she wasn't a "real" Tongan princess, she certainly looked like one. Sela was just 17 when Tom Stephens first saw her in 1897. He had come ashore at her village in Tonga to weigh and purchase copra, dried coconut. The Englishman's job was to travel by boat among the islands purchasing copra by the gunny sack for a company that traded throughout the South Pacific.

By the time he met Sela, Tom had already travelled widely, although he was only 24. He was born in England, had joined the British Navy as a teenager and shipped out for Australia on a coastal survey mission. When his ship visited Tanna Island in the southern New Hebrides, he deserted, going to work with a German settler. The German sickened and died; the natives grew angry because Tom, in accordance with the law and a strong sense of self-preservation, wouldn't sell them ammunition. Friction along racial and cultural lines, and the associated fears and threats of violence, made both islanders and traders uneasy. Tom's response was to get on his boat and set sail from Tanna to Santo, where he settled on the west coast.[4]

Tom Stephens opened a trade store beside the Presbyterian mission on the beach. He quickly established cordial relations (Miller 1990:247) but, after a year, Tom decamped to the island now called Ambae (later home to Chief Mathias and, for a while, me). He opened a trade store on a black sand beach. The local people welcomed the opportunity to sell their coconuts in exchange for trade goods such as rice, matches, tinned fish and cloth. They offered him land to encourage him to stay, but to no avail. In those days, there were no restrictions on whites owning land, and they could buy it for almost nothing. Disputes over old land deals are a main reason that the constitution restricts land ownership to indigenous people now.

Soon Tom sailed to Port Vila, the administrative headquarters of the New Hebrides, which later became the capital of Vanuatu. There he met someone who was looking for a shipmate to sail a cutter to Tonga. Off he went, and in Tonga he got that job collecting copra where he met Sela, the princess, and the rest was history.

I include this itinerary of Tom Stephens' early voyages because of what they tell us about the high degree of mobility that a white man and a boat had in those days. One's welcome might be uncertain. In Tanna he has "trouble" with natives, in Santo he gets on well with the missionary, in Ambae the people beg him to stay, but he sails away to Port Vila, then Tonga. By the time he meets his Tongan princess, Tom has a mental chart marked with memories of places in Vanuatu he wants to take her to, and he has the sailing skills to get there. The trajectories his life follows, told with still more boats and seascapes, emphasize his ingenuity, seamanship, the determination to have a place of his own, and to raise his children where they would be accepted.

Sela and Tom married in 1898. They stayed in Tonga for eight years and their first three sons were born there. Tom was accepted into Sela's family, as many white men were in those days, but may always have felt he was an outsider. Although some Tongan women who married white men retained their land rights, Stephens family members told me that Sela lost her title when she married Tom, and/or that she lost her land rights. Some said that Sela feared her children would be stigmatized for their mixed race in Tonga. Ironically, later, when her sons had children with ni-Vanuatu women, Sela stigmatized her own darker grandchildren. We will never know what deep dissatisfactions led the couple to plan their secretive escape from Tonga in 1906. The Australian Women's Weekly article on the journey has only a veiled reference to "family troubles" (*Australian Women's Weekly*, December 9, 1970, p. 35.). The French biographer, O'Reilly, alleges that Tom Stephens left Tonga for financial reasons (1957:216).

Tom and Sela invited a Norwegian friend, Carl Hennan, to make the journey with them. He obtained a rough chart with latitude and longitude, showing the compass course to Vanuatu. It was over a thousand miles. Sela's brother, Pa'ola, decided to join them. One Sunday in December 1906, Tom took Sela, their three small sons, Pa'ola, and Carl Hennan out in his 26-foot boat for a picnic. Sela was five months pregnant with a fourth son, John (Wilfred's father whose tape I heard).

Tom had recently decked over the open whaleboat, which had a mast and sail as well as oars. He named the boat *Fatahelava.* He said the name meant, "ready and willing." The destination for the Sunday picnic was an islet where there was a garden full of watermelon, so they loaded the boat with watermelon. It was their main source of food and water for the journey. After the picnic, Tom turned the bow away from Tonga, and set sail for Fiji.

The voyage took nearly two weeks. The watermelons rotted and stank. The oldest son remembers looking up from the hold, where the children had to stay for safety, and seeing his pregnant mother lashed to the mast, calmly rolling banana leaf cigarettes for the men (Oliver Stephens 1970:35). One night near Fiji, they hit a reef and broke the rudder, but Pa'ola made repairs underway, and they carried on.

They landed on the island of Erromango in the southern New Hebrides. Missionaries took them in. The family had a rest, then sailed to the capital, Port Vila. There Carl the Norwegian stayed, while the rest sailed to Ambrym where the local chief offered them land near the mission, invited them to settle, buy copra, and open a store.

Sela gave birth to John (Wilfred's father) in April, 1907, at the impressive mission hospital on Ambrym. Less than six years later, a volcanic eruption and earthquake destroyed the hospital and the entire area. The explosion was sudden and stories of the evacuation speak of the sea boiling. The water was too hot to start a motor so people had to paddle their boats out to cooler water, past floating lobsters that the boiling sea had cooked.

The Stephens family relocated twice more and had more children (nine in total). Now they used two boats called *Little Lizzy* and *Copra Chief.* When ni-Vanuatu killed Tom's partner on South Santo, Tom settled the family at Urelapa, a small island deemed a safe distance off shore.

Tom and Sela's sons settled nearby, acquiring blocks of land on South Santo. John built a house on a rock overlooking the ocean. Behind the house was Nasuli lagoon where John repaired and built boats. Once, he sailed a tired old trading boat out of the lagoon at sundown. He scuttled it in hope of collecting the insurance, but chose the wrong moment, as the British District Agent, sipping a gin and tonic on his verandah, had an excellent view of the whole proceedings and promptly arrested John for the crime of barratry.

Shot through the Heart

The second boat for which memory charts a course is *Wombah II.* Wilfred learned from his father, John, about boats, and he learned to avoid his father's mistakes.[5] By the age of 19, Wilfred became a captain in his own right. His first ship, the Fijian-built *Adi Gaetane*, was soon wrecked on Santo. But the next year, in 1957, a Frenchman offered Wilfred a job as captain of another ship, *Wombah II.* She was a 40-footer, an American military boat left behind at the end of the war and refitted for trading in the islands.

Wombah II was under charter to a nickel company surveyor, named Al Radin, when Wilfred brought her up the west coast of Pentecost Island in November 1957, and anchored for the night.[6] In the morning, Wilfred lay on his bunk in the main cabin waiting for the water to boil on the ship's stove. At 7 a.m., Al joined him.

"Turn on the radio so we can catch the news from Australia," Al said.

Wilfred reached up over his head. As he turned the radio dial he felt a stinging sensation on his left side near his ribs, as if he had been hit with a rubber band. Where did that come from? He looked around. There was no one else but Al in the cabin. He looked ashore. Nobody there. Then Wilfred looked down. Blood was pouring out of his side.

"My god, I've been shot. How the hell did I get shot? There are no people here."

Al panicked: "They've shot the captain, what's going to happen to me?" He locked himself in his cabin.

Wilfred had never taught the ni-Vanuatu crew how to start the engine. Now he struggled and somehow managed to do it himself. Wilfred was covered in blood, but he tried to ignore the shock and took the helm. The crew stayed below decks, as did Al's native assistants. With Al in his cabin, Wilfred was on his own. He headed northwest towards Ambae Island where there was a hospital with medical dressers trained in Fiji.

Hours later when *Wombah II* reached the hospital, the dresser said, "Mr. Stephens, I have to tell you, I am not a doctor. I am a dresser. I can't help you much. I can tell you one thing, your lung is all right. Beyond that I can't help you much."

Now Wilfred was worried as there was nowhere else to go for medical help nearby. He knew he was not well enough to sail his boat as far as Santo, some 40 miles away, where there was a French hospital.

Just then, a small trading vessel named *Three Cheers* motored into Lolowai Bay. Stan Breusch, the captain, ran a plantation nearby. Stan recognized *Wombah II.* He asked, "Where's the captain?"

"Oh, they've shot him!" replied the crew, "He's in his cabin."

Stan Breusch came aboard *Wombah II.* When he saw Wilfred lying there on the bunk, covered in blood and weak with shock, Stan said, "Wilfred, forget about your bloody boat. Get onto mine."

So they left *Wombah II,* and the crew, and everything; the porridge from breakfast was still on the table. Stan helped Wilfred onto the *Three Cheers*, and set a course for the hospital on Santo, arriving in the town at three a.m. There were no lights on at the hospital.

Stan woke up the French army doctor. The doctor thought they were a couple of drunks pounding on his door in the dead of night. When he finally understood the situation, the doctor cleaned and bandaged Wilfred's wound, and found him a bed in the hospital. In the morning, he took an x-ray. The doctor looked at the blurry x-ray and just shrugged. In heavily accented English, he said, "Monsieur Stephens, I cannot do anything about it." The bullet was lodged in Wilfred's heart. He should be dead, but he was conscious, able to walk, and not even in great pain. Wilfred was flown to New Caledonia, but again the doctors couldn't figure out what to do with him. So they sent him to Australia where the doctors confirmed that they couldn't remove the bullet without Wilfred likely bleeding to death. So they said to leave it and in time scar tissue would grow over the wound site. About nine years later, Wilfred's heart had healed over and the bullet was removed.

For months after the accident, Wilfred had no idea who had shot him. It had never occurred to him that the shot to the heart could have come from on board his own boat. He had looked to the land, to ni-Vanuatu inhabitants; but the unseen other turns out to have been below his own decks, an outsider who worked for the surveyor Al, and who was as out of control as Al was useless in a crisis. One of the surveyor's assistants had a 22 calibre rifle. He was below decks on *Wombah II* that fateful morning, cleaning the gun. It misfired, sending a bullet up through the deck, through the bedding on the bunk, and then, nearly spent, into Wilfred's heart.

Conclusion: Seascapes of Memory

Wilfred offered this amazing tale as context for his present approach to life. Being shot through the heart was quite literally an embodied memory. Being alive became a gift he said he treasured every day. The accident and its embodied memory spurred him to dedicate his life to bringing joy to others through music. In the 1960s, he played in an Australian rock band called the *AstraNotes*. When I met him, Wilfred was playing his guitar to spread joy at retirement homes and other charitable venues.[7]

As with his grandfather's story, boats and ports are the points of attachment, holding and legitimizing Wilfred's memories. Boats serve the way place names do for a ni-Vanuatu chief, helping to recall memories and retell them to affect the future. But they do so in the present, as Lowenthal told us in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, "The prime function of memory… is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present" (1985:210).

The stories of *Fataheleva* and *Wombah II* are iconic of a genre that is widely shared by settler families in the islands. The journey from Tonga evokes tales of Polynesian voyaging, such as the six canoes alleged to have brought people to Aotearoa New Zealand. The telling and retelling of the Stephens' voyage from Tonga makes the case for the legitimacy of the family as earning their place in Vanuatu. They arrived by sea, and were excellent navigators, as good as the ancestors of ni-Vanuatu. The Stephens' journey earned them the right to put down roots in Vanuatu; they maintain their connection to the land through the story of their connection to its waters. Although constitutionally prevented from owning land since 1980, the Stephens and other settlers assert their genealogical connectedness to place, recounting memories rooted in particular places, including particular boats and seascapes. They may have had to give up ownership of the land, but in their stories memory presses its claim to place.

Boats like *Fataheleva* express charter myths, conveying the island roots, seamanship, daring and desire foundational to a family that was larger than life in the history of Vanuatu. Yet, in nearly *every* settler's story, boats figure prominently. They are touchstones of memory, mnemonics for storytelling, "memory palaces" in motion. The medieval scholars whom Frances Yates describes in her *Art of Memory* (1966) used imaginary architecture to remember detailed sequences. Similarly, the boats I have been speaking of evoke sequences of movements through places. Like the colonial officers' in *Houses far from Home* (Rodman 2001a), boats helped people locate themselves in space and time. Instead of debating whether they had been *in* Monserrat or Martinique, they discussed whether they had been *on* the *Alysee* or the *Konanda* at the time.

Boats were also homes away from home. Wilfred knew *Wombah II* with his body, a kind of habitus afloat such that the body knows exactly where it is in space without thinking. He reaches to turn on the radio without getting up. Although he is shot through the heart, he starts the engine, because only he knows how to do it and even his wounded body can do it more easily than explain what to do to someone else. He knows that boat the way Chief Mathias knows his land, and it resonates equally with the meanings of lived experience. He can find his way to the hospital in Ambae the way Mathias can find his way to the rock that marks his boundary. We can see that Wilfred has ceded control over his very life to Stan when he agrees to "Forget the bloody boat and get on mine!"

Like memories of places in a landscape, I suggest, boats and the memories they trigger "become tools for the imagination, expressive means for accomplishing verbal deeds, and also, of course, eminently portable possessions to which individuals can maintain deep and abiding attachments regardless of where they travel" (Basso 1988:102). Simon Schama (1995) and Eric Hirsch (2006) stress the importance of movement through a landscape as a mnemonic for recounting past events as well as creating a nexus of time, space and myth. Boats, we have seen, allow a person similarly to navigate through seascapes of memories. Afloat and lashed to the mast on *Fatahelava* or wounded on the *Wombah II*, the remembered seascapes are not background, anymore than landscapes are. Instead, like the roving islands mentioned at the beginning of this article, landscapes and seascapes "can be imagined as provisionally intertwined, simultaneities of ongoing, unfinished stories" (Massey 2006: 14).

Both sea journeys described here have trajectories with unexpected intersections, moments of wriggle room or conjuncture, of fear and hope, of affective possibility. When Tom Stephens joins and later leaves the Navy, sails for Tonga, meets his princess, sets sail for Vanuatu, is evicted by a volcano, and chooses an islet rather than a deadly coast, all illustrate this point. Wilfred's most dramatic intersection connects a bullet to his heart, and raises the spectre of fear of an unseen attacker; but connecting unexpectedly with Stan Breusch in Lolowai Bay probably saves his life! Retelling is also full of affect in the sense of emotions of dislocation, identity and of the hope of return.

The boats that carry these people, then, are the mobile, uncertain places where the unexpected happens, where memory attaches in the moment to remake the past, and where a future is persistently imagined. This future, like the pasts that navigate memories at sea, envisions hope of reconnection with a land now only glimpsed on the receding horizon of an independent Vanautu and, at a more personal level, hope of life after near-death.

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Notes

1 Boats with engines increased indigenous people's mobility, changed work and consumption practices, and even figured in the Vanuatu independence movement. Youths in the tops of banyan trees scanning the horizon would shout "Seli ho!"—"Sail ho!" Seli ho became the cry that rallied the Vanuatu Party toward independence in the 1970s. Later, the rebel Na Griamel party leader, Jimmy Stephens, claimed that he made himself invisible to escape from prison in a glass-bottomed tour boat. I am grateful to an anonymous *Anthropologica* reviewer for reminding me about "Seli Ho."

2 See the new journals *Affect*, and *Emotion, Space and Society*.

3 Lattas observes that there is no necessary "opposition between the collective and individualizing aspects of memory" (1996:258). See also Boyarin (1994) on the intersubjectivity of remembrance; memory is symbolic, thus intersubjective, (and we would say now, co-created) but it cannot be entirely collective as it is also individually embodied.

4 Recorded interview by Wilfred Stephens of his father, John P. Stephens, August, 1979. Courtesy of Wilfred Stephens.

5 John Stephen's chequered career is the subject of another paper, *The Heart in the Archives* (Rodman 2003).

6 Surveys feature repeatedly in these stories, perhaps because land issues were so pervasive in the islands. First Tom Stephens deserts the Royal Navy on a survey mission to Tanna. The Stephens' property on Ambrym is mentioned in Jacomb's letters to Robert Fletcher (both being trained surveyors) in November 1913, weeks before the volcanic eruption began in December that resolved any contested issues of ownership (Stober 2004: 360). Finally, it is with Al and his survey crew aboard that Wilfred's near fatal shooting occurs.

7 In conducting further research for this paper, I was saddened to learn that Wilfred Stephens died in 2005 (personal comm., email from Anne Mooney, April 5, 2010), and www.echonews.com/1112/local_entertainment.html.

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