Balinese poetry of the New Order and Reformation periods generally follows the Indonesian pattern in terms of theme and style. After a period of propaganda poetry by right-wing writers in the late 1960s, themes of universal humanism emerged as the mainstream in the 1970s and continued into the next decade. Most Balinese poets who conformed to this pattern had experienced the tension between left and right-wing writers in the 1960s and had survived the purges of 1966. These poets, who include I Made Sukada, I Gusti Ngurah Parsua, Bawa Samar Gantang, Wayan Sumantri, and I Nyoman Tusthi Eddy, were mainly members of Lesiba. Writing under the tight controls instituted by the New Order regime, these poets concentrated more on personal matters than on social or historical themes. The poetry found in anthologies, individual collections and local publications from the 1970s and 1980s illustrates this tendency.

Although Lesiba members began to employ themes of universal humanism as their subject matter, this did not mean that they, and other Balinese poets, were reluctant to discuss social issues. Evidence of this can be seen in the winning poems from a 1976 poetry contest held by the *Bali Post* to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Chairil Anwar (28 April) and celebrate Hari Pendidikan Nasional (National Education Day, 2 May). Most of the six winning poems have social themes and deploy the social realism style (Sukada 1976:3-4). The winner was *Hidup ini memang begini* (Life right now is indeed
like this) by Agung Putu Mayun, which discusses the ongoing social disputes and conflicts over land in society that can become so serious that they end in death. A line in the poem cynically says: ‘Sempurnalah kelaparan dengan tumpukan bangkai!’ (The poverty is perfectly covered by piles of corpses) which can be read as a criticism of the failure of both the government and the community to create harmony and prosperity. One of the highly commended poems, Sawah tandus dan petani tua (A barren rice field and an old farmer), by Perry Kurniawan, describes the tragic death of an old farmer caused by poverty, a theme typical of Lekra and LKN writers in the 1960s. The winning poems, published in the Bali Post, undeniably defied the universal humanist mainstream.

The strengths and weaknesses of the winning poems were discussed in a judges’ report prepared by I Made Sukada, the chief judge, who was also the leader of Lesiba at that time. The report was published on the same page as the winning poems in the Bali Post of 16 May 1976 on pages three and four. It focused only on the formal structure of the poems and provided no analysis of the social issues and any political connotations implied in the themes of the poems. This analysis can be seen as an obedient act by critics to conform to the New Order’s preference for separating literature from politics.

Other poems on social issues continued to appear, but rather than grappling with potentially contentious topics such as politics, farmers or poverty, they transferred their focus to problems from external sources such as the impact of tourism on Bali. Because they dealt with issues affecting people, these poems could not be categorized as conforming to the universal humanist style; and in most cases, the themes paralleled concerns of the government – diminishing the possibility of censorship. Examples can be found in the work of I Gusti Ngurah Parsua, Cok Raka Pemayun and Oka Sukanta, who all wrote poetry about the same subject: Kuta Beach. As the most popular tourist destination, it experienced tourism’s most intense impact.

However, universal humanism regained popularity in the mid-1980s through poems by younger Balinese poets such as Nyoman Wirata, Ketut Yuliarsa Sastrawan, Widiyazid Soethama, Alit S. Rini, Adhi Ryadi, Hartanto and Wayan Arthawa. They were heavily
influenced by Umbu Landu Paranggi, literary editor of the *Bali Post*, who originally encouraged a contemplative style, which emphasized the beauty of sound as feeling (Eddy 1996). The early works of this group were largely romantic or idyllic and introspective in tone, as were poems by other young writers such as Oka Rusmini, Fajar Arcana, Warih Wisatsana and Ketut Landras Syaelendra who all began to write in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Apart from Umbu Landu Paranggi’s influence, the political atmosphere prevailing when these young poets were beginning to write helped to dictate their choice of themes dealing with personal matters and individual experiences. However, while still under Umbu Landu Paranggi’s guidance, by the mid-1990s the same writers were leading the aesthetic shift from a mood of inward-looking self-reflection towards a reflection of social issues within a Balinese context. This change resulted from a fortunate coincidence, with writers reaching a more mature and independent stage in their creative output at the same time as the public was displaying increasing resentment towards the New Order regime. This indicates that a significant critical movement was already underway in Bali before the Reformation started.

Bali is relatively distant from Jakarta, but by the mid-1990s, strong anti-government feeling was being experienced there. While the Jakarta protests were directed against corrupt officials and were calling for a more democratic society, in Bali resentment was mainly directed at local matters: the increased levels of development for tourism, land appropriation, and the excessive commercialization of cultural life.¹ With a wide base of support from the *Bali Post* newspaper, between 1993 and 1998, groups of academics, intellectuals, farmers, NGOs and writers became involved in street protests and petitions to the local parliament and government offices to emphasize their objections to the damaging mega-project proposed by the Bali

¹ Earlier dramatic representations of the impact of land appropriation for tourism development in Bali were raised in *sinetron* (television dramas) such as *Aksara tanpa kata* (Characters without words), which appeared in 1991. This *sinetron* tells the story of a lower-class Balinese family who are forced to sell their land to a corporation that wants to build a hotel and golf course on the site. For a discussion of this *sinetron* from a feminist point of view, see Aripurnami 1996:249-58.
Nirwana Resort and golf course. As well as this there were protests against another mega-project, the Garuda Wisnu Kencana (Golden Garuda Monument) (Suasta and Connor 1999:98-111). The protest against the Bali Nirwana Resort project which started in 1993 was the biggest to take place in Bali during pre-reformasi years of the New Order period.

While reformasi protests were part of a national movement, the protest against the Bali Nirwana Resort project was locally based. During this protest and at other public meetings, statements of objection were read, and some of them were followed by poetry readings. The governor of Bali, Ida Bagus Oka, was forced to cancel the original permit for the building of Bali Nirwana Resort because it was too close to the Tanah Lot temple. Nevertheless, the overall project eventually proceeded with minor design adjustments made to placate the protesters.

Many poems published in the Bali Post during this period were inspired by this public discourse and by resistance to the Bali Nirwana Resort project and other similarly large projects in Bali. Some Balinese poets also had anti-development poems printed in the national media, notably Horison. The same issues were represented pictorially in cartoons and comic strips by Balinese cartoonists in the same newspapers, Bali Post and Nusa Tenggara (now Nusa Bali). These cartoons take a cynical view of Bali under threat from capitalism and globalization (Warren 1998:88-98; Suasta and Connor 1999). The development of Indonesian literature in Bali illustrates that the two major concepts underpinning poetry, namely universal humanism and social realism, always co-exist. Each serves a specific purpose. The consistent presence of the two styles suggests that literature is not just written to fulfil aesthetic needs but is also necessary for

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2 Poets Tan Lio Ie and Warih Wisatsana said that they both read poems on a number of occasions as a part of public protest meetings. Tan Lio Ie described singing a poem by Umbu Landu Paranggi which expressed the holiness of the Tanah Lot temple, while Warih Wisatsana read the poem Rakyat by Hartoyo Andangjaya. Besides that, writers and NGO activists often held discussions to write public statements rejecting tourism mega-project developments that destroyed aspects of Bali and caused suffering to farmers who lost their land. Tan Lio Ie and Warih Wisatsana, personal communication 22-6-2007.
commenting on social issues – a defining characteristic of Balinese poetry since the colonial period.

Poetry as self reflection

While social and political issues had to be avoided, nature, the mystery of life, inner spirituality and death became prominent themes among the many used in Balinese poems of the New Order period. This change in poetic style reflects a period of relative stability after the violence and political and economic turmoil that occurred under the previous government. Poets often presented personal meditations or a form of self-reflection in which themes were blended. This constitutes the subject matter of most poems by Lesiba members found in poetry collections or newspapers during the 1970s and 1980s, some of which are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Selected poems from the 1970s and 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Theme(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Suatu malam sunyi (One silent night)</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Ngurah Parsua</td>
<td>Reflections on silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perjalanan (Journey)</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Ngurah Parsua</td>
<td>Reflections on life and death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bedugul</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Ngurah Parsua</td>
<td>Reflections on nature, loneliness and the secrets of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Setelah angin senja berhembus (After the dusk wind blows)</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Ngurah Parsua</td>
<td>Condolences and reflections about death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kuta</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Ngurah Parsua</td>
<td>Concerns about sin, world civilization and peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Samadhi (Meditation)</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Djelantik Santha</td>
<td>Meditation and a prayer to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Theme(s)</td>
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<td>-----</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Selamat pagi Pak Gubernur (Good morning Mr Governor)</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Aryantha Soethama</td>
<td>Expressions of hope in a new governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kuta</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Raka Pemayun</td>
<td>Concerns about the impact of tourism on local culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Aku (I)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Abu Bakar</td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gempa (Earthquake)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Bawa Samar Gantang</td>
<td>The destructive power of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sebuah pemandangan (A view)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Wayan Sumantri</td>
<td>Describing the tragic life of an eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Telaga (Pond)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Made Sukada</td>
<td>Reflections on nature and loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tat twam asi (You are me and I am you)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Jiwa Atmaja</td>
<td>The idea that human beings are all the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pantai Kuta (Kuta beach)</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Oka Sukanta</td>
<td>Reflections on nature and loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bali dalam puisi (Bali in poetry)</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Oka Sukanta</td>
<td>Concerns about the commercialization of Balinese culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I Gusti Ngurah Parsua’s collection *Setelah angin senja berhembus* (After the dusk wind blows, 1973) and poems in the collection *Antologi puisi Bali 1980* (1980), both published by Lesiba, provide examples. Almost all the poems in these collections focus on human beings as individuals who try to understand their relationships to other human beings, nature and the Gods within their own private sphere. The content and message of their poems appears to be very personal and to have little connection with historical or political public matters.

Two poems in I Gusti Ngurah Parsua’s collection, *Bedugul* (1972) and *Setelah angin senja berhembus* (1972) express his personal feelings about nature, loneliness, death and the meaning of life. In the poem
**Bedugul** – Bedugul is a mountain village on the shore of a lake, located on the border of North and South Bali – the poet expresses feelings of loneliness, sadness and the desire to feel the secret of eternal love, as shown by the following quote.³

\[
\text{di sinikah sepi abadi, yang misteri di seberang danau sana? Sepi Ia menunggu sedihku menunggu pertemuan rasa cinta abadi dalam rahasia}
\]

is this eternal solitude, that lies mysteriously beside the lake over there? Alone He waits my sadness deepens, and awaits a meeting of eternal love in secret

I Gusti Ngurah Parsua dedicates *Setelah angin senja berhembus* (1972), the poem that gives the collection its title, to his close friend Rasta Sindhu, a prominent Balinese poet and short-story writer who died in 1972.⁴ This poem relates to the concept shared by Hinduism and Buddhism of release from the cycle of suffering through the attainment of heaven or nirvana. According to the poem, the eternal is located in the after-world, where there is no sadness, loneliness or longing, and space and time are one. The poem suggests that only death can bring people to the eternal world. It emphasizes that besides marking the end of sadness, death is a journey to a perfect end.

These two poems are both included in *Tonggak* (Milestones) edited by Linus Suryadi (1987:316-7), an anthology of modern Indonesian poetry published when the New Order’s power was at its height, and marked a significant shift in I Gusti Ngurah Parsua’s aesthetic conception. In the 1960s, he had published poems promoting Sukarno’s political ideology, such as *Anak marhaen*,⁵ but in the 1970s, he adapted to the New Order’s preference for universal humanism

³ The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C.
⁴ Some of Rasta Sindhu’s short stories are discussed in Chapters V and VII. For a detailed discussion of Rasta Sindhu’s literary standing and his works including short stories and poems, see Sutedja-Liem 2000 and 2003.
⁵ ‘Children of the proletariat’. The poem *Anak marhaen* is included in Appendix B.
(Adi Riyadi et al. 1995:85). In general, the change in I Gusti Ngurah Parsua’s poetic style also reflects a contemplative time after the chaos of the national revolution. But it needs to be emphasized that during this time he also wrote poems about local issues, as evidenced by his poetry on Kuta beach.

The poetry in *Antologi puisi Bali 1980* is also dominated by universal humanism. As with the work of I Gusti Ngurah Parsua, these poems emphasize the inner, spiritual dimension of human existence. The difference is that whereas I Gusti Ngurah Parsua is concerned with life, death and the notion of the eternal, the poems in *Antologi puisi Bali 1980* are more interested in nature and individual self-reflection. Jiwa Atmaja’s *Tat twam asi* (You are me and I am you) and *Aku* by Abu Bakar, for example, focus on the subject (*aku* or I) as an individual human being rather than as a member of society. The identities and social backgrounds of neither ‘*aku*’ nor those being addressed in the poems are clarified. This contrasts strongly with poems from the colonial and national revolution periods in which individual subjects are clearly identified as supporters or members of specific groups or political ideologies (lower or upper caste, communist, left nationalist, proletarian, et cetera). The concealment of subject identity in *Tat twam asi* and many other poems in this collection gives a strong impression that under the New Order Balinese poets, particularly members of Lesiba, wanted to avoid any possibility of being accused of writing literature that could be interpreted as social or political propaganda.

The upsurge of interest in nature, apparently another method of eschewing social and political issues, can be read in Wayan Sumantri’s *Sebuah pemandangan* (A view), Samar Gantang’s *Gempa* (Earthquake), and Made Sukada’s *Telaga* (Pond) all poems are published in 1980. Although aspects of nature are the common theme, each poet has a different approach. *Sebuah pemandangan* takes the point of view of an individual subject, describing the tragic life of an eagle without feathers falling into a blue sea, while *Telaga* focuses on the atmosphere surrounding a lake in an endless forest. Neither poem provides any clue to the possible social context of the work, as illustrated by *Telaga*.

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6 The full version of *Sebuah pemandangan* is included in Appendix C.
Reinventing Balinese cultural identity

Telaga

Adalah sebuah rimba belantara
Sebuah telaga sunyi terlindung
dalam bayangannya
Kilat putihnya menyorotkan
cakrawala
mendukung bimbang semesta
Tiada prahara selain lembah-lembah
mengendapkan lumpur dunia

A pond

There is a vast forest
A quiet pond is sheltered by its shade
Its white sheen illuminates the heavens
which support the anxious earth
There is no tempest away from the valleys
which conceal the world’s mud

It is hard to identify any immediate background to the poem, as it simply conveys a personal contemplation of nature. It is highly subjective, individualist and escapist.

The earthquake that shook Bali in 1977 and caused considerable damage and casualties in North and West Bali may have inspired Gempa. But the poem itself is not interested in the victims or the social dimensions of this natural disaster, instead trying to create from it a mythical form or image. According to the poem, an earthquake has no hands, spirit or body. From a realistic viewpoint, this description is inconsistent because while the poet has said that the earthquake has no body, he also describes it placing its feet on the earth. However, this may just reflect Bawa Samar Gantang’s preference for dramatic aural and magical effects rather than a literal narration of events. This can be seen in the opening lines of his poem.7

Dengan diam
Kukenal kau tanpa angin
tangan roh dan badan

Silently
I know you are without wind,
hand, spirit and body

7 The full version of Gempa is included in Appendix C.
Tanah di mana kau pijak
Gelisah
Gemetar rumput, rumah, pohonan

Where you tread the earth
is nervous
Grass, houses, trees tremble

Universal humanism also dictated the themes of many poems which appeared in the *Bali Post* at this time. An example is *Samadhi* (Meditation), by Djelantik Santha, published in the *Bali Post* in 1976. This poem, as its title suggests, expresses self-reflection and submission of the individual (*aku*) to God.

*Samadhi*

Do I have to shout or make my eyes bulge or wave my hands or crying, beg to seek YOUR love or are my dedication, love and devotion the price I pay for heaven?

You are perfect

I appear before YOU in submission in all my works I am silent and meditation

The individual subject (*aku*) of the poem refers to no one but ‘the self’ that speaks. This poem and others by Djelantik Santha such as *Akuku sepanjang sungai* (My ego is as long as a river, 1976) share the theme of analysing self-worth.8 While in *Samadhi* the self prays to a great God,

8 The full version of *Akuku sepanjang sungai* is included in Appendix C. This poem is written in lower case.
in the poem *Akuku sepanjang sungai* the self metaphorically expresses the relationship between river and ocean to explain the existence of an individual in relation to other human beings – every individual is differentiated from others by an ego, but as human beings we are all the same. The theme of this poem is similar to Jiwa Atmaja’s *Tat twam asi*, which also stresses that human beings are equal. So the idea of equality that is presented in the 1980s differs from that understood by the poets of the colonial era; earlier it is discussed in terms of caste and socio-economic status, later in terms of human beings in general. As with other members of Lesiba, Djelantik Santha’s poems display typical characteristics of New Order poems, centring on the personal contemplation of nature, meditations on God and avoiding sensitive social and political issues. Although they cannot be classed as obscure poetry because they express their topics clearly, they are certainly very individualistic and subjective, and so fulfil the defining characteristics of the universal humanist style.

**Expressions of social concern**

Alongside these mainstream universal humanist themes, a number of poems concerned with contemporary Balinese social issues appeared. Such themes had already been seen in a few poems from the colonial period, but had disappeared during the national revolution era because poets were caught up in the euphoria of Sukarno’s enthusiastic promotion of nationalism. These poems usually have tourism and its accompanying social problems as a backdrop. The negative impact of tourism on Balinese culture, the social divisions between urban and rural, between the economically advantaged and the poor, and between indigenous people and outsiders are popular issues addressed by Balinese poets at this time. In the colonial period tourism was discussed in the context of poverty and backwardness, while during the New Order it was discussed in the context of cultural dislocation and social alienation.

There are three poems on the subject of Kuta beach by different poets – I Gusti Ngurah Parsua, Cok Raka Pemayun and Oka Sukanta. They were written in the mid-1970s and early 1980s when the area
was beginning to experience mass tourism. This included a subculture of young adventure travellers locally referred to as hippies, who were often associated with drug use and free sex. These poems and others dealing with tourism reflect the growing awareness of its dangers among Balinese intellectuals. This consciousness of the negative side of tourism contradicts the often government dominated discourse on the economic benefits it brings.

I Gusti Ngurah Parsua’s *Kuta* (1975) is concerned with the hedonistic behaviour of tourists at Kuta beach, being topless or even totally naked. The poem considers this to be sinful and morally unacceptable behaviour that consigns those who engage in it to hell (‘sins have caused people to lose their way and plunge into hell’). The term *neraka* (hell) is also used in Oka Sukanta’s *Pantai Kuta* (Kuta beach, 1982), from his poetry collection *Selat Bali* (Bali strait). This poem focuses on sprawling topless bodies at Kuta Beach. The last two lines of his three couplets say – ‘sprawling bodies clothing discarded / you could ask: heaven, or hell?’ As in *Kuta*, this poem also strongly criticizes the deplorable attitude of tourists that is threatening Balinese culture. As a former member of Lekra, Oka Sukanta had been closely involved in the pre-1965 debate about the dangers tourism posed to society (Foulcher 1983:34). Because he continued to hold these ideas in the New Order period he was able to find a niche in one of the dominant public discourse issues of that time.

Raka Pemayun’s *Kuta* (1979) also focuses on the vulnerability of Balinese culture when it encounters Western culture, and the values imported by foreign tourists. The poet was a university student who also worked for the *Bali Post* as a music, arts and culture correspondent. Although the poem is brief, consisting of only one stanza, it powerfully expresses the impotence of local tradition when it encounters global culture through tourism.

See Picard 1996:79, especially the cartoon reproduced from the *Bali Post* that features hippies talking about marijuana and sexual pleasure while sunbathing on the beach.

The full version of Ngurah Parsua’s *Kuta* is included in Appendix C.

This translation is taken from Foulcher 1983:34.
In this poem, the term ‘Budha’ can be interpreted either as a reference to the Buddha or alternatively, in Kuta beach slang, to ‘buddha sticks’, a form of rolled cannabis closely associated with the hippy lifestyle. The poem suggests that this hippy phenomenon was already in existence in Bali. Behaviours associated with this lifestyle were considered a negative influence on Balinese culture and society (McKean 1971; Vickers 1989:20). While continuing to promote the importance of tourism, both the national and regional governments considered hippies a threat to local cultural and moral values.

Raka Pemayun’s *Kuta* diverges significantly from the universal humanist standard. His poem explicitly confronts a real social problem faced by Balinese society: the growing influence of Western culture and values. In the 1970s, Bali was inundated with Western music, played on local radio stations and in Kuta pubs and discotheques. Performers like Bob Dylan and The Beatles were very popular and became symbols of modernity, particularly among Balinese youth. Attracted to modern music, many young Balinese began to consider traditional arts and music old-fashioned and abandoned them. This gradually contributed to the marginalization of some of the traditional Balinese arts, as the lines ‘Humming Dylan / And the music of the gamelan / Is buried in front of the temple’ clearly suggest. The poem seems to support the government view that tourism could diminish local culture.

Concern about social issues and the changes wrought by tourism can also be seen in other another work by Oka Sukanta. He wrote a

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12 The popularity of Western musicians and singers is mentioned in Rasta Sindhu’s short story *Sahabatku Hans Schmitter* (1969). This story is discussed in Chapter VII.
number of poems about Bali, many of which have the word ‘Bali’ in their title (Sukanta 1999:7, 64-6). The poem *Bali* written in 1963, for example, approaches Bali from two different viewpoints, displaying pride in the island’s arts and traditions and voicing concern over the death of a Balinese farmer caused by poverty. This poem and the similarly titled *Bali* (1964), already discussed in Chapter III, share the social realist technique of using images of oppressed lower-class people, a typical concern of left-wing writers. *Bali dalam puisi* (Bali in poetry, 1985), written during the New Order period, shows similar concerns, depicting the sense of alienation of a poet who visits the island which he calls ‘home’ to find that Balinese tradition has succumbed to tourist-oriented commercialization.  

aku menyeruak masuk ke dalam pulau bali I pushed my way inside my home the island of Bali

*akupulau bali*

*aku menyeruak masuk ke dalam pulau bali*

*kurasa*

*pulau bali*

*tapi begitu asing, hampir tak terpikirkan*

*begitu banyak yang telah bercoba*

*berubah*

*seperti sebuah dongeng yang sulit dipercaya kebenarannya*

*I pushed my way inside my home the island of Bali but it was so alien, almost unimaginable so much had changed like a fairy story you can’t really believe in*

His feelings of alienation are closely linked to despair at the commercialization of Bali’s arts and traditions.  

aku terperangah di rumah-rumah seniman aku terengah-engah di toko kesenian semua telah engkau pajang untuk pendatang tertinggal apa untuk dirimu sendiri? I caught my breath in the homes of artists I gaped in surprise in the art shops you’ve put out everything for the visitors what do you have left for yourselves?

13 The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C. The translation is taken from Keith Foulcher, see Putu Oka Sukanta 1986:89, 91.
The poet criticizes the Balinese for offering all their belongings to ‘visitors’ and leaving nothing for him and for themselves. As in the poems discussed above, he wishes to convey the idea of tourism as an obvious threat. Although the speaker of the poem is an individual (aku), his personal responses to the transformation of Bali undoubtedly coincide with important public concerns.

_Selamat pagi Pak Gubernur_ (Good morning Mr Governor, 1978) by Aryantha Soethama is another example of a New Order poem that addresses social problems faced by the Balinese community, this time from the growing number of development projects proposed by the government. These problems include the social divisions outlined above and other serious social problems such as prostitution, the growing number of children failing to complete school and the poor quality of flood-damaged roads. Expressing his support for the newly elected governor, the poet explains the problems and simultaneously encourages the governor to solve them. When he wrote this poem, Aryantha Soethama was a freelance journalist for local newspapers, so he would have had ample opportunities to observe the social and political scene closely.

This poem was published in the _Bali Post_ in 1978, when Bali had just ‘elected’ a new governor, Ida Bagus Mantra, an ethnic Balinese, to replace the previous Javanese governor, Sukarmen. The phrase ‘putra daerah’ (local figure) emphasizes the elected governor’s ethnic origin. The idea of the ‘local figure’ was significant in the context of the New Order policy of selecting regional leaders, which involved promoting a ‘local civilian figure’ as governor in some provinces and a ‘military figure’ in others. Among other things, the policy aimed to ensure both regional and military loyalty. To show consideration for its Hindu majority, its unique culture and traditions and its status as a tourist destination, Bali was assigned a ‘local civilian figure’ as governor, one who was highly competent in religious and cultural matters.

Ida Bagus Mantra was, in fact, the first Balinese to govern the island during the New Order regime. He had a wealth of experience in the central government bureaucracy, having served as director-general of Cultural Affairs in the Department of Education and Culture and was also known as a man of culture. After graduating
from an Indian university, he had become a lecturer at Udayana University in Bali and during his time as director-general had in 1978 established the Bali Arts Centre in Denpasar, a project that demonstrated his commitment to Balinese culture. The Balinese people, not unexpectedly, placed great hope in his administration. While the public were happily welcoming Ida Bagus Mantra to his new position, their hopes raised by his being Balinese, Aryantha Soethama was ready to greet him with a range of problems.

The poem repeatedly uses the expression ‘Good morning Mr governor’ as a device to draw attention repeatedly to the tasks facing the governor. Below are the two opening stanzas of the poem, each stanza beginning with ‘Good morning Mr Governor’.15

Selamat Pagi Pak Gubernur
Telah tersedia sebuah kursi
Tumpukan map dan bising
dering telpun menunggu
Kami tahu itu semua kau
tangani untuk kami
Untuk taudusnya bukit Pecatu
agar hijau dan banyak ternak
bisa merumput di sana
Untuk Ketewel, Seraya, Nusa
Penida dan desa terpencil nun jauh
Di mana deru teknologi, televisi
super color tinggal angan-angan
Agar mereka nikmati serpih
dollar dari Sanur, Kuta dan kelak Nusa Dua

Good Morning Mr governor
A chair is provided
A pile of maps and the jangling
noise of telephones are waiting
We know that you’ll handle all this for us
So the barren Pecatu hill may become green and much livestock may graze there
For Ketewel, Seraya, Nusa Penida and distant, isolated villages
Where the rumbling of technology and super colour television remain a fantasy
So that they can benefit from snippets of the Sanur, Kuta and future Nusa Dua dollars

14 The poet states that hopes were raised because the new governor was Balinese, Aryantha Soethama, email communication, 8-5-2002.
15 The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C.
Selamat Pagi Pak Gubernur
Pasar bertingkat, sampah, traffic
light macet dan pelacuran
menunggu
Pedagang acung menuntut:
pariwisata bukan monopoli
pemilik artshop.
Kaum pendatang, pribumi
terdesak dan anak putus
sekolah
Banjir, lalu jalan pun terukir
Kami yakin akan kau selesaikan
untuk kami.

Good Morning Mr governor
Multi-storeyed markets, garbage,
traffic jams and prostitution are
waiting
Street-stall owners demand:
no monopoly on tourists for
artshop owners
Visitors, local people are pushed
aside and children drop out of
school
Floods happen, and then the
roads are all carved up
We’re confident you’ll solve it
for us.

The tone of the poem is very direct and bold given the political
circumstances which were far less tolerant of criticism than they
are today. The voice of Selamat pagi Pak Gubernur is ‘kami’ (we) which
suggests that the speaker speaks on behalf of the wider community
and highlights social rather than personal concerns. The poem uses
simple linguistic structures and everyday expressions instead of a
condensed, symbolic style. The declamatory manner resembles
that of Balinese poems from the national revolution period but the
content is slightly different. Where poems from the earlier period
contained propaganda and promoted political struggle, Selamat pagi
Pak Gubernur politely reminds the government of the need to use its
power to serve society.

Several issues are covered in the quote above, such as the contrast
between the facilities available in the most barren and isolated areas
(Ketewel, Seraya, Nusa Penida) and the most developed tourist areas
(Sanur, Kuta, Nusa Dua) and some common problems in urban areas
such as traffic jams, prostitution, immigrants and the marginalization
of local people. To overcome these complex problems, the poem
first asks the governor to ensure that isolated villages – though
today most of those mentioned are no longer isolated – can enjoy
the benefits of income from tourism. This shows a positive attitude
to the tourist industry, which reverses the way it is viewed in the
poems discussed earlier that directly or indirectly blame tourism for social change and see the modern culture that accompanies it as a threat. Like other poems from the New Order period, Selamat pagi Pak Gubernur approaches social issues with moderation, avoiding direct confrontation with the government while still permitting the poet to articulate deep concerns.

Loss of land and identity

Bali in the 1990s was not the Bali of peace and harmony so often described in tourist promotions. After a long period of silence, many public protests and student demonstrations condemning the pro-investment policies of the regional government took place during this decade. The government was accused of being too acquiescent in permitting investors to develop grandiose hotels, resorts and golf courses (Picard 1997:203-4; Suasta and Connor 1999:100-1). These developments forced many poor landholders to sell their sole asset, their land, resulting in ever-increasing numbers of landless, jobless farmers. Land plays an integral role in Balinese religion and culture, and the transfer of land ownership from local people to national or multi-national conglomerates causes significant problems for Balinese social and cultural practices (Pitana 1999b:121-2; MacRae 2003). A major example is the manner in which hotels now reserve many beaches for their guests and restrict public access, which is essential for the frequent purification rituals basic to Balinese Hinduism.

Community concern about the development of Bali is also shown by the widespread popularity of the expression ‘Kembalikan Baliku padaku’ (Bring back my Bali to me). This is taken from the lyrics of a popular song from the early 1990s written by Guruh Sukarnoputra – son of the late Indonesian president and of Balinese descent – and sung by Jopie Latul. Cynical appeals to ‘bring back my Bali to me’ still occasionally appear in the media to this day with the meaning changing according to the context in which it is used. Similar concerns dominated Balinese poems of the 1990s. By this time Balinese poets were no longer as interested in speaking about national issues, national identity or being Indonesian, as they had been during the
national revolution period. Nor were they interested in discoursing on personal ideas, but instead focused on the relationships between land, space, culture and Balinese identity. Balinese poets of the 1990s traverse complex themes, simultaneously addressing topics such as the loss of land, the decline of culture, alienation, anxiety and disillusionment with the contemporary situation in Bali (see Table 6).

Table 6. Reformation period poems on tourism and land alienation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Theme(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sakit (Sick)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Ketut Yuliarsa</td>
<td>Materialism as a disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Di pura Tanah Lot; Bersama Aix (In Tanah Lot temple; With Aix)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Landras Syaelendra</td>
<td>Feelings of alienation because of tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mana tanah Bali (Where is the land of Bali)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Widiyazid Soethama</td>
<td>The commercialization of culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tanah leluhur (Ancestral land)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Wayan Arthawa</td>
<td>The younger generation who distance themselves from their ancestral land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Di depan arca Saraswati (In front of Saraswati’s statue)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Fajar Arcana</td>
<td>Feelings of alienation because of lack of spiritual space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Benda-benda lahir menjadi Dewa-Dewa (Material goods become Gods)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Widiyazid Soethama</td>
<td>Materialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Upacara kepulangan tanah (Ceremony for returning to the land)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Oka Rusmini</td>
<td>Culture and civilization threatened by the loss of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tanah sengketa (Disputed land)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Alit S. Rini</td>
<td>Land appropriation and spiritual decline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The poetic Bali of 1990s reveals an anxious, threatened and gloomy island. One of the first poems to articulate this bleak outlook was *Tanah leluhur* (Ancestral land, 1994) written by Wayan Arthawa, from Karangasem in eastern Bali. Eastern Bali has suffered sharply from the depopulation of its villages as its young people move to Denpasar and other areas seeking work. The only major tourist development in the region occurred at Candi Dasa around the time the poem was written. It became one of the most graphic illustrations of the negative consequences of the rapid development which began around the late 1980s. A quiet lagoon with a small stretch of beach and a meditation centre was suddenly transformed into a ribbon of hotels

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Theme(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Catatan tentang Ubud (Notes on Ubud)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Sukawidana</td>
<td>Cultural commercialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Halaman kapur Bukit Pecatu (The limestone field at Bukit Pecatu)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Fajar Arcana</td>
<td>Appropriation of land for tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lelaki kuburan Badung (The man of Badung graveyard)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Nyoman Wirata</td>
<td>The lack of space for local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Manusia patung (Human statue)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Alit S. Rini</td>
<td>Feeling powerless in the face of growing development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nyoman urban (Urban Nyoman)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Nyoman Wirata</td>
<td>Feeling alienated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jalan ke Tanah Lot (Paths to Tanah Lot)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Warih Wisatsana</td>
<td>Feelings of alienation because of tourism development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tanah pesisir Padanggalak (Coastal land at Padanggalak)</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sukawidana</td>
<td>The appropriation of beachside land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and restaurants, and this quickly led to the erosion of the beach that had provided the initial attraction. The growth of discos there was also associated with increased violence, with fights breaking out between gangs of youths from different areas of East Bali. A sense of loss and deterioration is conveyed in religious terms, stating that ‘all the children are fleeing / leaving their ancestral lands’.16

In his poem, which was published in *Horison* in 1994, Wayan Arthawa takes as his overt subject the movement of young Balinese away from their villages and their traditions. While critical of them, he nevertheless presents the perceptions of those who leave – that the land is dry and polluted because the water from *subak* (irrigation systems) on which they depend has been redirected to new projects. Likewise, people feel drained of the possibility of retaining their traditions. However, the work does not explore what other possibilities exist. It is possible to see the poem as representative of the state of alienation experienced by young Balinese in the modern era. They deliberately abandon their existing traditional identity, while at the same time not achieving the modern condition to which they aspire.

Poets specifically express the idea of decline and loss as a spatial concern. Agriculture and religion are inextricably linked with the ancestral lands, which are being emptied of traditional activities and filled instead with tourist developments. Ngurah Bagus (1990: 1-5) analyses the shift from an agrarian to an industrial society, with tourist development shaping that change, as rice fields become golf courses. These changes have also been a potent source of imagery for many Balinese cartoonists, both those who published in the *Bali Post* and those who exhibited privately (Warren 1998:83-101). The messages they seek to convey centre on the increased pace of land speculation and the pressure put on poorer farmers to sell land. Between 1987 and 1990, agricultural land was converted to other functions at the rate of 1,000 hectares per year (Pitana 1999b:121-2; Wiranatha 2001:134-5). This trend has continued, primarily for the creation of residential and tourism facilities, despite a government...

16 Anak-anak semuanya berlari / meninggalkan tanah leluhur. The full version of Wayan Arthawa’s *Tanah leluhur* is included in Appendix C.
ban on the conversion of rice fields since the early 1990s.\footnote{See ‘Bali larang konversi sawah untuk pariwisata’, \textit{Kompas} 1-2-1997:2. Here it is stated that between 1989 and 1995, Bali lost an average of 900 hectares of agricultural land each year.}

There are abundant examples of disputes over land ownership, the point of contention often being the specific ceremonial or sacred function of the land. For most Balinese, every piece of land has a defined spiritual role, with a number of temples or shrines connected to spirits or deities of place all being required for the performance of ceremonies. The Balinese perform a variety of these ceremonies on the land on which they live, to ensure safe lives and fertile fields. For this reason, when land they possess or land in the area where they live falls into the hands of an outside landowner, a serious problem arises – where should the temples on such land be moved to, and where should its people hold their rituals in the future? The ownership and use of land, and the fate of Balinese culture remain dominant themes of local newspaper debates, and the general tone is typically pessimistic. The poem \textit{Tanah sengketa} (Disputed land), by Alit S. Rini, a \textit{Bali Post} journalist, illustrates these problems and this mood. The use of the word ‘\textit{tanah}’ (land or earth) in the title recalls Wayan Arthawa’s \textit{Tanah leluhur} and both poems stress the importance of land and space.

\textit{Tanah sengketa} develops different aspects of the issues raised by Wayan Arthawa. Its language is more cryptic, playing on the idea that both loss of access to the water and loss of land are linked to spiritual decline, as seen in the first two stanzas.\footnote{The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C.}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Pertarungan panjang ini & This long battle has left me \\
membutaku terpana & stunned \\
sudah ribuan kali kita & Thousands of times we have \\
percakapkan & discussed \\
laut yang tak lagi leluasa kita & the sea which we no longer can \\
datangi & freely reach \\
jukung-jukung kembali & the old log canoes return \\
melayari sungai rohani yang & sailing up a spiritual river \\
kian keruh & grown ever more murky
\end{tabular}
Kata yang berhamburan itu
takkan pernah jadi sabda
tertimun ia di bawah tanah
gusuran

Words scattered here and there
can never become truths
buried under a pile of
confiscated land

The poem appeared in the *Bali Post* in 1995, during the ongoing public protests against various tourism projects triggered by the Bali Nirwana Resort dispute. It conveys the idea that ritual space is diminished because roads leading to the sea have been closed. Spiritual flow and movement is stopped by the clearing or levelling of land. The enclosure of free spaces, of water as well as earth, is linked to emotional and physical suffering. For Balinese people, the sea is a place where vital rituals are performed. The series of *ngaben* (cremation ceremonies) always ends at the sea, with the scattering of the ashes of the body. This process provides a symbolic link which speeds the progress of the person who has been cremated to the next world.

Balinese Hindus also perform *melasti* ceremonies – a series of ceremonies to purify *pratima* (statues of the gods) in preparation for the Nyepi religious holiday – by the sea. So the sea cannot be separated from Balinese society’s ritual needs, and the withdrawal of free access to allow the completion of these rituals causes people to feel that they have offended their ancestors by severing communication with them.

An example of this is the disputed area of Padangganalak beach, next to the popular tourist resort of Sanur. In 1997, the Balinese regional government was forced to retract permits given to an investor to build hotels on the beach after strong protests from the community who use it for purification rituals. The reclamation project for the small coastal strip at Padangganalak was cancelled and the beach was returned to the community (Suasta and Connor 1999; Warren 2000:5-6). *Tanah sengketa* functions as an allegory of the contemporary condition of Bali, which has become a ‘disputed land’ – the dispute being between the Balinese people and government-backed investors (Picard 1997:202; Lewis and Lewis 2009:59-61).

The idea that Balinese attachment to the land is ancestral and ceremonial is also central to *Upacara kepulangan tanah* (Ceremony for returning to the land, 1995) by another *Bali Post* journalist, Oka...
Rusmini, who has also written a number of short stories and novels. Like the poems of Wayan Arthawa and Alit S. Rini, Oka Rusmini’s work depicts the Balinese as totally alienated because they have lost control over their own land and are no longer free to perform the necessary rituals, as the following excerpt emphasizes:

bahkan untuk mencium tanah
para pemilik peta, pemilik kali
Badung, pemilik laut
bahkan dewa-dewa
harus membayar bau tanah
miliknya

and just to smell the land
the owners of the map, the
owners of the Badung river, the
owners of the sea
even the gods
have to pay for the scent of the
earth that is theirs

The poem describes a set of embedded ties, making oblique references to the birth ceremonies during which the afterbirth, part of the self, is buried in the earth, and to the ritual of the third month when Balinese children take their first steps on the earth. Its lines go beyond the notion of nostalgia into a deep sense of loss, of land and water, which implies a further fundamental loss of identity. The poem describes, with great sadness, outsiders taking land owned by Balinese and the gradual extinction of Balinese civilization, as stressed in the opening line of the poem: ‘Ini peradaban yang menghilang’ (This is a disappearing civilization).

Upacara kepulangan tanah is a series of four poems each with the title Tanah Bali. The poem can be read as a metaphor for the Hindu concept of catur yuga (the cycle of four ages). Catur yuga comprises kertha, treta, dwapara and kali yuga, and explains the cycle of human civilization from its birth and harmonious state in the first age to
its instability and ruin in the last age (Wiana and Santeri 1993:61-2). *Kertha yuga*, the dawning of civilization, is an era marked by public prosperity, peace and a populace adhering to religious values. By contrast, *kali yuga*, the last era of civilization, is an era of chaos in which religious duties are neglected, people lose their way and society becomes barbaric.

The present era is always referred to as *kali yuga*, although its beginning and end are uncertain. Evidence for this can be found in the spread of corruption, greed and moral decay, the political and social conflicts that cause war, the death of other human beings, commercialization, the neglect of religious values and many other social problems. Although *catur yuga* is a concept from Hinduism, the term is usually used by the Balinese to refer to the state of civilization in the world at large. The opening reference to ‘civilization’ indicates that the idea of *catur yuga* is at work in the poem *Upacara kepulangan tanah*. Another sign is the division of the poem into four sections, suggesting the progressive transformation of Bali from harmony to instability. The last stanza, which contains the idea that the only land remaining to people will be the grave ('how many plots of land will you set aside for the burial'), allegorizes the *kali yuga*.

In one way or another, the idea of *kali yuga* or chaos, is also expressed in both *Tanah leluhur* and *Tanah sengketa*. Wayan Arthawa conveys an element of *kali yuga* in the sense that religious values have been abandoned, while Alit S. Rini declaims her vision with more radical imagery, with chaos arriving in a season of epidemics and a rain of blood. These representations accentuate the powerlessness of Balinese people, leaving them with the options of hollowness, becoming like 'a scarecrow' or dying – both implying a complete loss of human identity.22

22 ‘Aku telah menjelma jadi orang-orangan sawah / membawakan tari beku dicabik-cabik angin’ (I’ve already taken birth as a scarecrow / Performing my mute dance as I’m shredded by the wind).
Besides dealing with the concept of land as a material entity, all the above poems deal with issues of the spiritual or inner self. A number of works expand on this meeting of the interior and exterior through discussions of alienation and relationships specific to the spiritual space of temples. Balinese temples, which are holy places for Hindus, have been promoted as tourist attractions, and to take advantage of this, investors have felt encouraged to build hotels and resorts in improper proximity to temple sites. The manipulation of temples as tourist attractions has become a matter of public debate, particularly during the late 1990s. Opponents of this have called for the removal of pictures of temples from tourist brochures and have forced the government to reject the building of hotels too close to temples (Pitana 1999b:102; Warren 2000:5).

Through his poems that have a Balinese context, Fajar Arcana, a journalist with the national newspaper *Kompas*, tries to appear as a ‘spokesperson for ordinary people […] fighting for others’ (Putra 1998b:163). He can do this because he feels that he experiences the same things as ordinary people, and when he walks around Kuta, Nusa Dua or Candi Dasa, he feels alienated and foreign in the midst of this outburst of tourism. This can be seen in his poem *Di depan arca Saraswati* (In front of Saraswati’s statue), published in the *Bali Post* in 1994 and then included in his poetry collection *Bilik cahaya* (Room of light, 1997). *Di depan arca Saraswati*, addressed to the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, continues the theme of the lack of ritual space commented on by the other contemporary poets quoted above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Di depan arca Saraswati</strong></td>
<td>In front of Saraswati’s statue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewi, pelataran pura ini</td>
<td>Goddess, in this temple courtyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tak cukup buatku menari</td>
<td>there’s not enough space for me to dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terasa ruang kian menghimpit</td>
<td>More and more I feel that space is closing in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penuh ditumbuhi pohonan yang tidak kita kenal</td>
<td>planted full of trees that we do not recognise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dewi, gerak mana lagi mesti kumainkan
Langit telah jadi dinding pembatas
bagi kelihatan burung-burung
dan rumputan yang menghamba
di kaki peradaban
makin mengasingkan puja kita

Garis yang kau gores di atas debu
diterbangkan angin ke awan

Kita sedang bertamu di pelataran sendiri
Tak bebas lagi memetik bunga
atau terlentang di pasir
mencium hangat matahari

Dewi, harus kutujukan ke mana sembah ini?
di sekeliling pura telah tumbuh
pohonan yang tidak kita kenal!

Goddess, what movements should I play out?
The sky has become a wall to cut us off
from the sight of wild birds
and grass which bows down
at the feet of civilization
separates us more and more
from our worship

The line which you scratch in the dust
is borne up by the wind to the clouds
We are guests now in our own courtyards
No longer free to pick flowers
or stretch out on the sand
to kiss the warmth of the sun

Goddess, where should I direct this prayer?
all around the temple have grown
trees we do not recognise!

Bali is often called the ‘island of a thousand temples’ because there are so many in locations all over the island. As they are so numerous, the expression ‘temple courtyard’ in this poem can be taken to refer not to one particular area but to all public spaces in Bali. Similarly the phrase ‘planted full of trees’ can be read as a metaphor for ‘multi-storied buildings’, particularly the hotels and shopping complexes around tourist resorts in Kuta and Sanur and in the city of Denpasar. In the mid-1980s, the Bali regional government brought in regulations aimed at preventing the island from becoming a concrete jungle, fixing the height of buildings at a maximum of 15 metres or the equivalent of three stories.
The rapidity of recent development, however, has caused Bali to become overcrowded and has led to a loss of green spaces as well as open areas, and as other poets have indicated, there is no longer sufficient room for the performance of social and religious activities. There are other layers of meaning in Fajar Arcana’s poem. It voices public complaints about places considered sacred that no longer provide an atmosphere conducive to prayer or ritual, a concern also expressed in the poems of Alit S. Rini and Oka Rusmini. Fajar Arcana seeks to unite this concern about spiritual space being closed off with a similar concern about the loss of living space. A strong sense of distance and alienation is also emphasized in his poem. People now feel like ‘guests’ in their own space (‘We are guests now in our own courtyards’). The word ‘tamu’ (guests) is the officially preferred word for foreigners and tourists and Di depan arca Saraswati clearly suggests that the ‘tourists’ are the Balinese themselves, not the foreigners, thus implying that the Balinese have lost their identity.

The poet identifies with those who are estranged and those under pressure, ‘no longer free to pick flowers’. Many flowers are used in Balinese offerings and prayers, so losing the right to gather them implies that opportunities to practise tradition and religion – both essential elements of Balinese identity – are lost. The poem suggests that the sole avenue of recourse is a plea to the Goddess Saraswati. This is not the first time Saraswati’s name has been invoked poetically to address a problem. An earlier example occurs in Oke’s Och, Ratna (1938), the poem discussed in Chapter III about the importance of knowledge for Balinese in coping with modernity brought about by tourism in the late colonial period. The mention of Saraswati in Fajar Arcana’s poem is relevant because it is used to highlight the Balinese people’s ignorance of what is happening around them.

Other poems that use the idea of the Balinese being alien in their own land are Fajar Arcana’s Halaman kapur Bukit Pecatu (The limestone field at Bukit Pecatu, 1996) and Nyoman Wirata’s poem Nyoman urban (Urban Nyoman, 1996). Nyoman Wirata extends the concept of Balinese as ‘guests’ by referring to them as wong sunantara, which is Balinese for ‘foreigners’ or people from far away, while in Halaman kapur Bukit Pecatu, Fajar Arcana describes the Balinese as being ‘powerless’ and ‘backed further and further into a corner’.
Halaman kapur Bukit Pecatu took its inspiration from the case of Bali Pecatu Graha, a luxury housing estate complete with golf course owned by a son of former President Suharto, Hutomo (Tommy) Mandala Putra. The project is unfinished due to the economic and political crises of 1997 that precipitated the krismon, a dramatic fall in the relative value of the Indonesian currency. Due to this and the unfairness involved with many land transactions a lot of problems regarding land ownership remain unresolved. The accumulated effect of this, combined with some forced land sales, is to make Balinese the true wong sunantara.

A more explicit statement of this latter form of alienation comes in the poem Di pura Tanah Lot (At Tanah Lot temple), by Ketut Landras Syaelendra, which was first published in Horison in 1994 and later included in his poetry collection Mata dadu (The eyes of the dice, 1998). As with the poems of his colleagues, the subject matter of Ketut Landras Syaelendra’s poems is heavily oriented towards the issues discussed above, that is, the effects of the rapid growth of tourism on Balinese life. The feeling of alienation is shown in the opening stanza of the poem.23

Kami memasuki kawasan asing ini
di antara tiang-tiang beton
dan lalu lalang tubuh-tubuh telanjang
Kenanganlah yang selalu mempertemukan kami

We enter this strange territory between concrete pylons and the coming and going of naked bodies. It is memories that always unite us.

Written at a time when opposition to the Bali Nirwana Resort mega-project was at its most vocal, between 1993 and 1996, the poem comments directly on the threat posed to the Tanah Lot temple. As a poet, Ketut Landras Syaelendra captures this moment by showing that the sacred Tanah Lot temple has become defiled by its popularity as a tourist attraction and its image as a temple or home of the gods has thus been diminished (‘Tak ada lagi tarian dewa di puncak meru

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23 The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C.
ini’, The gods will dance no longer on the peak of this meru). Ketut Landras Syaelendra, however, avoids engaging in the controversy over the development and the granting of the permit, and the collusion between the local administration and the Jakarta-based Bakrie conglomerate. Instead, he takes an easy, safe option and shifts the blame onto the tourists themselves. His decision to avoid direct criticism of the government in this manner illustrates that poets could still be overawed by the shadow of government power. Poets of the colonial era had used a similar strategy.

Like his contemporaries, Ketut Landras Syaelendra clearly shows the connections between the disappearance of land for agricultural use, the enclosure of sacred space and the loss of sanctity within it, and the sense of alienation of the Balinese. He sees the gods departing. Temples are no longer places where people can connect with gods and ancestors and as a result the Balinese social order loses its equilibrium. Other poets – I Nyoman Tusthi Eddy, Gusti Made Sukawidana, Warih Wisatsana, Hartanto, Sindhu Putra and Umbu Landu Paranggi – have all written one or more poems on Tanah Lot. Apart from expressing disappointment about the Bali Nirwana Resort controversy, their poems also convey general concern for the overall Balinese social situation with its over-commercialized and desecrated culture. In their poems, Bali is portrayed as having undergone a major change – one which means it is no longer the place of spiritual comfort much stereotyped in guidebooks.

Images of the human condition

The emotions emerging from these poems present a disturbing image of the human condition in Bali. The happy, joyful, content Balinese people of the outsider’s imagination are absent. Instead the poems deal with various levels of emotion, and link personal feelings to a spiritual experience which is being lost, resulting in

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24 Bakrie is a company with interests in several areas, such as construction, mining, communication and tourism. Recently the owner of the company Aburizal Bakrie became involved in politics and was elected chairman of Golkar.
images of Balinese people who are alienated, gloomy, repressed and marginalized. These powerless images of the Balinese are directly attributed to the rapid growth of tourism – an industry that is seen as a source of economic opportunity by governments, but as a socio-cultural threat in the eyes of poets.

A poem that illustrates this notion of tourism as a threat which leaves poorer people in tears rather than in a state of joy is Gusti Made Sukawidana’s *Catatan tentang Ubud; Aku teringat Isma Sawitri* (Notes on Ubud; Remembering Isma Sawitri, 1996). Gusti Made Sukawidana was born in Ubud, but spends most of his time in Denpasar where he works as a junior high school teacher, teaching Indonesian language and literature. Under his supervision, the school’s drama and literary clubs have been very active and they often dominate local drama and creative writing competitions. Oka Rusmini, one of his students, was active in the literary club in the mid-1980s. Although he lives in Denpasar, Gusti Made Sukawidana often returns to his village near Ubud, less than an hour’s drive north, either for personal visits or to attend various traditional ceremonies and social functions – something that is common among Balinese. These visits have given him an opportunity to observe the rapid changes occurring in Ubud.

Ubud is a well-known tourist town in south-east Bali, which has long been a home for foreign artists and expatriates (Picard 1996:83-9; MacRae 1999:123-8). The town is famous for its performing arts and the fine quality of its visual arts. Most of the inhabitants of Ubud earn their living from businesses related to tourism, ranging from luxurious hotels to budget class accommodation, from fine arts shops to cheap souvenir stalls. However, not all inhabitants of Ubud are fortunate enough to become rich, or even to benefit, from tourism – some are forced to face a bitter reality, as reflected in Gusti Made Sukawidana’s poem.25

Di Ubud sekarang ada pasar bertingkat

In Ubud nowadays there is a multilevel market

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25 The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C.
The changes in Ubud mentioned here are representative of the changes in Bali as a whole, as described by other poets. Gusti Made Sukawidana uses a similar metaphor to one used by Fajar Arcana when he associates the growth of hotels with that of weeds, growing rapidly in river valleys. Both poets also use the expression ‘temple courtyard’ to refer to the sacred space or inner core of Bali. The important aspect of Gusti Made Sukawidana’s poem is his differentiation between upper- and lower-class people, between tourists and local people, and between artists and brokers. Almost everything is for sale to satisfy outsiders, tourists and brokers, reducing Balinese culture to the status of ‘nothing more than a spectacle’ for the entertainment of these outsiders, ideas shared by Oka Sukanta’s poem *Bali dalam puisi* discussed above.

Isma Sawitri, who is specifically mentioned in the subtitle of the poem, is a national poet of Acehnese origin who wrote a poem entitled *Ubud* in 1974. Isma Sawitri emphasized the religious, traditional and romantic images of Ubud and its inhabitants, whereas Gusti Made Sukawidana’s piece depicts the depth of sadness of people at the time he was writing. It can therefore be seen as a critique of Isma Sawitri’s poem, written more than 20 years earlier. If the two poems are read together, they present a summary of the changes that have been taking place not just in Ubud, but throughout Bali. If in Fajar Arcana’s poem, Balinese are depicted as ‘guests’, in Gusti Made Sukawidana’s poem they are portrayed as part of a ‘spectacle’, extending the image of Bali as a ‘museum’.

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26 Isma Sawitri’s poem *Ubud* is included in *On the verandah*, a bilingual anthology of modern Indonesian poetry edited and translated by Iem Brown and Joan Davis (1995:76-7). See Appendix C.
Balinese intellectuals used the term ‘museum’ in the 1920s in *Surya Kanta* to reject the colonial construction of Balinese culture. Despite independence, even now, in the twenty-first century, the image of Bali as a ‘museum’ is very much alive, particularly in the discourse of tourism and culture. Gusti Made Sukawidana’s poem suggests how powerless and hurt Balinese people feel in trying to overturn the ‘museum’ concept.

The Balinese are also depicted as worshippers of material goods, worshippers who have become commercialized. These characteristics are inseparable from the development of tourism and the advances of technology. The need of tourists for commodities has enabled the Balinese to sell their art, but this involves selling part of themselves as well. The poem *Mana tanah Bali* (Where is the land of Bali, 1994) by Widiyazid Soethama questions where some important Balinese cultural traditions like performing arts, dance, and traditional and religious songs have gone. As in Oka Sukanta’s *Bali dalam puisi, Mana tanah Bali* makes it starkly clear that many Balinese are powerless to resist the powerful lure of money, as evidenced by the changes in their lifestyle. In *Benda-benda lahir menjadi Dewa-Dewa* (Material goods become Gods, 1994), Widiyazid Soethama describes an attitude to life which makes commodities into gods and gods into commodities, another characteristic of *kali yuga*.28

Paduka yang mulia benda-benda dunia
melakukan prajuritMu dengan
mimpi-mimpi buruk
tinggalkan dirinya dari
ekemuliaan hati
untuk pesta pora dan mabuk
sepotong nikmat
pada benda lahir yang menjadi
dewa-dewa

His Excellency worldly goods
wounded Your soldiers with bad
dreams
they abandon the goodness in
their hearts
for partying and getting drunk
on slices of pleasure,
from material things that have
become gods

27 Widiyazid Soethama is the younger brother of Aryantha Soethama whose poetry is discussed above.

28 The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C.
The Balinese people in this poem are portrayed as being part of a society that is becoming deeply materialistic. Those who have enriched themselves enormously by selling their land, or have profited from tourism through jobs, capital investment and other means are part of this materialism. While this assessment is hard to reject, it is also true that many economic benefits gained from tourism have been spent in positive ways, such as sending children to study overseas and fulfilling spiritual needs by building grander ancestral household shrines, renovating temples and making pilgrimages to India (Vickers 1996:30; Santeri 1992:98).

Ketut Yuliarsa also focuses on materialism in contemporary Bali in his poem *Sakit* (Sick, 1993), published in the *Bali Post*. The poem takes its themes from lifestyles centred on materialism and consumerism. ‘Sickness’ here is defined in phrases such as ‘desire for prestige compels people to buy new houses and cars, even without enough money’. According to Ketut Yuliarsa, this sickness is not just caused by a yearning for prestige but also by simple greed, the foul cultural atmosphere and a season of uncertainty. These factors all fit the idea of a reign of chaos or *kali yuga* found in other poems discussed above. Here modernity is understood as either failing to provide happiness or as the cause of sickness for those who pursue it obsessively. It extends the negative images of modernity expressed in poems, short stories and plays by Balinese writers since the colonial period.

While *Sakit* makes no specific reference to the problems of space, land and excessive development on the island, the changes in the overall lifestyle of the people he refers to are intertwined with the other ongoing upheavals in Balinese society and culture. As we have seen, change in Bali is attributed to external influences and accelerated by tourism and contact with foreigners.

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29 The full version of the poem is included in Appendix C. The translation is taken from Cork 2000:78-9.
Voices of resistance

The overt tone of pessimism and gloom in these Balinese poems results from the unease poets feel about the rapid pace of change in their island. Alit S. Rini, when interviewed, argued that the changes around her have made her feel ‘not at peace’ (Putra 1998a:164). She stated that many of her poems reflect the powerlessness of the people, their sense of being manusia patung (human statues) or ‘scarecrows’. In her opinion, no poetry, even that written by world-class poets, will ever bring about change. However, although she feels ‘not at peace’ and ‘powerless’, Alit S. Rini refuses to stand aside or give up. She wants to stay at the centre of things and to continue to write poetry, because she is convinced that people around her want to hear others speaking out in protest. She does this through her poems and the articles which have appeared in the *Bali Post*, which emphasize the importance of the need to maintain Balinese culture, religion and identity in the face of external pressures.

Other journalist-poets such as Raka Pemayun, Oka Rusmini and Fajar Arcana share this position. In his role as a journalist, for example, Fajar Arcana has often written news items and articles detailing his observations of the oppression of lower-class people and farmers who are struggling to keep their land. In such situations, he states, it is easy for him to identify with the victims, because he has witnessed the alienation caused by the decreasing amount of spiritually intimate open space caused by excessive development in Bali (Putra 1998a:163).

Some non-Balinese poets like Ajip Rosidi, Rendra, Isma Sawitri and Radhar Panca Dahana have tried to emulate Balinese voices, but Fajar Arcana argues that these poets simply acquire images of Bali from a ‘bus or aeroplane window’ or as ‘tourists’. According to him, in this latter role, non-Balinese poets can only express romantic images of Bali and fail to convey the real problems facing the Balinese.

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30 Alit S. Rini published her first poetry anthology titled *Karena aku perempuan Bali* (Because I am a Balinese woman) in 2003. Her poem *Tanah sengketa* discussed in this chapter is included in this anthology. Her poems that deal with women’s issues are discussed in Chapter VI.
Fajar Arcana’s claim is valid, the exception being Rendra’s *Sajak pulau Bali* (Poem of the island of Bali, 1978), which openly protests against the intrusion of capitalism into Bali through tourism and the commercialization of Balinese culture. The poem *Mohammad Rukman Kartawinata di Bali* (Mohammad Rukman Kartawinata in Bali, 1957) by Ajip Rosidi (1993) and *Bali di ufuk teru-menyan* (Bali on the horizon, a fragrant tree; 1994) by Radhar Panca Dahana are good examples in support of Fajar Arcana’s claim. Ajip Rosidi’s poetry portrays its character as *pelancong sejati* (truly tourist), while Radhar Panca Dahana describes how its subject looks at Bali from the aeroplane window.31 Ajip Rosidi and Radhar Panca Dahana see Bali with a tourist’s eye, resulting in a series of romantic images of the island. Coming from outside, these poets are not really concerned with understanding the deep-seated factors contributing to a distinctive Balinese identity.

Unlike Radhar Panca Dahana and Ajip Rosidi, who see Bali as visitors, Balinese poets describing their homeland are not just observers but also actors experiencing what they are expressing. When they write poetry, they combine the creative manipulation of language with a desire for that language to intervene in the changes that are affecting them so deeply. Balinese poets do not create poetry as tourists but as indigenous people who are concerned and anxious, living amidst the cultural and developmental problems that surround them. They therefore feel they have the authority to describe these changes, both physical and non-physical. Physical change is causing land in Bali to be gradually used up and to fall into the hands of outsiders, with the result that Balinese spiritual space is being increasingly restricted. Non-physical change inflicts feelings of alienation and powerlessness, stemming from the diminished sacredness of temples and the decline of ceremonial space in general. When Balinese poems of the Reformation era are read as a whole, they seem to cry out with one voice: ‘Bring back my Bali to me’.

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31 ‘Waktu berangkat di jendela pesawat, lagi kau kulihat’ (When leaving, from the aeroplane window I look again at you).
Reinventing Balinese cultural identity

Reading many Balinese poems, from the colonial and national revolution periods through to the New Order and Reformation eras, makes it clear that Balinese identity has continually altered according to the tempo of the general political, social and cultural changes occurring within the island. National revolutionary concerns in the 1950s and 1960s became part of this identity but this was transitory and the focus quickly returned to specifically Balinese issues. For the reader, there is no fixed, single Balinese identity to be found but rather a fluid, multiple one. The changes, as the poems show, are the result of an ongoing struggle among the Balinese between controlling the dynamic of their own society and responding to powerful national and global forces.