

*In the Fields of Encompassment:  
Colonialism and the Advent  
of Modernity*

First it was messianic, then violent, becoming a long slow dissolve into the course of modernity. The first engagements of the Maring with Europeans were sometime in the mid-1930s. No one knows how often; these encounters were quasi ritual, the Maring mesmerized by what they beheld, some believing that the Westerners were ancestor spirits returned in transfigured form. The complexion of these invaders was pale and ghostly, their hair cropped and drained of color, their eyes alighting on each other promiscuously, their feet wrapped in some strange skin, their gait odd and unsure. Their bodies were abnormally large and they talked in a tongue that, to the Maring ear, barely sounded like language. They barked orders at the black bodies, mostly pairs marching in tandem, their heads tilted to accommodate the pole on their shoulders along which was strung a metallic box. And just as often there were no comparable witnesses from the colonial side, for the Maring were mostly watching the patrol party from behind blinds. The women and children had taken refuge in the deep forest while a band of men remained and witnessed the spectacle. Where in later years, the New Guinea Highlands would play spectacle to the West—lighting up its imagination and the covers of National Geographic—the first encounters were an inversion of that reality in the making. So early reports indicate that the patrols encountered signs of habitation but no inhabitants.

The next great moment was violent and revealing. A generation later, it underlined in blood that the Maring were vulnerable. In the opening months of 1955, a party of Yomban—the easternmost Maring clan cluster—chanced upon and killed a gardening group of Manga, apparently in retaliation for the theft of pandanus fruits and the rape of a Yomban girl. The entire Manga party—estimated at twelve—was slaughtered in the encounter. A patrol officer, R. I. MacIlwain, hearing the story of the massacre while doing a census among the Manga, then headed for Togban (see map 2 in chap. 1) to ferret out the Yomban “murderers” (MacIlwain 1955). But no sooner had he set foot on Yomban territory than he was met by a group of men who told him in no uncertain terms that their dispute with the Manga was none of his business. Believing that he did not com-

mand sufficient firepower to engage them, MacIlwain retired to the patrol post at Minj (Cook 1967:7). The Yomban then launched at all-out attack on the Manga, driving them from their land and leaving their homesteads in flames that could be seen for miles (Attenborough 1960:44–45). Determined to teach the Yomban a lesson and set an example, MacIlwain returned in May 1956 with a detachment of heavily armed police. They met a group of black-faced warriors as they entered Yomban territory and summarily opened fire. In a matter of minutes eight Yomban were killed, nine others badly wounded, the defeated Maring group now fleeing for safety. The patrol then proceeded to destroy all of the Yomban settlements, burning their houses, killing what pigs and cassowaries they could find, and leveling the pandanus trees. The use of direct, punitive, and summary attack on peoples who violated the Pax Britannica fit the colonial office's concept of "being firm." Watson (1960) reports that elsewhere in the Highlands the patrol officer, Ian Mack, accompanied by a police contingent, surrounded the men's house at Aiamontina (Kainantu) and opened fire on whoever might be within, killing at least nine and wounding others. There were numerous other killings and executions throughout the territory—though in the eyes of the administration, they were always justified and unavoidable. Peace would be achieved by whatever violent means were necessary.

For the rest of the Maring, especially the clan clusters to the west who had, up until this moment, only felt a touch of the colonial presence, the deaths at Togban and the rumors that flew around them were the beginning of a longer conversation with the encompassing universe. The narratives of the "red men"—first of the fear they provoked and then of their resounding firepower—became special episodes in the cultural history of the Maring as a group, as much a part of their collective memory as the wars they had won and lost. The red color of their skin, the smoke from their guns, their shirts that buttoned down the front, their supplies of tinned foods: everything conspired to make this a historical event in the truest sense, an oracular sign that a discontinuity between past and present was in the offing. After the original sightings, there was discussion among the Kauwatyí senior men about these disturbances in the field. Some argued that the "red men" were incarnations of ancestor spirits, red spirits who, enraged that their names had been forgotten and sacrifices were no longer made on their behalf, had returned to punish the living and reclaim their homesteads. Others argued that the intruders were sorcerers from afar, from the home of pearlshells and steel axes, their appearance in the manner of sorcerers, a transfigured form of their real persons. Just as a sorcerer could assume the form of a cassowary or pig, so he could take the form of a red spirit to fool and best his enemy. Another version of the aftermath of this initial meeting has the Maring as epistemological agnos-

tics, of being unable to know who these foreigners were. Whatever the outcome of these collective ruminations, only the most incipient of cargo cults ever developed, and this was short-lived. What did occur was the collective recognition that the killings at Togban began a time when the Maring's traditional reaction to intruders would have to be placed in historical parentheses. Whatever and whoever these aliens were, they had conquered the Maring as much spiritually as militarily.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, on future occasions of encounter things would be very different. From 1958 to 1962 the colonial administration led by patrol officers such as Griffin, Worcaster, and O'Farrell made a more extensive series of forays into the Jimi and Simbai Valleys. This time the Maring issued no resistance; their fierceness had turned to anxiety, their defiance to a certain subordination and willingness to try to please. Gavin Souter, an Australian journalist who accompanied patrols into the Jimi valley, described an encounter.

In 1958, I accompanied a patrol into the Bismarcks, a range of mountains whose green rococo folds of rain forest from the northern wall of the Jimi Valley. After two weeks of more or less comfortable walking . . . we climbed an almost vertical slope of mud and tree roots for three hours, then crossed a ridge of moss forest at 6,000 feet, and jolted downhill beside a hectic, nameless stream which our guides said would lead us to a rendezvous they had arranged with the Gants [actually, a place name called Gunts, the people were Maring of the Fungai-Korama cluster]. Ten minutes later we met the Gants; they were standing beside a waterfall, about forty men in grass sporrans and plumes and possum fur, and some were so nervous that they held each other's hands for comfort.

They led us to a campsite, called their women and children out of the bush, and presented the patrol with two live pigs trussed to poles. After returning this compliment with steel hatchets and salt, the patrol officer, Barry Griffin, addressed the Gants in Pidgin English. Our interpreter relayed the speech in his own placetalk which, although not identical with that of the Gants, was intelligible to them. "I am the Kiap" said Griffin. "I am the Government. Many times I have heard you Gants people mentioned, and you have interested me. Now I have come here to your place, and I see all you . . . gathered to meet me, and I am pleased.

When Griffin had finished telling the Gants that they must no longer kill or steal, and that they must help the government build patrol roads [i.e., do road construction for free on behalf of the colonial government], the time was 5:30 P.M. and the sun had

almost set. But there was still time to lower the Australian flag which had been hoisted beside our tents earlier in the afternoon. As the flag slid down its bamboo pole Griffin came to attention and saluted; his police slapped the butts of their bayoneted .303s and the poor bewildered Gants stood gaping. (Souter 1963: 235–36)

How different from the first encounters in 1955 and 1956 when the Maring sought to fend off the kiaps. Here they are “nervous” and eager to please, dressed in finery and offering two of their cherished pigs. A detachment of well-armed police accompanies the patrol officer, their .303 military rifles bayoneted as though they were expecting a firefight. But word of the incident with the Yonbam has blanketed the valley, and the Fungai-Korama appear more than willing to submit to government control. Unlike the earlier episodes, this and future engagements would find the Maring in a compromised position, willing to accept the verbal and sometimes physical abuse at the hands of the kiaps. Indeed, the Maring will give the government little trouble for the next quarter century.

### *Pax Britannica and the Colonial Imagination*

Those who hold that we should have left the primitive mountain tribes of New Guinea to their innocent, idyllic existence would change their views had they have been able to see the fear, superstition and pain that dominated the lives of these people before the government stopped tribal fighting, bound their wounds and broke open the prison of their fearful isolation.

JAMES SINCLAIR, 1981

The patrol reports from across the Highlands talk incessantly about “making contact” as though the brute act of making contact itself would change the Other, projecting the morality of the West into a new geography. For many Maring, this was a gift that was at once unwanted and unrepayable—that could only be acknowledged by submitting to the will of the state and its agents. That many valleys of the Highlands remained terra incognita well into the 1960s appears to have bothered the colonial state no end; so it continually hatched plans and timetables to bring all of the protectorate under control. There was more than a touch of magic in all this. The mere planting of the Australian flag, a symbol having absolutely no meaning to the Maring, magically brought once autonomous peoples under the sway of the colonizer. The arrival of the assistant district officer (ADO), the translated speech on the virtues and

law of the government, the ceremonial raising and lowering of the Australian colors, all of this was believed to be the first inaugural step in bringing the Maring into the twentieth century. The Maring could come willingly or reluctantly, but come they would. From the perch of the colonial administration, the history of the Maring was a Western concern. Having been granted the island in trust, it was a Western and specifically Australian responsibility to see that its people were marched into the modern era and onto the world historical stage. Maring, Melpa, Enga, and other Highlands histories would become moments of world history—minor stories on a larger stage produced and directed by the more advanced Western powers.

As one patrol officer explained to me in July 1974, the “civilization” of the Maring and all the peoples of the Highlands was a three-step dance: the initial step was contact, the second was pacification, and the third was the patient process of civilization. In the first encounter, the area was mapped, the “presence of the government” was made felt, and if possible a census was conducted. According to the patrol men, this instance of first contact set the stage for what was to come, and thus it was important to be muscular and determined. Flanked, as he was that day at Gants, by a phalanx of armed policemen, the tone and substance of the kiap’s address underlined that this was not an encounter between equals—culturally, intellectually, or technologically. From that moment on, local lives and practices would be subject to a higher, Western, nearly omnipotent authority not of their own choosing.

In the next step, the “natives” were disarmed, and the firepower and authority of the government was driven home. In the colonial mind, fear and respect were fraternal twins. Often this display of firepower and authority took the form of the shooting of pigs, the burning of war shields, and punitive raids against “law breakers.” In 1966, for example, officer Brown remanded most of the able-bodied Kauwaty men to a two-week work detail as punishment for the “theft” of kerosene and food from a Western woman. Guilt or innocence was less the point than for the community to learn the divine right of kiaps—as it came to be called and enjoyed by those in stations of authority. From that period onward, the administration also demanded the nucleation of what were formerly more dispersed settlements. The rationale for the concentration of the community was that it would lighten the burden of the patrol officers’ intermittent attention and make the Maring region easier to govern, although in the overall scheme of things this could not have been of much practical importance. But that was not the point. The concentration of once dispersed settlements was a permanent reminder of, and a memorial to, the power of the state administration. The nucleation also compelled and enticed people to congress on a more frequent basis, creating greater contact among

distant relations. Particularly among the younger generation, it elevated the principle and possibility of friendship to a new level—a point to which we shall return in a few moments.

But Western influence was never simply a sequitur to Western policy. An unspoken aspect of the colonial presence was its influence on local house styles, especially its implicit opposition to men's houses. This aspect was unspoken inasmuch as the impact of the administration and the missionaries on the domestic sphere was never a matter of policy or doctrine. Rather, it existed as a presupposition, a given, that appeared in the attitude of the Westerners the Maring encountered, in those practices that won their nod of approval and those that provoked a shake of the head. The station manager, for example, once described the traditional, low-slung oval house as "more like a den than a proper house." So, desiring to be modern, the Maring began to replace their own low-slung, windowless, oval houses with what they called Papuan-style houses. The model and monument to this style was the kiap's rest house, centrally positioned by the administration on the clan cluster's common dance ground. The Papuan-style house was, first of all, large enough and meant to contain an entire family, this in contrast to a men's house semicircled by several or more women's houses. The Papuan house created a space for the family unit, husband, wife, and children, sanctified in matrimony and blessed by the Lord. Its design and size also permitted a fixed space set off from the outside world, divided internally into rooms allocated to specific domestic activities, such as sleeping, storage, cooking, and eating. This stood in contrast to the "traditional" arrangement that featured physically (though not conceptually) undifferentiated houses and that assumed a certain continuity between inside and outside (e.g., cooking). Just as the tropical environment with its "riot" of flowers and plants seem to dissolve into an indiscernible mass, so traditional housing did not appear conducive to proper sociality. To the Western mind, the A-framed Papuan house with its airy spaces, addiction to light, and internal divisions seemed infinitely more orderly than traditional arrangements.

Another invention in the management of newly "controlled areas" was the construction of a road linking all of the villages to the government station. The golden rule was that each Monday would be officially devoted to building and improving this main road, and its iron-fisted implementation (backed by beatings and lock-ups for defaulters) was that each cluster would "volunteer" to provide as much unpaid labor as the kiap deemed necessary to complete and maintain their section of the road. The big road, the new road, linking all the settlements to the government station was sacred to order, authority, and peace. The road was space out of "traditional" space, it belonged to no clan, and so all could walk along the road without fear of violence or intimidation (though maybe a little sor-

cery). “He ruled the Western Highlands like a principality,” answerable only to his own inclinations, “one of his chief obsessions” being the construction of roads (Sinclair 1981: 208). So Sinclair describes Thomas Ellis, the district commissioner of the Western Highlands. The road, like the government and mission stations, the rest house and the medical aid post, were novel kinds of public space—spaces whose genesis and use was defined by the state (as impersonated by the kiap) rather than by kinship and marriage. Physically and metaphorically, it was nothing less than the simultaneous invention and expansion of the public political sphere, a new space in which categorical identities outweigh relational ones, orchestrated by men “whose skin we have never seen” (Maring elder in 1981).

The administration’s aim was to imprint a Western standard of order and orderliness, to engrave on Melanesian bodies, minds, and landscapes an appreciation of Christian bourgeois discipline since this was assumed to be the grail of progress. This vision of evolution came with its own ontology. Just as fear led to respect, so an orderly village would produce an orderly mind. Cleared roads that ran by nucleated, evenly spaced houses with penned pigs and proper latrines would eventually produce subjects with clear, directed, and rational thinking. Subjects who would will their own metamorphosis. Diligence on the part of the administration was crucial; for it was the persistent impression of order that would eventually carry the Melanesian as close to the modern person as their nature would allow. The kiaps believed unquestionably and said emphatically that their fixation on “getting the settlements in proper order” was just what the Maring needed if they were to ascend into the twentieth century. This policy was both necessary and enlightened, even if the “natives” were only dimly aware of its eventual benefits. At some unspecified time in the future, they would be “thankful” for their guidance into modernity and onto the world stage. In the final step of the dance toward civilization, the local populace would cheerlead its own transformation, endorse the politics of citizenship and the nation-state, mature into God-fearing Christians, develop local business ventures and a sense of entrepreneurship, attend school as a matter of course, master the Queen’s English, appreciate the values of money, applaud the miracle of science, and matriculate generally into prosperous societies composed of autonomous individuals bent on self-improvement. For the West, Papua New Guinea’s peaceful and orderly metamorphosis into a democratic nation-state confirmed that the colonial intervention was not only necessary but ultimately salutary.

So many of the kiaps spoke of the three-step colonial project in terms that oscillated between a heroic and a thankless task, sometimes in the same breath. Particularly at night, when loneliness and a longing for home had set in and a melancholy had awakened in their eyes, when blind hours of drinking had disabled their superego and their conscience was allowed

to vent the feelings their sober side would better repress, the kiaps told whoever was white and would listen how they loved and hated their job and “this place”—this place, this placeless referent, being both the concept of Papua New Guinea and their specific circumstance. For many of the Westerners who came to Melanesia, “this place,” “PNG,” and “the bush” were euphemisms. They described the terrain of their own psyches, the latitude and longitude of selfhood, more than cultural geography. “This place,” “PNG,” and “the bush” were sources of refuge from their own world, a challenge to prove themselves to themselves, a chance to restart their lives unencumbered by the weight of their own history—all of this and the possibility of redemption wrapped in the cloak of duty, adventure, and rational nationalism. And so the Melanesia they encountered was as much the projection of their own inner landscapes as a “real” place of the Other. Thus the profusion of geographic metaphors was no accident; for often the kiaps and “expats” (as the expatriates named themselves) spoke of “this place” or “the bush” as though it was uninhabited, as though one could speak of it independently of the people who had lived there for millennia. Thus the simultaneity of love and hate they felt for Melanesia could not have been more personal. And this most combustible mixture of human psychology, in its most unreflective state, often drove their behavior. My friend Penga, a lapsed seminary candidate at the Anglican mission school in Poppendeta, a man who knew astoundingly little about botany (at least for a Maring) but who spoke English fluently and was one of the most psychologically sagacious people I have ever encountered, summed it up this way: “If you can’t live in your own place and you can’t live here, you must live in a bottle”—referring to the fact that, in the long moment between nightfall and the click into sleep, all of the kiaps and expats he had ever known had bathed their psyches in whiskey and beer. On another occasion, this time in Maring and in a phrase that is almost untranslatable, he told me that they were people who did not like their own reflection.

Sometimes the recruits were educated veterans, but mostly they were young men, too young and inexperienced for the complex task of interfacing between cultures. As Sinclair concedes in his most apologetic voice, officers of limited education and even more “limited experience at this time and for years after were often placed in charge of patrol posts or sub-district stations” (1981:15). To make matters worse, the department of Native Affairs never devised any formal, approved statement of its mission or operations. So these young men often seemed to be actors trapped in a recondite play with no inkling of purpose or plot, stumbling through their parts, nursing the bravest face they could muster. They were men whose public presentation of self as disciplined, manly, hard-boiled, and unflappable was part of a deception that was also and most of all a self-deception. The kiaps described their excursions into the local world in a

way that was at once boastful and modest, a dance of tropes in which traversing a gorge over a badly weathered vine bridge or nearly air-crashing in the dense mist that overhung the mountains was told with a too casual humor, as though high adventure borne with good grace and measured modesty was the mark of a man. This was the convention. Their public self hid deep underlying senses of uncertainty and insecurity, fears that led them to be more punitive toward local offenders than was necessary, more condescending toward local leaders than warranted, more intolerant than inquisitive about local practices. Many kiaps harbored what they could not admit, least of all to themselves: a fear of powerlessness both in “this place” and when they returned home (denuded of the nearly absolute authority they exercised in the “bush,” made doubly vulnerable because they had spent their lives learning a job for which there was no counterpart in Australia). And then there is the kind of alienation that visits a man who cannot be at home in so foreign a land but whose own home looks best when viewed from afar. Samuel Beckett, the Irishman who wrote of Irish men, but lived most of his life and all of his death in Paris, said of men like himself that, no matter where they were they were always far from home, and thus their behavior, in sympathy with their spirit, was often grotesque, angst-ridden, and laced with uncertainty.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the bookish and reflective Beckett, the patrol men were distrustful of anyone who put much trust in books—many of them swore to a deep anti-intellectual bent that they attributed to their working-class backgrounds. They were also deeply homophobic and would in private and for laughs accuse the seemingly more effete mission men of being “poofsters”—Australian derogatory slang for gay men. From their perspective, it was hard to bring civilization and right-thinking to “bloody-minded kanakas,” as I was informed more than once in a certain conspiratorial tone—as though I, as a Westerner, would understand such “politically incorrect” ethnocentrism as a truism that, given the heroic (read paternalistic) goals of the project, should not be said too loudly or publicly. The crime of colonialism was that these young men, hardworking but hardly trained, with honest intentions but conflicted souls, were the point men in the colonization of a people. So doing the best they could was a good day’s walk from good enough.

The two central moments of Australian discipline and surveillance were the two yearly inspections of the villages and the patrol reports, the latter comprised mostly of what happened during these village inspections. These village inspections were fundamentally “rites of submission,” reminders that local capacities and power paled before those of the colonial administration (see Gewertz and Errington 1995 for a discussion). The patrol reports themselves, though stylized and dry, and self-consciously “descriptive” in content—this was one of the admonitions given on how to write such reports—could not help but invent a particular type

of native and native society. No matter which district officer was in command or who commanded the patrol, all the reports from the Maring region are remarkable similar in style and tone: short clipped sentences written in the third person omniscient with the exception of the orders given (“The rest house latrine was in deplorable condition. I had them replace it immediately”). Local voices are vacant spaces, save on those occasions when a villager is responding to a question aimed at him by the patrol officer. Under no circumstances do the reports reveal anything of the “inner state” of the officers, except in a way that is so perfunctory (“I was happy to see that they had complied with my instructions”) that its only function is concealment. Maring practices are depicted as timeless, as flowing upward directly from the natural substratum of our human natures. The implication was of a kind of precultural state in which the two controlling forces are human nature and nature itself, species and environment. What passed for culture was the routinization of the material and practical relationship between organism and environment, such as gardening techniques. The patrol reports are snapshots of the Maring universe in which the lens has little depth of field, the camera no memory.

The reports depict the Maring as obstinate and unfathomable from the perspective of the kiap, sometimes “stupidly” unwilling to act in their own obvious self-interest. They are also portrayed as being able to be hammered and cajoled into peaceful coexistence, even though a primitive, more instinctive, bloodier sentiment boiled just beneath the surface. In this self-conceived image, the kiap, essentially alone, but armed with his masculinity and civilization, stood between the natives, the colonists, and the outside world. It was his job to accommodate the interests of the administration, the various Europeans, and the local population. In kiap eyes, this task was difficult, more difficult than it need be, because the upper administration was overrun by bureaucrats; the colonists (Territorians as they were called) typically had only their personal interests at heart; while the local community, ignorant of the real shape of the modern world, did not know or understand what its real interests were. So the kiaps thought of themselves as standing at the center of this intersection of interests, “of keeping things going” on the frontier, accomplishing the kind of essential but “thankless” task that was often the work of those who “stood up” for their country (“like the boys at Gallipoli”). Those in the fields of encompassment, the men who were in “the line of fire” (as it was once explained to me), envisioned the colonial project as a policy of containment. They were to protect the colonists from the local population and the local population from the outside world. The patrol officer and the patrol report were to be the sole mediators between the local community and the outside world—specifically, the higher rungs of the colonial administration, the Western community at large, and the self-appointed army of international

observers (who increasingly regarded the Protectorate as something of an anachronism).<sup>3</sup> The political control of these groups depended on the management of knowledge: the data gathered by the kiap and inscribed in his report. The international community would be kept at bay if only they appreciated how much work was still to be done before people such as the Maring were ready to fly on their own. The expatriate community needed to be contained and controlled in their intercourse with Melanesians. The businessmen especially, many of whom the kiaps thought to be unscrupulous and of questionable patriotism (“who else would leave Australia simply to make money?”), would take advantage of the ignorance of the indigenes to defraud them and in so doing retard local progress and compromise the colonial responsibility. In the vision of the kiaps, they were the rational and enlightened center, the only people who knew the whole story, besieged at times by bureaucrats and international pundits who understood nothing about life in the bush; by a local populace that was primitive, potentially violent, and slow to grasp the mechanics of modern life; and by expatriate businessmen who, though they shared a “mate” mentality with the kiaps, would not hesitate to place their own economic interests above those of God and country. The kiap was the only person on the scene who knew the world, knew the bush, and was loyal to his country and God.

Here is how one former patrol officer described the expatriate community that he had known in and around Mt. Hagen.

There's not many good marks [honest men] here. Plenty of pointers [dishonest opportunists] looking for quick money, but mostly just spending hours getting pissed [drunk], getting wet [angry] over nothing at all, and looking at every other bloke's woman. They're always looking for an angle or two and have a down on [grudge with] too many people. I think many of them are Pommies [English immigrants to Australia] who just couldn't handle Aussie life, who just going to spend their life here go knocking along [doing nothing useful].

It is clear that the patrol officers drew a sharp distinction between themselves, men who had come to serve the interests of their country, and those expatriates who had migrated to New Guinea for crass economic reasons. In their eyes, the difference told the story even if, as it turned out, many of these same patrol officers would remain in Papua New Guinea after their service was completed and local independence had come (in 1975). The difference was a matter of mentality and morality, and it perpetually brought the patrol officers and the Australian administration in general into a subtle, submerged, but enduring tension with the expatriate

population. For their part, the Territorians imagined themselves and their relationship to the “kanakas” in astonishingly racist terms, and they were thus contemptuous of the colonial administration for coddling the local population. In their vision, whites should never have to perform manual labor, were entitled to at least one “personal servant” apiece (Sinclair 1981:20), and had, by virtue of their superiority, the right to exploit the “natives” as they saw fit. This was a natural order that a too-liberal policy could only disturb. Not surprisingly, this “difference” between the kiap and entrepreneurial expatriate was lost on the Maring who saw them as two arms of the same body.

In addition to the odd missionary, the only other person who might be a threat to the authority of the kiap and the administration was the anthropologist. This was not of course intentional on either side, simply the circumstance of the colonial context. The threat stemmed from the reality that the anthropologist was the “other Westerner” on the scene charged with writing an account about that community. And the only other Westerner with the skill and the authority to act as a mediator between the community and the outside world. To complicate matters, the anthropologist was an intellectual, often non-Australian, and most significantly, did not share the goal of containment that was central to the administration’s organization of the colonial space. Guided by their own stars, they were prone to overly liberal sentiments and unregulated speech, talk that in a frustratingly academic way seemed to be ignorant of the “real” problems pressing the kiaps in their governance of this colonial terrain. The anthropologist blithely ignored the intractable natives, greedy expatriates, and stodgy bureaucrats. Apparently intelligent and educated, yet soft and unsympathetic to the colonial cause, the anthropologist was, in the kiaps’ focused eye, a threat to the control that they exerted through a monopoly on the textual production of that space and its public political presentation. There was an inherent conflict mitigated by a mutual, though unspoken, agreement: in exchange for the kiap’s good office, the ethnographer would stick to academic concerns—the “kinship/cosmology shit” as one obviously knowledgeable kiap put it. In the practice of the field, no matter what they knew about how the patrol officers (or their national successors) had treated the local community, the ethnographer remained mute. As long as the behavior was not overly brutal and the violence mostly symbolic, they confined their observations to fieldnotes and the stories they circulated among themselves. And so clashes were infrequent, not least because anthropologists needed the cooperation of the administration to complete the most critical disciplinary hurdle of their profession—the fieldwork that would underwrite their dissertation, establish their place and credentials in the discipline, and constitute the foundation of future research and publications.<sup>4</sup> Twice strangers, with respect to

the local community and the administration, and dependent on both for the realization of their project, ethnographers negotiated this terrain by helping the local community as much as they could without stepping out of line with the administration.<sup>5</sup> In the fields of encompassment, compromises were unavoidable, and all were compromised.

The kiap's image of their mission and themselves was also gendered. Western women in particular—female missionaries and Bible translators, the wives of plantation owners and businessmen, nurses, and the occasional anthropologist—were understood as particularly vulnerable. In their own estimation, there was a chivalrous halo to their role as the defender of the West's women—a role that many women ethnographers understood as patronizing and paternalistic (Reay 1992: 141–42; Buchbinder, personal communication). This gendered image was powered by the unspoken and unspeakable fear of miscegenation, sex and marriage between a local man and Western woman. The fear was not that local men would “force themselves” upon these women—indeed, that possibility was summarily dismissed with the comment that “even kanakas are not stupid enough to risk the thumping that would follow.” No, the fear was that contact would spark intermingling. It would spawn fantasies of exploring the other sexually, thereby puncturing in the most threatening way possible (at least for the Western imagination) the containment of the two populations. So a very visceral sense of outrage was directed at Western women who, in associating “too freely” with Melanesians, violated the boundaries between the forms of racialized society. In their own frontier worldview, sexual relations between a kiap and a local woman was, given his seething virility and near complete isolation, understandable even if it did betray a certain weakness of character and was not something to be proud of. By contrast, a Western woman who was imagined to have relations with a local man had to have lost her bearings and sense of propriety. She had not only done something that was racially dirty, dangerous, and polluting; she had not only endangered the edifice of containment upon which colonialism was built; she had committed an act of cultural adultery, coupling with a local man when there were more than a few willing white partners.<sup>6</sup>

In the end as in the beginning, colonialism was always a bastard of its own inner contradictions. It sought to modernize and improve local communities yet conserve them as if in a state of suspended animation. It sought to civilize local cultures even while its own self-imagining depended on their otherness. It sought to erase the distinctiveness of the other on which the colonial project was itself founded, but also to identify and rank the differences between the West and its others, all the while ignoring the relations of power on which this exercise was based. It sought to fulfill its mission through agents who read the contradictions inherent in their own

project as inadequacies of the other. It was grounded in the self-excusing notion, captured in Sinclair's epigram, that "primitive" cultures lived in the grip of a fear they secretly yearned to be freed from. Finally, it fathomed that it was changing the culture of the other through the nature of the West, thus to battle against the brute nature of the other with Christianity, capitalism, and the other instruments of Western culture. Perhaps the best that can be said of Australian colonialism is that its contradictions were its virtues, engendering enough indecision and offsetting actions that it caused less damage than it might have under other circumstances.

### *Fractured Politics and the Economy of War*

For the Australian administration and the Anglican mission, Maring warfare was the essence of antisocial behavior. The acts of violence visited by one clan cluster upon another undermined sociality and prevented the Maring from rising to a higher standard of civilization—a Western standard. The Kauwatyi rout of the Manamban, the Yomban destruction of the Manga settlements, the descent of the Kundagai upon the Tsembaga, were all indicative of a prevailing state of nature. Under these circumstances, the worst of human instincts—greed, lust, pride, avarice—were allowed free reign. Warfare was the unbridled expression of nature and the suppression of society. In this view, pacification was absolutely essential in that it not only created peace and the conditions for prosperity, it allowed for the existence and advancement of the social itself. Forced pacification would move the "uncontrolled" areas of the protectorate from the state of anarchy—symbolically emblazoned in warfare, headhunting, cannibalism, and sorcery—to the progressive road of civilization.

For the colonizers, the coefficient of amnesia must have been as high as the Highlands itself. The correlation of Western civilization with peace and civility seems to have forgotten the series of genocidal wars that Westerners waged against one another in the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> To hear expatriates and other Western commentators talk, cannibalism, sorcery, and head-hunting spoke to the very essence of Melanesian society, whereas nuclear weapons, genocide, and mass incarceration were marginal to the real character of the West. But even more than that, the idea that pacification would socialize the Maring misread the character of local warfare, which was defined precisely by its sociality. Like many of these peoples of Melanesia, the Maring make war only among themselves, never against neighboring peoples. There has never been a war between a Maring and a Kalam cluster, for example, and local fight leaders dismissed the idea that it was ever even a possibility. Warfare occurred exclusively

between adjacent clan clusters (see map 2, chap. 1) and never for gross economic reasons such as the acquisition of garden land. Because land was part and product of the construction of kinship and the clan, the alienation of another clan's land, livestock, or pandanus was the appropriation of its kinship system. That an enemy's ancestor spirits could never be driven from their homeland symbolized that reality. So Maring warriors slaughtered the pigs and cassowaries, swept the houses into flames, uprooted the trees, and generally destroyed the territory of their enemies rather than appropriate it. To use the land or eat the food of an enemy was anathema because it would destroy the basis of kinship, expunging the instruments of similarity and difference upon which clanship itself was founded (LiPuma 1988:211).

Whereas interpersonal violence, especially between those related by kinship and marriage (e.g., within the family), is highly intentional and draws forth the individual aspect of persons, warfare was persuasively dividual and had little to do with the personal intentions of the combatants. Far from an example of anarchy, it was a kind of sociality, a modality of action between neighbors in which the value of collectivity effaced and sublimated the individuality of the actors—who may on other occasions have acted sociably toward one another. This was, of course, especially true in instances where, due to the pattern of marriage alliances, clans of the same clan cluster or even subclans of the same clan wound up on opposing sides of the battlefield. Harrison, speaking about Melanesia generally, puts it this way: “Amity and enmity, peace and war, help and harm, are contrasting aspects under which the same persons present themselves to one another” being “antithetical ways of envisioning, and acting within, the ‘whole’ of social relations” (1995:85). What this meant for the Maring was that the prosecution of war entailed practices, ritual and otherwise, that elevated and glorified the relational aspect of the person.

The practices that surrounded warfare assumed that there was no distinction between technical and ritual action. For example, the propitiation of the ancestors and the selection of weapons and enemy targets were inseparably instrumental in the success of the military enterprise. Warfare as a species of violence sought to efface and subordinate the individual aspect of the warriors. Or, to put this in a more Maring way, to be a warrior was not to be an individual but dividual in a pure and transparent way. The most public sign of the collective self was body decoration. All of the warriors had legs smeared with gray clay, black-painted faces, darkened headdresses encircled by cowry shells, and incised shields the width and sometimes the height of a warrior. Such decoration both symbolized and merged the *nomane* (spirit) of the clan with the *min* (life force) of the warriors. The warriors' individuality also disappeared into lineal time. As

with their Melpa neighbors (Strathern and Strathern 1971), the decorations bespoke the presence of ancestral spirits—clan spirits, especially the souls of those who had fallen before the enemy's axe. In this vein, the war shields behind which the warriors hid were engraved with the abstract design of a fiery orchid, a metaphorical allusion to the hotness and habitat of the red spirits of war. From a Maring standpoint, warfare was not a way of channeling the aggressive instincts that lurk beneath the surface of civility. It was, along with marriage, exchange, trade (in plumes, axes, pigs, and salt), mutual avoidance, verbal jousting, and sorcery, the way that clan clusters orchestrated their braided histories.

The colonial illusion of an indigenously chaotic world lent support to the administration's notion that it was the author of order. But there existed of course another kind of order defined by the almost perpetual cycle of war and peace, symbolized by the uprooting and replanting of the rumbim plant, enacted in the great ceremony of the kaiko, and embodied in those who had been forced to flee their homelands and beg refuge with distant relatives (Rappaport 1968: chap. 4). The end result was that the Maring were always a "culture" divided, however socially, by fighting and feuding. And when the Australian administration appeared in the mid-1950s, the Tsembaga, driven from their land by the Kundagai, had sought shelter with the Tuguma and the Kauwaty; the Manamban had been sent into exile by the combined forces of their eastern and western neighbors, the Kauwaty and Tukmenga; and the Manga had fled eastward to escape the wrath of the Yomban. Entering a world that already had a shape and a distribution of people and power, the Australian administration was an exogenous force of untold power. For the defeated clan clusters and the diaspora of war, it was a stroke of serendipity beyond imagination, a way for them to reoccupy their lost lands immediately and gain an ally who would protect them in the future. So the more vulnerable the clan cluster the more likely it was that it would not only bow willingly to the colonial authorities, but would endorse the Pax Britannica as the road to salvation. As for the more powerful clan clusters, they were intimidated into submission by what appeared to them to be an arbitrary exercise of power—the verbal abuse, beatings, jail terms, work punishments, and shows of force. This was the kiaps' definition of being firm and authoritative. It was the Maring definition of the humiliation that befalls those who have been deserted by their ancestors and defeated by their enemies. The elders' narratives of first contact report this reality, although, ironically, an aspect of the new road has been a cultural effort to erase and downplay these narratives. Not the least of the reasons why Westerners could not grasp the inherent sociality of Melanesian warfare was that their horizon of understanding began in a conception of human nature that, by its nature, was nothing less than culture naturalized.

*Human Nature and the Other*

Behind the comments and stances of missionaries, kiaps, and the expatriate community lay a tacit philosophy of human nature. This was a seat-of-the-pants philosophy, less a coherent viewpoint than a set of characterizations and explanations united by a common and underlying occidentalism. On this viewpoint, the nature of Melanesians, Maring in particular, was conceived as a layering, a number of tiers neither harmonious nor transparent to the uncritical eye. The first element was the concept that there is an inner core, an original sameness common to every human being. Listening to missionaries giving their sermons, the kiaps talking of their mission, or medical volunteers explaining why they chose Highland New Guinea left no doubt that these Westerners believed in a “generic human nature.” In moments of liberal enlightenment, Westerners of all varieties, from the Anglican bishop to the kiap, would, referring to Melanesians, echo the phrase that “underneath we are all the same.” This theory was of more than archaeological value; it was meant to suggest that, because we are all human, we all have the same potential. Here is an excerpt from a statement by the Anglican priest at Koinambe.

People here [Maring] are different, but deep down, we are all really the same. What each person wants is peace and a chance at self-fulfillment. The people of the Jimi are just like people everywhere; they want to improve themselves; they want respect, and want to use their talents to make a better life for themselves and their family members. Everyone of us is equally God’s children.

As if from central colonial casting, the good father’s statement inscribes the double ideology of colonialism: that there exists a generic human nature and that this being is the bourgeois man in all his singularity. His words were founded on the conviction that fundamentally, in that first instance before God, there is no difference between Westerner and Melanesian. Conceived in His image, God has made all humans open to spirituality, love, faith, family, and the other virtues. Equally exiled from paradise, they must confront birth, aging, and death on the same footing. Attending a Maring funeral with Father Bailey, the wailing of the mourners piercing through the morning mist, he put his hand on my shoulder and offered that “one of the things that made us all human is that we cried at the death of a parent.” There is a human condition, spiritual and physical, that makes us all, even in all our individuality, the same at the ground level of being. In particular, those who had come to Melanesia voluntarily to help or convert held this view as an unshakable ontological premise.

However noble this concept of heavenly and earthly equality, and

however emancipatory it might be in principle, it was only one level of a heavily alloyed image of human nature. For at the same time, it was held that people have a set of base instincts—such as fear, lust, pride, aggression, avarice, and greed—that are common to all and constantly threaten the better side of Man. So the human artifacts of family and community, the ways that individuals come together socially to resolve the problems of the human condition, are constantly besieged by the forces of aggression, greed, and unbridled egoism. In this vision of human nature, life is an ongoing struggle between the part of us that reflects God's image and the sinful, destructive instincts that are part of our (fallen) nature. The Western view was that Maring, like people everywhere, are the same as Westerners at this base level. This human nature was transhistorical and transcultural. It was not bound by the tethers of time or culture, and thus one could take it for granted. A good indication of this was how the Westerners read, or presumed they read, Maring facial gestures. The idea was that there was a one-to-one correspondence between form and function, the gesture and its meaning, and that the source of meaning was the set of base virtues and instincts. The station manager remarked that he could see the glitter of greed in men's eyes when they were receiving money for their coffee or gold. The priest told me that although he could not speak to many of the woman parishioners (because they did not speak pidgin), he knew from their "look" who was "a virtuous and faithful wife." The goal of Church and the colonial administration was to create an environment—with a sense of order, peace, and godliness—that would elicit the positive virtues.

Overlying the sense of similar virtue and the scandal of basic instincts were culture and society. The inarticulate Western view was that by dint of these human virtues, a peaceful, harmonious, cooperative sociality could trump those disruptive instincts. Aggression, greed, and the other instincts could be kept at bay in the interests of society-making. Like a caged and cunning animal, these instincts could be held in check only with constant vigilance and surveillance. Only in this way was it possible to safeguard the social order and prevent it from reverting back to disorder and discord. Such vigilance required institutions and rites of community (e.g., civic associations and meetings) and the acceptance of the higher authority of God and State. From this viewpoint, the marvel of Western culture was that its institutions and practices were devoted to the suppression of the natural substratum and the celebration of sociality. Of course, violence and war sometimes erupted, aggression and greed bubbling to the surface, but the glory of the West was that civility and sociality soon reasserted themselves, driving the base instincts back into the hell from which they arose.

On this view of human nature, the "problem" and "failure" of

Melanesian culture was its glorification of the “wrong” instincts. Practices such as headhunting, sorcery, cannibalism, polygamy, animal sacrifice, institutionalized homosexuality, arranged marriages, and chronic warfare served to express, legitimate, and—worse—celebrate these base instincts. Headhunting was pride (i.e., trophies) and blood lust turned into a cultural sport. Warfare was aggression raised to the communal power. Sorcery was envy of others’ success hardened as social practice, while polygamy was nothing less than a way of condoning untempered sexuality and lust. Even worse, institutionalized homosexuality was bestiality with a human face. Arranging marriages in which women were “sold” for money was an outpouring of greed writ socially large. These practices were not understood as fundamental to the character of Melanesian society but as universal human weaknesses that had become embedded in their cultural practice. The Western view was that Melanesian cultures were, and would remain, primitive so long as human weaknesses were socially inscribed and hence given a good name. The underlying premise was that Melanesian cultures, by encoding and sanctifying these universal human faults, stood between people and their better natures. Where the Western nations outlawed these sins, rendering them personal perversion (e.g., homosexuality) or crimes against humanity (e.g., cannibalism),<sup>8</sup> Melanesians made sin social. They seemed not to understand that these base instincts were something to be overcome not socially applauded. So Melanesian cultures were themselves the problem. Not only did they endorse immoral acts and practices, they were a barrier to becoming modern and the appreciation of its virtues. For the Westerners, it was precisely those practices that distinguished Melanesian from Westerner that retarded their progress. Modernity thus entailed, and was synonymous with, an erasure of those differences that distinguished Westerners from Melanesians. So in this Western theory of human nature, Melanesian man, in his encounter with and quest for modernity, was hobbled first by his race (which, with a few noteworthy and laudable exceptions, bequeathed him less than a European intelligence) and then again by their culture. No wonder that, from the Western heights, their climb toward modernity seemed all uphill.

Moreover, there were never any certainties here. No matter how long the installation of civilization, there was always the possibility of degeneration and devolution, an evolutionary reversal in which an individual or an entire people reverted back to headhunting, ancestor worship, polygamy, superstition, and other sins. Even when a people seemed to embrace capitalism, Christianity, formal education, medicine, and the state, vigilance was necessary because backsliding was part of the nature of Man. The ever-present threat of devolution was epitomized by the “European” who had gone “native,” who had returned to the heart of darkness where people make the worst of our human natures the very foundation of

social life itself. Nonetheless, within this vision of human nature all people are recoverable, nonredemption is always possible, because we all share a human nature and we can all endorse those customs that express its virtues.

This vision of human nature was also a method of interpreting others. As with facial gestures, it rendered seemingly exotic behavior in familiar terms. The ethnographic trick was to simply read backward from the cultural practice to the underlying instincts. Such was the case with the interpretation of ancestor worship—the sacrament in which the living community sacrifices pigs to the recently deceased in return for their help with material and social relations (bountiful gardens and fruitful alliances). The Western theory was that all humans, by virtue of their humanity, had some sense of the Almighty, some glimpse that there were supernatural powers that lay beyond their ken. Here in the summer of 1979 is what the Anglican archbishop of Papua New Guinea had to say on the subject: “That people worship at all shows me that deep down that they know God. They may not know Him in His true form, but they have a spiritual instinct, they sense His presence. By their nature, all people know God. The work of the Christian missions in PNG is to channel this spirituality in the right direction.” A VSO worker involved in setting up the primary school education remarked, “If I was stuck out here in the bush and was far from any church, I might begin to worship my ancestors too.” In this respect, the existence of local religious practice was simply an expression of a universal spirituality, a thirst for the divine shared by all humans. At the same time, the content of the practice was an expression of the fear that arises in those who do not share a scientific understanding of nature. So they confuse and conflate technical and ritual action. Ignorant of why plants and animals really grow, of the true causes of health and disease, some mixture of greed and fear drives them to look to the spirits for secular answers.

Understanding practice as an outpouring of instincts was itself a kind of policy of containment. True to the spirit of the West, it was a laborsaving device, a kind of cultural X ray for those on the frontier. For it meant that one only had to attend to the surface of indigenous lifeways. If it was difficult for Westerners to fathom why lust led to polygamy—as the Anglican missionaries observed more than once—it was transparent that the basis of polygamy was lust. If it was difficult to figure why envy led to the spells and magic of the sorcery, it was easy to see that the motive for sorcery was envy and greed. This theory of human nature rendered irrelevant any depth of involvement in the local world, any real search for the genesis and organizing principles of practices. So the goal of colonialism was to redirect people’s instincts, create contexts for the expression of the most virtuous ones, teach people better practices for achieving the same results.

As a native son of Alabama, turned Baptist missionary in the Southern Highlands, once explained to me: “when you are cleaning out the closet [of old customs], it is not necessary to examine the throwaways too carefully.” His maxim was a reply to my question as to why, if he had lived and worked with the same people for a decade, he did not know more about, and show more interest in, their culture. By the same token, the notion that one could glide along the surface of custom, that practice was self-explanatory, allowed the Australian administration to move district officers and other field personnel around swiftly and indiscriminately. Writing about the Eastern Highlands, Watson (1992) puts it this way.

In recognizing local ethnic differences, an outsider might suppose that kiaps would be among the best informed. In fact, they were not. Plainly they were handicapped, among other things,<sup>9</sup> by the system of short-term posting. . . . This system put a man in one post for twenty-one months and then, upon his return from a three-month leave “down south” most often sent him next to a different station, not uncommonly a station in a remote or quite different corner of the country. The practical work of administering . . . could—or at any rate did—proceed without detailed ethnic knowledge of the local people. (185)

The same could certainly be said for the administration of both Simbai and Jimi Valleys. The notion was that for the kiaps, or for that matter any Westerners, to be successful all they had to do was use their common sense. This would lead from the surface of behavior back to the underlying traits that inspired it. The logic of administration was straightforward: social practices inspired by virtue would be condoned; those animated by vice would be extinguished with a firm, muscular response.

The Maring, like other Melanesians, had their own view of human nature, although, of course, there is no term in Maring that bears even a family resemblance to the Western conception. The founding reason was that humans by their nature have no nature, only the inscription of a thoroughgoing sociality. The social is never an artifact built on a natural substratum. Rather, as M. Strathern (1980, 1988), Harrison (1995), and others have argued, what Melanesians take for granted is the inherent sociality of life. To be human is to be cultural, to be immersed in a self-defining web of social relations in which different contexts for action require different modalities of sociality. Ultimately, what for Westerners were different aspects of our human nature were, for Maring, different levels of intentionality. The notion that sociality has inherently cultural roots has no place for “a generic human nature,” and indeed the Maring understanding was that underneath different peoples are just that: different. The

paramount example of this was, ironically, their conception of Westerners. I and other Westerners were thought to be immune from sorcery. Where sexual contact was debilitating for young Maring men—draining them of “grease”—I and other Westerners were thought to suffer no ill effects. By the same token, the Maring treated Westerners as though they had no gender: men and women ethnographers were on the same footing because, whatever kind of people they were, they sure weren’t Maring. From the native point of view, Maring and Westerners were different in the first instance—a difference that the mission and the educational system would try successfully to change (see chaps. 7, 9).

Unlike the Western vision, the Maring did not believe that people had internal states. Accordingly, there was no way in the Maring language to assert that someone is intelligent, belligerent, honest, or whatever. What could be said is that they acted honestly; they hunted intelligently; or they fought aggressively. Persons did have biographies in the sense that others expected them to behave intelligently or give gifts graciously, but agents interpreted these as regularities of action rather than expressions of internal states. Contrast this with the Western construction of personhood. Because we imagine that persons have internal states, agents act toward others as if they did indeed have such states, which in turn motivates Western persons to construct their subjectivity and imagine themselves in terms of these states. In this respect, internal states are “social fictions” that are culturally and historically *true* in the fullest sense of the word because they inform the beliefs, desires, and judgments of Western agents. They shape the intentionality and meaning of behavior. The ideological aspect of this aspect of personhood is the Western notion that, because agents have free will and are the sole authors of their own actions, these internal states are the primary determinants of action. Open any Western newspaper and there will be stories of people who did well (on their job, on a test, in sports, etc.) because they are intelligent, courageous, hardworking, etc.; others who fair poorly because they are timid, lazy, corrupt, . . . fill in the adjective. What all of these explanations have in common is that they envision the results as the public expression of the internal state of the agents. The Maring did not, by contrast, attribute the results of an action to the internal states of the agents. Though feelings were embodied—anger in the abdomen, shame on the skin, betrayal in the liver—these locations were not states, but rather the incarnation of a relationship between the person and the social world. What the next generation would “learn” in school and church was that people did indeed have internal states. What they took this to mean was that the modern person was defined by having internal states. In the new-road world, no one should leave home without them.

A critical aspect of the Maring image of “human nature” was that the social capacities of people were inseparable from their physical being. The

ability of whites—to “pull” all manner of goods, to receive letters and radio messages, command airplanes, etc.—these were taken to be part of their physical state, at least during the opening years of contact. By equal account, their inability to walk in the dense, rain-slippery jungle, negotiate the log and rope bridges across ravines, or carry loads on their back was also taken to be part of their physical capacities. What Westerners could and could not do were associated with their physiognomy. These physical attributes were common cause with their spiritual and mental qualities. One of the lessons of schooling learned by the next generation would be to separate the mental from the physical. As I was told more than once by this generation, “before the missionaries came we did not know that people had minds.” In other words, because the locus of understanding of others was the conjuncture of relationships, the separation of mind and body as well as the conception that behavior is an expression of a person’s internal states, though imaginable, did not figure in people’s interpretation of these relations. Or, to put this another way, because Melanesians understood behavior as the crystallization and objectification of ongoing relations, what was in people’s “heads,” what states they may have, was entirely moot. They become important only when the world tilts so far toward modernity. And nowhere was this more the case than with respect to the up-and-coming generation of men *and* women.

### *The Generation of Modernity*

“The *nomane* (spirit and culture) of my generation is entirely different from that of our fathers and mothers: sons go their own way and make new business; daughters speak their mind and marry the man of their choice; we show our elders respect but pay no attention to their wisdom because it belongs to the epoch of our ancestors.” Spoken by a leader of the junior generation, the words encapsulate the birth of new relationship between reproduction and temporality. Certainly, if the Maring material underlines any point it is that to appreciate the dynamics of the transformation of Melanesia and beyond, anthropology must develop the theme and theory of generations. It must learn to appreciate those who, living on the social and existential edges of adult society, are most poised to change it. Such progress entails an anthropology that locates those who are coming of age, those who are in the throes of forging their identity, those who grasp history intuitively as the difference between the world they encounter and that portrayed by their parents—by any other name the youth of a society. Only too aware of their world-changing, the Maring senior generation also recognized that the beliefs, desires, and social trajectory of the junior generation were the oxygen of change. And they are

not alone. Across the world, up and down the ladder of social class and consciousness, accounts of the clash between generations inundate media and mind. The reality suggests that an understanding of generations is essential to an account of encompassment and the creation of the modern. That at least is what I argue theoretically, amplified of course by the Maring ethnography.

Prior to their encompassment, the Maring, like other Melanesians, lived a different kind of social history. Locally produced oppositions and hierarchies (male versus female), cycles of exchange with ancestors and affines, and an elaborate system of rituals (see LiPuma 1988; Rappaport 1968, 1977 for detailed accounts) defined the overarching and objective structure of collectivity. Although the Maring had their own take on each of these, the social systems of Highland New Guinea and Melanesia generally were remarkably similar in the fidelity of their reproduction. This objective structure generated a world that inculcated in the living community a social epistemology, a structure of desire, and sets of dispositions (most prominently a sense of exchange and the desire to actualize it toward others). Because the objective structure at any given time tended to be similar to the structure under which these dispositions, desires, and knowledge were instilled, Maring tended to simply and positively reproduce themselves. This is not to say that change did not occur or even that change was not sometimes desired, only that change was animated by ecological and demographic fluctuations (Buchbinder 1973; Lowman 1980), the unpredictable outcomes of military engagements (Rappaport 1967; Vayda 1971), and the contradictions within the structure of clanship and affinity that engendered group fission, fusion, and migration (LiPuma 1988, 1989; Maclean 1984). The result was that Maring history was local, cyclical, and nearly determinate. The social distance between generations was, accordingly, relatively narrow. There was once a time, the poet explains, when all the generations “breathed the same air” (Pavese 1979:21).

This mode of simple social reproduction gave life to its own mode of generation. This was no more or less than a way of accounting for succession, the replacement of one person by another over the cascade of time. Prior to their encounter with the West, the tempo of Maring lifeways turned on two forms of social time: seasonal time or the rotation of gardens and weather, and the wheel of succession. These who were born and nurtured from the bodily substance of their ancestors in turn passed on and became incarnated through their descendants. In contrast to the West, where succession is an absent-from-mind anonymous relationship, here it was engraved in consciousness and interpersonal kinship. The Maring, like all those who refuse to posit a concept of society over and above social relations, saw the replacement of people as a rope of interlinked and interchangeable identities—a “line” of known and homologous persons whose

“root base” begins in the founding of the clan that, in a kind of social tautology, was inseparable from, because defined by, the original “planting” of men on “this” land. The time of generation perpetually brought into convergence the relationship between mortal and social time—a mortality that the Maring transcended by designating a “line” of agents who, although they lived in mortal history, were conceived to transcend that history in the name of the reproduction of the clan. The function of ritual here, specifically funeral practices, was to form a bridge between mortal and social time. These rituals, as Foster (1995b) indicates, emancipated a chain of living ancestors to assume the place of the dead. For the Maring as for other Melanesians, living replaced the dead through transfers to the clan of the deceased, transfers that, by imagining the clans as collective individuals, allowed the participants to draw a homologue between one person/object and other (such as x’s sons and y’s daughter). The objective of replacement was the conservation of social relations; the production of a generation, bound by kinship and imbued with the values and dispositions of the ancestors, created a continuity that was more than meaningless perfection.

Encompassment changed this. Dramatically and permanently. It expanded the bounds of the public political sphere beyond the limits of the relations between clan clusters and set in motion a stream of external and indeterminate transformations. In the context of the new road, the connection between the objective structure and the installation of knowledge, desires, and dispositions became tenuous and disarticulated. Transformations in the objective structure brought about by the advent of Western agents and institutions meant that the knowledge, desires, and dispositions of the senior generation would be significantly different from those inculcated in the up-and-coming generation. More, what was instilled in this up-and-coming generation was itself becoming rapidly out of alignment with still further and continuing transformations in an increasingly global objective structure. No sooner had they mastered pidgin then it became apparent that to truly succeed it was necessary to know English. No sooner had they begun to adjust to the compass of the Australian state than a national state, moved by a different set of directives, emerged. No sooner had they obtained a primary education then it became essential to attend high school to obtain a job in the modern sector. In the fields of encompassment, the generation gap was as wide as could be imagined. Father and son, the senior statesman with shamanistic powers and his high school educated, trilingual, store-owning son, were defined by knowledge, desires, and dispositions that were worlds apart. Yet they were joined by semen and blood. By genealogy and identity. And by the reality that in the age of encompassment they would struggle over the character and creation of the world they had in common.

The junior generation grasped modernity as the unfolding of a new world of practices, as an invitation to probe the cultural possibilities once censured by *kastam* and now seemingly celebrated by modernity. In respect to social relations, most of the junior generation pushed for the relaxation of kin and community obligations. They continually explored avenues of escape from the embrace of their clansmen and affines—men and women who did not understand the logic of business, the individual rights of persons, and other wisdoms of the West. In their struggles with their seniors they were determined to amplify their personal freedom, to listen first and foremost to their own voice and that of their generation. The most able of the young politicians sought to create a respectful distance from their elders, listening to what they had to say but with every intention of following their own lights. This ascension of personal freedom was part of a progressive movement in which the individual aspect of the person began to overshadow its dividual or relational alter and the individual increasingly emerged as the locus of decision making and moral authority. This contravened longstanding conventions and helped to wrest power from the more senior generations. A paradoxical sign of its emergence was that the most successful senior leaders skillfully invented ways of both attaining their own ends and preserving (at least the appearance of) the independence of their juniors. Two of the dominant avenues for freedom, both requiring education, were a position in the civil service or with the Anglican Church. The ultimate assertion of personal independence was to move to an urban locale, a route that was taken by the most educated, especially those capable in English. A taste of urban ways went hand in hand with education because the only high schools were in the more urban settings of Mount Hagen or the Wahgi Valley. The more this group became accustomed to freedom, the more prickly they became toward the demands of kinship that would seem to spring up unexpectedly each time they returned home, dashing their plans for the immediate future. Some reluctantly surrendered to these obligations; others became increasingly sensitive to the increasingly infrequent call of their community. For a few who became emblematic of how modernity could deplete the strength of the community, this drove them to distant and more urban centers, ever farther from the tentacles of their relatives, spurring them ever more insistently toward the magnetic pole of the greatest possible freedom. The anonymity of life in Port Moresby and even more so in Australia epitomized this possibility, most visibly embodied in the Maring translator of the Bible who, educated in Australia, longed for the metropole more than the bush.

As the waves of encompassment washed over the Maring, two facts became impressed on the consciousness of even the most conservative adults. The first was that the socialization of children would be entirely and

substantively different than under the more traditional regime. The construction of subjectivity would have a new basis because peoples' concepts, desires, dispositions, and life trajectories would have to be fitted to new objective conditions. And then refitted as these conditions changed. Not only would the phantom of socializing one's children have a new form, it would change suddenly and in barely predictable ways, producing in the senior generation a sense of disquiet and uncertainty, as though the heartbeat of social life had become irregular and arrhythmic. The senior leader Yingok observed that "I am like my father, but my sons resemble me less each day . . . because their bodies have been nurtured by your [Western] food, your medicine, your language, your schools, your religion and laws." His words capture the storyline better than any page of analysis. Spoken in the spring of 1980, they underlined the realization that socialization and succession would now be different from anything that had gone before. The second realization was that encompassment created a permanent divide between the time of custom and the time of law, the epoch of the ancestors and that of Jesus, the era of great shamans and the modernity of biomedicine. It was *the* historical event that founds and contextualizes all other events. One result was the genesis of a generation gap, articulated as a taken-for-granted distinction between those who had been born before the kiaps arrived and those born after. The more senior generations sometimes applied the term *kiap babies* to this generation; usually said with a measure of derision, it nonetheless acknowledged the temporal break in the succession of generations. Implicitly the Maring came to recognize that modernity produced a new mode of generation that was inseparable from the generation of new modes of knowledge and desire. So much was this the reality that irrespective of their position in social space, agents began to circulate a discourse that openly acknowledged generational divisions and assumed further that across a variety of contexts for action differences in generation would motivate and explain people's behavior. Thus, a distinctive feature of the first quarter century of contact was that generation became an increasingly visible and salient social category. As the modern became enmeshed in local lifeways so did the assumption that generation was always at issue. It emerged as a significant metadiscursive framing device, a presupposition that informed how agents would interpret a given instance of speech, especially when they used speech to characterize or explain behavior. Generation became a way of explaining everything from the way people spoke to the modes of dress and body decoration (e.g., pearlshells or a wristwatch) they preferred, from the way they liked to do business to the foods they yearned for, from whether their emphasis was on kinship and customary obligations or friendship and personal freedom. The circulation of a discourse about generation helped to engender the reality that it took as its object of linguistic representation.

In the first quarter century of contact, from the first encounters in 1955 to the ascension of the first post-contact generation in 1980, the Maring reconstructed generation according to four principles or criteria. The first was age grade which corresponded to, and was a proxy for, the major break in the objective structures of social life. As observed, they took the advance of the West as the epochal break in their history. However close in chronological age, it was assumed that agents who stood on opposite sides of this divide were almost sure to be generationally distinct. It commonly assumed that they would be imbued with a distinct *nomane* (denoting both spirit and customs) because their spirit substance had been formed in the crucible of their interaction with the West. The second principle was the internalization of those marked forms of knowledge, desire, and disposition specific to the character of modernity. Agents classified others and themselves according to the degree to which they had internalized these forms. Whether and to what degree a Maring spoke pidgin, for example, marked that person as belonging to one generation or another. Whether a person owned a wristwatch and whether they could tell and use time marked that person as belonging to one generation or another. Agents were also generationally classified by other agents according to their ability to operate within the Western sphere (e.g., opening a bank account, arranging for air transportation, and so on) and their ability to negotiate with its representatives (e.g., the Anglican administrators). The third principle was the exercise of personal choice. Historically, both ends of the phrase “personal choice” were new social determinations. The ascension of the person-as-individual as a critical locus of decision making and moral authority and an expansion of the rights of action of that emerging form of personhood were products of the Maring engagement with Western agents and institutions. They were founded on the dramatic increase in personal freedom coupled with the emergence of the individual aspect of the person brought about by the immersion of especially the junior generation in Christianity, formal education, plantation labor, and Western-style jurisprudence. Maring, like Melanesians generally, linguistically captured the ascension of personal choice as a legitimate mode of behavior by adopting the oh-so-appropriate pidgin phrasing “lik belong yu.” It pointedly conveys the sentiment that the “you” embodies and is the cause of its own desires and action. This concept lives in stark contrast to the indigenous supposition that desires and actions were drawn out of a person by the relationalities in which he or she was inescapably immersed as a condition of the social. It was thus allowed that as a matter of personal choice agents might, through their own initiative and behavior, self-select their generation. The final principle was time or, more precisely, social trajectory. Agents gave themselves and others a position in the space of modernity by virtue of their trajectory of change over time. Those per-

sons who constantly sought to become more modern were given a location in social space that tracked not only their outstanding forms of knowledge, desire, and dispositions, but what they were likely to become in the future. In this respect, the use of generation as an analytic/ethnographic category *relationally* unites the past (the source of measurement-from), the present (a person's presently embodied forms of knowledge, desire, and dispositions), and the *future* (what these forms may become given a notion of the future that is itself defined at the intersection of local and imported views of time) in a single moment.

The generational punctuation of what was, after all, a continuous demographic space became inscribed in the comparative discourse set up by agents when they classified someone as "too old" to speak pidgin or to want (desire) to travel to Mt. Hagen, or "too young" to show respect for the ancestors or the power of their elders. Certain people were "too hard" in their ways to appreciate the virtues of a saving account at the Bank of New South Wales, others too infatuated with the modern to appreciate the symbols of their past (e.g., implements of war and magic) other than as potential sources of income. Certain people were "too close" to the past to comprehend biomedicine, others too immersed in the present to believe in the powers of the shamans. What is clear is that persons who hold neighboring positions in social space, having been subject to similar agents and institutions of encompassment (e.g., education at the mission station by Christian teachers) and therefore subject to similar conditioning factors (e.g., emphasis on the individual at the locus of responsibility) have every chance of internalizing similar desires, dispositions, and forms of knowledge and "thus of producing practices and representations of a similar kind" (Bourdieu 1987:5). They have every chance of making the same choices and desiring the same trajectory toward the modern. The set of positions created by modernity were thus relatively stable because similar objective conditions impressed themselves on agents of a certain historical age. For example, in a survey of the Kauwatyí clan cluster (conducted in January 1980), all but 4 (out of 67) men aged twenty to forty had engaged the culture of capitalism through performing contract labor on a coastal plantation whereas only 6 of 42 men aged forty to sixty had done so. The positions were also relatively stable because each person (and hence each generation) was defined relationally, according to similarities and differences in respect to other persons. This produced a powerful and practical generational effect because agents with similar capacities, desires, interests, and dispositions were more likely to come together as a practical group. They were more likely to form social groups and coalitions to pursue their interests which, reciprocally, also tended to reproduce and reinforce their similarity. One result was that cross-generational groups tended toward hierarchy, archotypically a big-man and his subordinates,

while the gravitational pull of intra-generational groups was toward equality.

But the ethnography also indicates that there is no absolute correlation between age and modernity; some persons who were over forty adopted a more modern perspective than those in their thirties. This appears unreasonable or contradictory only if we consider generation an age-dependent category and we forget that this social space was also intrinsically a field of power. In the flow of history not everyone inherits the same social leverage. Thus several men in the thirty-something age category chose to adopt dispositions and practices characteristic of more senior generations. Not having attended school, not having mastered pidgin, intimidated by the complexities of business, and thus deprived of the material and symbolic capital that “attached to the skin” of their contemporaries, they nominated themselves as critics of the modern and as young guardians of custom. In their own response to the modern, they recast *kastam* into a resource they could deploy in their struggles with other members of their generation. They once collaborated with several elders in a failed attempt to rekindle ancestor worship. And they sometimes joined their elders in publicly decrying the newfound independence of women. In their discussion with members of their own generation, they advised caution in approaching things modern. But history (and God) was not on their side and they were able to garner only minor and waning influence using this strategy and probably would have won even less except for the fact that honoring select customs was one of the few strategies available to the Maring to counter white privilege.

Simply because persons occupy similar positions in social space does not mean that they will automatically recognize themselves as a generation or that they will mobilize as a group to act in the world. Generations are “virtual” classes in that, due to the similarities among their agents, they will likely cohere as categories of self-conscious agents. In times of great change, such as the advent of Westernization, it is almost certain that a generational identity will emerge. Nevertheless, the emergence of this identity in any real life situation will always have to compete with other modes of identity, such as that of clanship in the Melanesian context and ethnicity in others. It will also have to compete with other, more practical divisions, such as the rivalries that spring up among members of the same generation. What this means is that a generation will emerge as a group only through the intentional action of agents who, in setting their generation off from others, both define and legitimize a new trajectory for that society. In the Maring case, I am talking about men such as Moses Winai. High school educated and fluent in English, a devout Christian who operated the most successful local owned trade store in the Jimi Valley, the true nephew of one the most powerful Maring big-men and the priest’s hand-

picked candidate to manage the Anglican mission at Koinambe, a charismatic man who was imbued with all the forms of knowledge and desire characteristic of the modern man, Moses nominated himself to speak on behalf of the junior generation even as members of his own and other generations recognized him as a principal leader of this up-and-coming group of men. The relative emergence of a generation—its relative distance from other generations—is always the result of both a set of transformations in the objective structure of social life that, in turn, unfuses new modes of knowledge, desire, and dispositions into an age class, and the emergence of leaders who, on the basis of and inspired by these new modes of understanding and acting upon the world, strive to realize the forms of interest inscribed in this new vision and division of society by constructing a generation in and for practical action. The well-founded construction of a generation is one of the instruments—that is also a weapon—by which the junior generation wrests power from their seniors, and conversely, one of the means by which seniors claim privilege, in part by invoking *kastam* that, without hesitation, ceded power to them. Indeed, the field of encompassment was the site of complex struggles in which the senior generation sought to both claim its right of authority and co-opt the junior generation through the use of seduction and intimidation, all the while mindful of and seeking to create rifts within the junior division. For its part, the junior generation deployed its knowledge of the modern world to attain increasingly acknowledged ends (e.g., making money) and cited that knowledge as a way to disparage their seniors, solidify their own identity, and ascend to power before their “time,” meaning customary time, the form of time characteristic of precontact society.

What was critical about this “modern” generation was that it stood precisely at the juncture between the forms of knowing and desire immanent in their parents and those forms that were instilled partly by these parents and partly by a world that played no part in the creation of their parents’ *habitus*. Moreover this generation had to respond and adjust to the demands of a prevailing situation that increasingly exalted modern forms of knowledge and desire and disparaged customary ones. No wonder it was often difficult for them to maintain their sense of balance as they crossed a bridge (that they were also responsible for building) from one cultural world to another. This generation felt its predicament as discomfort and confusion, not least because (like all generations) much of what was happening with respect to the relationship between transforming objective structures and co-relative forms of knowledge and desire was happening beyond the pale of consciousness. So my friend says to me: “I am Gou by birth, Barnabas by baptism, and Barnabas Gou is the full name I go by—maybe I don’t know who I am.” “Not knowing who you are is a very Western sentiment,” I reply, to which he just smiles a

smile of amusement and resignation. What Gou grasped was that the practical consensus of meaning—the coordination of intentionality—that once came so easily to social life now seemed to be a struggle. For reasons that were hard to comprehend, the senior and junior generations usually found it difficult to see eye to eye (e.g., on how profits from the tradestore should be distributed, how marriages should be arranged and so on). Bourdieu (1977), focusing on the relation between structure and habitus, puts it this way:

practices are liable to incur sanctions when the environment they must confront is very distant from that to which they are objectively fitted. This is why generation-based conflicts do not oppose age-classes separated by natural properties. They oppose habitus produced by different conditions of existence which, in imposing different visions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable, motivate one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices and aspirations that the other group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa (78, my translation).<sup>10</sup>

In the encompassment of Melanesia, the junior generation finds the ethos and practices of their seniors old-fashioned and passé while the senior generation finds the practices and dispositions of their juniors, if not unthinkable or scandalous, then simply an entirely new mode of sociality. The eldest generation of Maring—those in their late sixties and early seventies who had retired from public life—did see the ways of junior generation as incomprehensible. With a touch of derision and a hint of wonder they sometimes referred to them as “kiap babies”—children borne after the advent of the “new road.” The agents and institutions of encompassment differentiated what I have called the elder, senior, and junior generations, but because the character of its effect was more pronounced on the young, the gradient of difference was much steeper between junior and senior generations than between senior and elder generations. The Maring themselves quite explicitly recognized this reality, conceptualizing it through the transparency of linguistic competence. This itself was a longstanding trope because the Maring always conceptualized differences between peoples in terms of language, professing, for example, to see earthshaking differences between Maring and Narak.

Of the junior generation it was said that both men and women were fluent in pidgin and that many of its leaders also spoke English (at least to the ear of nonspeakers). Of the senior generation it was said that most (though not all) of the men were conversant in pidgin whereas the vast majority of the women were not. Of the elder generation it was said that everyone was limited to tok plas with only a few even dabbling in pidgin.

But not only were all of the junior men fluent in pidgin, several spoke English and almost everyone in the junior generation knew at least a smattering of English vocabulary. The pattern of code switching and the introduction of English words were often intended to exclude members of the elder and/or senior generations. To index and mark their distance from the present reality. Repeatedly, for example, in a generational confrontation over the operation of a trade store, the store owner and other members of the junior generation not only sought to impose capitalist forms of knowledge and desire on the situation (i.e., to make and reinvest profits and use a bank account to accumulate capital to expand the business) but attempted to exercise control over the discourse by continually switching into pidgin, inserting English words and phrases, and inventing new verb-chains in Maring to refer to their new world (e.g., the verbs for repeat, gain, and grow were linked together to denote reinvest). Enos, a manager of Anglican trade store, when asked why he often used English and pidgin in talking to other Maring, observed that much of what needed to be said nowadays could not properly be said in tok plas. Or that it was necessary to twist tok plas in new directions. He knew what generations in change and the poets have always known: that because agents are condemned to speak a language already forged and immobilized by prior usage, to harness it for meanings and values beyond its horizon requires resources from afar and from within. As Proust reminded us over and over again, language is always trying but never quite able to cover all the terrain between the inner lands of emotions, the outer world of society, and the realm of the senses that lies between.

The typology was part of an indigenous comparative discourse about behavior in that people assumed that, since language was instrumental in identity formation, there was a correlation between linguistic competence and modes of sociality. This assumption was, of course, simply a specification of the original trope that Maring and Narak, for example, behaved differently because they spoke differently. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the ideological door swings in both directions. And if we take the Maring's own discourse about language and the "new road" at face value only, we are liable to confer too much power on encompassing agents and institutions. We may end up believing that the mission, the schools, the medical system, and the other aspects of the modern shaped discrete and homogenous generations when the real story is that they were internally differentiated and separated by gradients of difference. This was especially true of the junior generation for reasons that were intrinsic to the very construction of the modern.

In practice, generation always intersects with other visions and divisions of the social universe and other principles of identity and practice populate the same space as that of generation. What leaders of any gener-

ation struggle against is this practical conjuncture of social principles that serves to blur the lines between generations and complicate the invocation of a generational identity. The resources of the modernity, while powerful, were still limited in their application after the first quarter century of contact, creating on these grounds a general division between urban areas and the hinterlands throughout Melanesia. Indeed, one could construct as a general principle that the closer a village is to an urban area the more control the junior generation has over its own destiny, this principle reaching its extreme in cities such as Port Moresby where the senior generation can exercise little or no control. But perhaps an even more critical point was that the geography of the modern redefined the influence and implications of gender relations. As throughout Melanesia, the Maring have always had a pronounced sexual division of labor that was also a division of sexual labor. A crucial dimension of this gendered division of life was the opposition between the inside, the domain of women and female initiative, and the outside, the domain of men and male practice. A consequence of this gendered view was that almost all of the Maring who attended school or worked on the Anglican mission station were men. Espousing the Western ideology of equality, the missionaries pressured the Maring to send more women to church and school, and the number of women associating with Western agents and institutions has increased steadily though slowly from 1955 to the present. Nonetheless, after a quarter century of contact, more than a few young women did not speak pidgin well and none spoke English. Only some of the women had been to urban centers and none had migrated out to perform contract labor, a modern rite of passage for men. The result was that the inculcation of the modern forms of knowledge, desire, and dispositions that depended on external experience was less pronounced in young women than in their male counterparts.

But this is only where the story becomes more interesting and complicated. Historically, the exchange of women, the alliances that ensued from the exchange, and the social, economic, and political implications of these alliances, elevated marriage to the single most important practice in local lifeways. Accordingly, the clan as a whole, especially the subclan, and most especially a woman's father and brothers, sought to control and regulate who, when, and where she would marry. Though the Maring did not treat women as chattel, this is how the mind of the missionary and the state administrator, imbued with the epistemology of the commodity form, imagined the situation. And so for this and other reasons, they set their opposition to Maring marriage practices. Maring women, and especially those of the junior generation, were quick to use this powerful and external resource, to add its weight to their own local inventory of resources, to check, modulate, and often nullify the desires of their family and clan. They joined the church and took up its gospel that marriage should be a

matter of personal choice, an arrangement between the woman and the Almighty. With equal zeal, the junior generation of women began to occupy a portion of the economic territory staked out by men (e.g., cash cropping). So visible was this reconfiguration of marriage and economy that members of all generations often referred to the present as the “time of the woman.”

Now this reshaping of gender relations, inspired by precisely the same agents and institutions of modernity that allowed the emergence and increasing independence of the junior generation of men, was often opposed by these men. Insofar as they perceived that “good” marriage relations and alliances were still important to their future success, brothers sought to retain control over their sisters. A principal reason was that not the least of their strategies was to use the production from the local, domestic sphere to enhance their position in the modern, public sphere. Where they might usually exemplify the beliefs, desires, and dispositions of the modern, on the issue of marriage they took on all the trappings of traditionalists. They seemed to align themselves much more with the senior generation than with the ideas and institutions of modernity. Thus men often took a progressive stance toward senior men even as they articulated a much more conservative stance toward women of their own generation in order to control them. And this in turn had a refractory effect on both the representation of the past by the junior generation and the orchestration of power relations between generations. On the one hand, there developed a rift between junior men and women on how they would appreciate their own past practices and imbue them with instrumental value for defining the future. Many of the men suggested that the Maring retain their customary marriage practices, critically because this nostalgia was essential to the preservation of their traditional cultural identity—an identity that, I have pointed out, was itself forged in the fires of encompassment. Against this vision, their “sisters,” in all the enormous polysemy that this term can muster, argued that (and acted as though) customary marriage practices deserved, as one woman put it, to be abandoned like “an old garden that no longer produces food.” On the other hand, the traditionalist stance of many junior men on the matter of marriage not only aligned them with their seniors, it often compelled them to solicit seniors’ support. Young men would partially attach themselves to especially senior big-men, hoping to achieve that delicate balance by which they could retain as much as possible of their newfound freedoms yet satisfy the demands made of these big-men on their protégés. They would try to conform enough to win the big-men’s assistance in creating a successful marriage without compromising their beliefs or independence. The only members of the junior generation who were exempt from this contradiction were those who had obtained employment in the modern sector (e.g., mis-

sion station). Not surprisingly, it was this group who were the most vocal and uncompromising leaders of the junior generation.

In sum, the reshaping of gender relations allowed by the conditions of modernity and endorsed by the agents of encompassment (especially the clergy and schoolteachers) encouraged the emergence of a junior generation of women, who in the process of defining themselves through their control over marriage and its still powerful implications, created conditions that served to narrow the social distance between the junior and senior generation of men. Due to the cross-cutting category of gender, different factions of the junior generation emerged partly at each other's expense. Like viewing one transparency laid over the other, the social space occupied by women, and thus the value of those positions within that space, were influenced by and inseparable from, but were not the same as, the space and positions occupied by men. At the same time, these social spaces were themselves the result of the encounter between the Maring and the forces of encompassment.

A corollary dimension of the expansion of individuality at the expense of clanship and community was the fluorescence of a notion of friendship. Because generation has been an orphan category, anthropologists have failed to notice that one of the most important changes in post-contact Melanesia (and the encompassed world generally) has been the rise of the concept of friendship. There was always a difference between the total universe of close kin relations and practical kinship, namely those specific relationships that an agent chose to nurture and develop. One feature of indigenous society was that, other than the context of interregional trading relationships (LiPuma 1989; Healey 1990), the domain of practical kinship was relatively narrow. People primarily developed relationships with members of their own clan and those of their affines. The advent of Westernization has expanded the domain of practical kinship so that any two people who can trace a relationship can use this to establish a friendship. And since some kin connection can be traced with everyone but one's traditional enemies, the ground of friendship has been broken. The nucleation of settlements along the main thoroughfare (noted earlier) advanced the interpersonal contact that leads to friendships. Especially among the junior generation friendship became part of the cultural imaginary. This produced networks of friends, self-conceptualized and named in the pidgin term, *pren*. These networks cut across clan lines, practically disregarding kinship as a primary principle of the production of personal relations. Forged in the contexts of the modern—while doing plantation labor, attending the government school, working for the Anglican mission or an ethnographer—these friendships were practical, recognized, and often strong: More, these relations between friends were easily mobilized into groups based on their commonalities of knowledge and interests. Though

fashioned within the indigenous paradigm of practical kinship, these relations had been given a decidedly modern turn. Certainly one of the distinguishing features of the junior generation was its willingness to promote friendship to a principle of group formation. The most powerful example was that the groups who sought to represent the junior generation in public forums were composed of men from a variety of clans. The notion of friendship was also important to ethnography insofar as it opened a space in indigenous social organizations for outsiders such as myself, allowing me to set up residence with two distantly related young men.

Examining the practice of agents, the schemes of practical classification, and their enactment, it becomes clear that generation is neither an arbitrary slice of an otherwise undifferentiated continuum of physical age nor a concrete category brought into being by a coalescence of the interests of members of the same age cohort. Rather, generations are relational and emergent, appearing as a space of differences based on principles of sociohistorical differentiation. These principles are continually forged and then reshaped in the interaction between the Maring and the West. Both the analytical concept of generation and the sense of generation felt by agents result from a space of positions whose relative distance or proximity to one another determines their values. What was (and still is) at stake in the tension between generations was the power to impose a vision and division of the social universe—in a word, to construct the reality that shapes the trajectory of the society as it pushes into its future. A future that is vastly different, objectively in its structure and subjectively in the forms of knowledge, desire, and dispositions inculcated within agents. A key concept and a stake in the contestation between generations, within a generation, and between the Maring and their Western encompassers, was the question, what was *kastam*. For the modern not only pushed away from the past, it also produced a social epistemology that helped to construct the past that it was pushing away from, not least by defining *kastam*.

### *The Customs of Kastam*

Every discussion of custom is actually several overlapping discussions. Whether in a featured or supporting role, there is always a moral history that is also, among other things, a moral geography. Representations of, and reflections on, what custom/*kastam*/*nomane* was (and is) form a social conversation on the merits of the past for the future. The term *nomane* is Maring: it can be used to refer to local conventions and practices. Its ethnographic significance is that it is the most abstract word—that is, free morpheme—translatable as *custom*. It is certainly however not the only word or phrase. This moral history has had an increasingly kinetic quality

with the expansion of the public sphere. Foster (1995b), with the intelligent clarity that graces his entire study, notes that the gloss “custom” is a paradox, a “claim about historical continuity expressed in a creolized form that bespeaks historical change” (1).

The Maring, of course, never knew they had customs until they engaged “civilization,” or at least what passed for civilization in the personae of missionaries, ethnographers, kiaps, and the other creatures of modernity. The doubleness of language strikes here again. On the pragmatic side, speakers have access to a slew of terms to refer to, and so classify, a social practice. These can range from the creolized *kastam* to the English *culture* to local terms like *nomane* and *kopla* (balance). Semantically, each of the terms has multiple glosses (or metasemantic equivalence), these glosses partially overlapping with each other. The result is that these terms, like the modern itself, continually compose, decompose, and recompose themselves in mid-flight. Each context of use and each gloss conditions the meaning of all others. In order to grasp the significance of any usage we must apprehend the entire design for speaking. In their most embracing use, this set of terms took their bearing from the opposition between the “new road” and that of *kastam*. The Maring took this difference to be so transparent as to hardly require further comment.

KASTAM	MODERNITY
clanship	friendship ( <i>pren</i> )
tok plas	tok pidgin, English
violence	law, court system ( <i>lo</i> )
ancestor worship	Christianity ( <i>lutu</i> )
sorcery	medicine
subsistence farming	business ( <i>bisnis</i> )
valuables	money
men’s authority	women’s rights
inherited knowledge	education
kaiko (dancing)	Western-style “parties”

The construction of the category *kastam* involved the production and partitioning of historical time. The imagination of *kastam* in opposition to the modern entailed the invention of the past, a kind of time inscribed in practices and measured from the present looking back. This conception

also transformed the present in that it was no longer imagined cyclically as a variation on an ancestral theme, but lineally as a discordant and radical break from a “traditional” way of life to its modern replacement. In this, there is also the beginning of the Western notion of objective history—a notion that parallels our theory of human nature in that the agents and institutions of social life are understood as expressions of larger and more enduring historical forces.<sup>11</sup> The Maring movement to conceptualize the past objectively as *kastam* entails the disembodiment and de-institutionalization of social practice. It entails a kind of reversal of the history produced by those whose history was inseparable from cultural practice itself. What I mean by this is that because indigenous history was embodied in people’s dispositions and perspectives, and institutionalized in the practices of kinship and exchange, it was never encountered outside of itself. The world existed in a taken-for-granted state—what Rappaport, speaking of ritual, called the canonical.<sup>12</sup> There was no recognition of different or antagonistic practices—only different species of societies. Accordingly, agents (especially the junior generations and women) were not conscious of the power-distributing function of cultural practices. Under these conditions, the junior generations and women could neutralize a practice only by accepting it and then, through guile and insight, turning it to their own advantage (see LiPuma 1980 for a discussion of how Maring women practically negotiated their own marriages). The power of indigenous representations of reality derived not only from their capacity to shape a cultural logic, but their capacity to instill a sense of respect for the senior generations of men—to take but one important example. The advent of the modern and the construction of *kastam* brought the embodied dispositions, desires, and knowledge to light by creating a contrast within Maring society. Here was no longer the original indigenous contrast between the Maring and neighboring societies, but between those Maring who followed the cultural path of the ancestors and those who took the new and future road. This, in turn, raised to consciousness the power-distributing function of “traditional” institutions and classificatory schemes, setting up the possibility, even as Western agents and institutions provided the resources, for challenging the senior order. No doubt the epitome of such possibility was embodied in a young man named Ambrose who was paid handsomely for translating the Bible from English into Maring and who used his education, wealth, Christianity, and status to both expose the sources of customary power and to wrest power from the senior generation by systematically ignoring their wishes, denigrating their wishes to members of his generation and to his white audience, and “convincing” his seniors to go along with his. Though phrased in the language of self- and social interest—what he thought best for “his” people in their great march into the modern world (such as Christianity; in this he seemed to echo the

sentiment of the kiaps)—his actions were nothing less than a moment in the reorganization of the structure of desire. Ambrose was helping, from a privileged position mediating both worlds, to redefine what was desirable for men his age at this point in Maring history. Put another way, the emergence of “kastam” as a social category was an index of the disruption of the once harmonious fit between objective and embodied structures that characterized the logic of local reproduction.

But the matter was more complicated than such a simple opposition would suggest. For the encompassing process served to parse kastam into those practices and beliefs that were wholesome, rational, and progressive and those that were telltale signs of the Maring’s more primitive and asocial past. Ancestor worship, sorcery, polygamy, warfare, and animal sacrifice fell into the latter category. The patrol officers, missionaries, and medical personnel, backed by the weight of God and government, inveighed against these practices. Meanwhile, Westerners considered other indigenous practices as either positive or neutral. Westerners erected an implicit, practical, and situationally dependent gradient for assessing indigenous practices. If Westerners understood the practice of a strong familial life positively, they grasped the local language and the norms governing land tenure as unexceptional. Marriage exchange was more suspect in that it appeared to involve the purchase of a wife. More to the point, most Maring generally went along with this assessment of custom, though with a few notable and well motivated exceptions.

The struggle between the senior and junior generations—the forms of contestation and co-optation—were played out dynamically in the way that indigenous practices could be used to take advantage of modern opportunities, and the gains made in the modern sphere used to local advantage. In their struggle to build and insure their status, big-men and the senior generation had a number of weapons, symbolic and material, at their disposal. The primary strategy of the seniors, especially the big-men, was to enter the modern world where they could use their “traditional” leverage. This was particularly the case with respect to the cash cropping of coffee. In Maring land tenure, there was a hierarchy of rights conforming to the contours of the social structure. More inclusive levels have priority over less inclusive ones such that the rights of the clan take precedence over those of the subclan and the subclan over those of any individual claimant. Historically, this allowed for easy adjustments when gross inequities occurred, those who were strapped for land simply requesting grants in perpetuity from better endowed landholders. In the context of modernity, the senior generation and especially the big-men have used their authority as clan leaders to allocate significant tracts of land to themselves for coffee production. They then used their influence mostly over their own wives and junior women to manage and harvest

these coffee gardens. The effect was to create a stream of monetary income for the senior generation. The seniors could not only use this income to buy coveted consumables, but to mount feasts and other public exchange ceremonies. This affirmed and augmented their status—in the Maring phrase, it raised their name—which in turn gave them greater discretion over the allocation of clan lands. Such actions also served to reproduce, with all of its new implications, the customary organization of land tenure.

For the senior generations of big-men, this also meant the continuation of polygamy, no matter how adamant the opposition of the Anglican Church. As men may receive gifts of land rights from their affines, multiple well-placed marriages allowed such seniors to increase both their effective land holdings and their labor power. The moral judgment of Anglicans was that they would not permit polygamists to be baptized and enter the house of God until they had renounced all but one of their wives. But not one of the fourteen polygamous men seriously contemplated this strategy. Punga, a big-man in his mid-forties, twice married and known for his coldly calculating political nature,<sup>13</sup> explained it precisely:

There is much to be gained from coming together with Father Brian [Bailey] and the other people at the mission. They have money and goods for those who adhere to their ways. But what would I do with my second wife and all of the exchange relations I have built up from it. Who would now attend to my coffee gardens? Who would help me when it was time to make a feast? Who would come to me and offer me money if I had none myself. What “bisnis” would I have? Who would know my name or listen to me when I speak? No, the young men make their way through the mission; those of us who were born in the time before [contact] have only land and wives.

Punga makes no bones about it. His logic was ironclad. In modern times, money was essential for feast-giving, and his primary access to cash was cash cropping and the labor power needed to produce it. His position and power, the control of his generation over reproduction, his promise of a future, turned on the degree to which he could harness “traditional” resources to garner cash that could then, as coveted consumables, be returned to the universe of feasting and exchange. In the same vein, the senior generation also exercised control through the management of bridewealth payments. Insofar as young men needed their assistance to satisfy their obligations to their affines—that was, to provide the pigs and raise the money required to consummate their marriage—the junior generation was dependent on their seniors, a dependence that the seniors cultivated practically through the timing of the payment.

A primary force motivating newly married men to conform to the standards and practice of bride payments set by their seniors was their wives. Because of the sexual division of modernity, women attended school and performed labor outside the village much less frequently than men and so were much more likely to harbor forms of knowledge, desire, and dispositions that resembled those of the senior generation than the junior one. Accordingly, a wife was likely to press her husband to remit a substantial bride payment to her natal clan, often by this act forcing members of the junior generation into the hands of their seniors. A way to avoid this complication was, of course, not to get married, and indeed, one of the primary characteristics of the leaders of the junior generation, men such as Moses, Pena, Gou, and Ambrose, was that, no matter how “eligible” they were, they remained unmarried. To remain unmarried was unthinkable in the Maring perspective such that their decision to postpone marriage was a provocation to the social order in the sense that it exposed the relationship between marriage exchange and the hegemony of the senior generation, a relationship made even more transparent, and thus also more threatening, by the public statements of these junior leaders that they were delaying marriage because of the difficulties surrounding bride payments. In this respect, what anthropologists have called bridewealth inflation was one of the symbolic weapons that helped to maintain the threatened and sometimes flagging power of the senior generation. The telling point, true across Melanesia and no doubt beyond, is that especially when the breach between generations is so great, the forms of contestation and co-optation crystallize in what agents say and what they leave in silence, in what they do, won’t do, and undo, and in the opening up of a field of voices that engenders a novel cultural set of competing possibilities. Most radically, the generation then coming of age began to introduce a view of knowledge common to Western liberal thought (e.g., as inscribed in notions of democracy) that societies should not delimit the universe of discourse, that knowledge, including heretical knowledge, should be given a public hearing because even “bad” knowledge is a social good.

Finally, even as early as the late 1970s, there was an inkling of *kastam* becoming significant as a means of asserting the value of Melanesian ways of life and resisting white privilege. It began slowly enough with simply an increase in pride in the way Maring history had shaped indigenous lifeways. This newfound pride appeared in the transformation of the *kaiko* as first and foremost a dance of war to one whose distinctive dancing and costume, headdresses fashioned from the thorax of luminous beetles and crowned with pearlshells and plumes, symbolized the Maring as a people and the unity of each clan cluster dancing in formation. It was also “our” *kastam* for attracting wives as well as doing *bisnis*, such as selling plumes for cash. There also began at this time the crystallization of the big-man

status as the modern political offices of councillor and committee. Accordingly, the instructions given by a councillor or committee on which candidate standing for election their clan members should vote for was a way of reflexively resisting the notion of the individual embodied in the idea of the democratic election, but also a way of asserting and validating this customary institution for modern use. As the councillor and committee were invariably from the senior generation, this was also a way of tilting power back in that direction.

### *Remembrance of Things Future*

By the mid-1950s, the Maring had not only been conquered militarily, they had been conquered spiritually and socially. Though at different paces and rhythms, the various clan clusters moved, like an orchestra without a conductor, to the same music of modernity and collectively opted to embrace the modern. They felt the modern first through the power and authority of the patrol officers, detachments of young men assigned to pacify and begin the civilization process in the “bush.” The process, by its colonial nature and persons, had a certain brutality to it, but one that was much less meaningful to the Maring than the reality that they were now on a new social trajectory. Central to their future would be to erase their past, particularly their penchant for violence, and indeed, by 1980 all of the war shields and fight stones were either in museums or the hands of anthropologists.

The Western community that the Maring encountered was rather idiosyncratic and often divided, though the Maring did not, of course, see it that way. I sometimes wondered what it must be like trying to imagine what the West was like from the motley collection of Westerners that visited the Jimi and Simbai Valleys—an effeminate priest from San Francisco, a disaffected nurse from County Cork, a Bible-thumping translator from Western Australia, a lapsed policeman from Manchester, young macho patrol officers, plus a series of rather nosy intellectualizing anthropologists. I imagined that it must be like trying to reconstruct “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” after hearing a handful of sour notes played on a tuba. But construct an image of the West they did, as a military force, a carnival of goods, two new languages, and most of all, as novel modes of sociality that often seemed curiously asocial. Between the first sighting and the present, one generation and an entire world have passed.

To grasp this movement of generations, it is, I have argued, necessary to construct a theory of generations. Moreover, this theory must not only be relentlessly nonreductionistic, it must recognize that a generation is neither a ready-made category nor simply a statistical regularity apparent only to the anthropologist, but has gradients of difference that, embodied

in inculcated knowledge, desires, and dispositions, and generated by changing social structures, separate generations. Because members of a generation will, having undergone many of the same experiences, tend to think and desire alike, there is every likelihood that they will coalesce into groups that are politically active. But this is never guaranteed because there are always other powerful principles of identity in play as well as a collision of practical interests. It follows that no generation will ever think or act homogeneously, but will have varying moments of strength and weakness, powerful realizations and equally apparent absences, depending on the situation and the charisma of its leadership. Nonetheless, there is no way of imbuing transformation with both structure and agency, of taking into account the many forms of contestation, cooption, and collaboration, without an account of generation. What I have presented here is at best a preliminary theory of generation, my intent being to open the discussion.

In the first quarter century after contact, there arose a generation that for the first time in Maring history sought to distance itself from that history and tie its fortunes and future to the modernizing gesture. This new generation took up a liminal space between a tradition with fixed reference points but no future and a modern future with few reference points. And from this liminal space, inherently dynamic and unstable, they began to fashion concepts, desires, and sensibilities that were neither Western nor Maring; nor were they some logical combination of the two, in that agents added large measures of creatively new forms, the shape of this creativity itself a product of the encounter between the Maring and the West.