

# Notes

## Chapter 1

1. As for myself, I am embarrassed by their embarrassment, and a feeling comes over me that wants them to better appreciate and respect their own past, their own grandparents. But who am I to want this for someone else? This thought flashes across me in the very next moment. But talking to these young men who have become my friends, in the special and strange sense that friendship is possible across cultures, it is hard for me to escape the feeling that they grossly overvalue Western lifeways and practice, that their enchantment and acceptance of things Western, however historically inevitable, involves losses that are never known except retrospectively. They have the reverse reaction, wondering why I am not more enthusiastic about my own culture.

2. On the flip side of this cultural logic, those of the senior generation would ask me why I worked—why, for example, I went to the trouble of making a food garden—if I could get things simply by magic. Why would I spend time on a garden when I could simply send a letter and receive food by the next delivery from Mt. Hagen or even America?

3. This is a paraphrase. The encounter took place many years ago when I was still a graduate student. I do not remember word for word what Cardoso said, though for many years I have believed that he said something like this.

4. Beneath its crisp analytical style and often dense prose, much of what is called the New Melanesian Ethnography is sentimental, tender, and nostalgic. For not only does it want to theorize the differences between Melanesians and Westerners, it desires these differences to persist, feeling that the world is a better place if left to its own diversity. I don't know whether this is right historically or theoretically, but I can't help but share the feeling—otherwise I would have become something other than an anthropologist.

5. A second temptation (which is more true of, say, Indonesian ethnography than Melanesian) is to be so enamored of the power of the “world system” that every local culture becomes just one more tragic footnote to a history not of its own making. This view, in saying correspondingly little about the local level, cannot but efface local forms of agency, forgetting that the Christianity and capitalism imported to Melanesia are fast becoming highly Melanesian brands of Christianity and capitalism.

6. This is somewhat of a misnomer. All modern anthropology is of modernity, while all studies of modernity cease to be anthropology in its most traditional cloth. But there is no point in fretting about this. It is simply anthropology follow-

ing in the footprints of those it studies: that is, seeking to deflect the impact of the modern even as it reconfigures itself.

7. Healey (1990), writing about the Maring, contends that “even into the 1980s” change “has been slight.” He admits that the political encapsulation of the village into the nation-state has led to some modification of internal village politics, but then goes on to say that “these new alignments, however, have not engendered any major alterations in the organization of production and exchange” (xvii). Against this I would submit that the changes have engendered significant movement in the organization of meaning, representation, and desire. I have (somewhat unfairly) singled Healey out because he has spoken about the Maring, but he is by no means alone in taking this approach that cannot help but reduce Melanesian societies to islands immune to history and its implications.

## Chapter 2

1. Marie Reay (1992), speaking about the Minj region adjacent to Maring territory, notes that the district officers were afraid of precisely this situation and therefore “dreaded any manifestation of ‘antiadministration sentiment’” (141).

2. Samuel Beckett may well be the author of expatriatism. Like expatriates, his characters characteristically found themselves in grotesque situations within a world that is apparently normal to everyone around them.

3. Sinclair, for example, notes that “like many of my fellows, I had little time for the United Nations and I resented the carping, petty nature of much of the criticism that powerful sections of that August world body continually hurled at our administration of the Territory. It was hard to swallow this sanctimonious humbug” (1981:218). Black representatives from postcolonial states such as Nigeria and India especially grated on their nerves. Blacks judging whites seemed an inversion of reality that was, as one kiap put it, as though “the Abos [derogatory term for the aboriginal peoples of Australia] were running Australia.”

4. My own fieldwork in the Maring region in 1974 began with a near confrontation with the district officer, raising the dismal prospect of ruining my field research even before it had begun. The DO (who shall remain nameless) had invited Georgeda Buchbinder—then a professor of anthropology at Queens College and a Maring fieldworker—and myself to stay with him before going to Tuguma in the Simbai valley. Prior to my moving to Chicago to attend the University of Chicago, I had lived for two years with Georgeda in New York. That evening after dinner, the DO became progressively more intoxicated and began to make suggestive remarks and then sexually harass Georgeda. I had grown up in the Bronx, had been in numerous fights in my life, and had the ominous sense that I was about to be in another. Knowing me and seeing that I was about to become unhinged, Georgeda pulled me aside when the DO announced that he was going to the loo and told me that we could not afford a confrontation and that she, as my superior, would handle the situation the best she knew how. And so she played along with him, kissing him, fondling him, and allowing him to remove her blouse, all the while filling up both their glasses with whiskey, until too drunk to perform

and growing angry at his impotency, he and Georgeda passed out. In the morning, I followed their lead and pretended that nothing had happened as the DO accompanied us halfway to Tuguma.

5. This was the advice that was given to me, but believe me I would have known it anyway from having listened to the stories of Meryvn Meggitt, Bob Glasse, Georgeda Buchbinder, Paula Brown, Ed Cook, Cherry Lowman, and other senior ethnographers.

6. Vividly imprinted on my mind is a night I spent with two former kiaps, one a civil servant in the provincial government, and four VSO members (two of whom were woman). The kiaps and one of the VSO men went on for at least an hour castigating a young nurse who it was presumed had had relations with a local man. Their attack was so visceral, out of control, and vicious that it was as if she had run her nails down the raw nerves of their psyches. In a seriously joking way, they sputtered between beers that she should be gang-raped and her partner castrated for what, in their eyes, was an unpardonable sin. They opined that they might understand it “if she was ugly and no one wanted her” (no one white, that is), but she was “more than acceptable.” My observation that the nurse and the young man, an orderly at the local hospital, were consenting adults and that it wasn’t as though someone had been harmed was met with a look of disgust and the reply that I simply didn’t understand; that even though I did not look like an academic (i.e., I was a former football player and weight lifter in contrast to their image of what an academic was supposed to look like), I sure thought like one. As I got up to leave, I could see in their eyes and demeanor a new and obvious distrust toward me—a man’s man, a patriot of his race, would support their ideology of miscegenation. That was not only the racist current that ran through them now. It was of long standing, back to the time when they first donned their khakis and began to tour the Highlands. Despite the obvious need, there is apparently no twelve-step program for former kiaps.

7. One night at a dinner in Port Moresby, a couple in their mid-thirties, an English businessman and his German wife, went on for some time how barbaric such practices as head-hunting and sorcery were, how these were telltale signs of the savage, of people lacking a sense of civilization and civility. I reminded the couple that mustard gas and gas chambers, V-2 rockets raining down on the civilian population of London and the firebombing of Hamburg in retaliation, not to mention the atomic bomb, were part of our civilization. The English businessman nodded his head and reluctantly said that was true, as though I had reminded him of his genetically deformed sibling that his parents kept in the basement, while his German wife replied that “she had forgotten all about that”—that wonderful shifter *that* rescuing her, rescuing us, from having to say that we did unspeakable things, and having done them what right do we have to look at Melanesia and claim the high moral ground as our birthright.

8. The missionaries were not sanguine about the future of Western civilization. Their reason was that its present period was one of a liberalization of values and actions that was nothing less than a socializing of sin. This was underscored by the legalization of abortion, pornography, and other sins, and the creation of social institutions to advance them.

9. James Watson is more genteel, gentlemanly, and dapper than I could ever hope to become. And the phrase “among other things” is, I would suggest, a most polite and euphemistic way to say that kiaps had little brief for local practices, both because they thought they understood them and because they thought understanding them didn’t matter.

10. My translation is admittedly not totally faithful to the published texts in either French or English—both of which might be translated into their respective languages. I have broken up a run-on sentence, corrected two grammatical errors, eliminated an “overly” redundant phrase, and generally tried to make the text intelligible and accessible. My reason is that I think that what Bourdieu has to say here is important—too important to be buried beneath impenetrable prose.

11. Just as the West understands an action, such as an act of courage, as an expression of the underlying trait of courage, so we often see the men and women who make history and the institutions they forge as expression of larger, immanent historical forces. This appears philosophically as well as ideologically in the work of Hegel, and more historically concretely in notions such as “manifest destiny”—the idea that the agents and practices that displaced the Ameri-Indians were simply responding to this larger historical impetus. Colonialism itself takes its form and justification from the idea that its agents, such as missionaries, are simply parts of a grander and inevitable scheme.

12. If the Maring did not have a history as the West imagines history it was because they also did not live in nature as the West imagines nature. This is not to say that they did not know their environment. As farmers and hunters, they seemed to know every tree, plant, insect, and bird down to the subspecies level. And they knew so much about their interrelation—which insect bred in what tree and was preyed upon by what bird—that I thought that each of them probably qualified for a Ph.D. in botany (except Penga of course). What they did not encounter was nature as an entity that was independent of, and could stand against, culture and kinship. What was nature was not distinct from the organization of the spiritual universe, the ancestor spirits of the high ground versus the low, the spirits of the head and hotness and culture versus those of the lower body and coldness and fertility. The trees where the birds of plume lived were intrinsically related to the relations of exchange and kaiko that they made possible. It was for this reason, among others, that Maring stories of their past were never histories in the Western sense inasmuch as they elided people, actions, places, and environment.

13. I can vouch personally on this latter point as he made every attempt possible to manipulate me for his ends. From his perspective, I was a blessing and resource in the sense that I could furnish him with money to help him satisfy his political objectives. He continually raised a fuss if I assisted members of other clans, which, of course, I had to, inasmuch as my objectives entailed establishing and maintaining relations with members of all of the Kauwatyi clans and with a number of non-Kauwatyi clans as well. Living with him was a continual game, often involving brinkmanship, as he would threaten through emissaries (never directly) to have me expelled from Kauwatyi if I did not adhere to his desires, which invariably required me to act in a partisan political way on his behalf. Part

of my social education was learning to fend off his overtures and threats by thinking through a cultural logic that went like this: if through enriching him I suffered a loss then this would cause other people to have to share my sorrow, which would upset the balance of my relationships with others. These others would feel compelled to restore this balance by giving gifts to me, which, through the intermediary of my person, would create a reciprocal obligation for him, an obligation that he might not recognize because it was not on the “skin” of events, and thus failing to reciprocate properly or not recognizing the request of others for what that request truly was, might lead to sorcery. And as a Westerner, I was by my “nature” (or more precisely, my cultural species) outside the possibility of sorcery. There was in this what I have referred to as an implicational logic, which unlike Western logic is not a logic of things or even concepts, but one in which A relation implies B relation that in turn implies C relation, thereby creating an implication string that links persons together through the inevitable intentionality buried in their actions.

### Chapter 3

1. I had come to the study of Melanesia and the Maring by chance, first through the influence of my teacher and lover, Georgeda Buchbinder, who had done biomedical ethnography among the Maring in the late 1960s, and then through my long and deep friendship with Cherry Lowman, the first to study the Kauwaty, and Skip and Annie Rappaport. If Cherry was the best ethnographer of the five, Skip could combine theory and ethnography fluidly, and Annie pioneered the description of the Maring language. The trademark of this group was that, like the best of Melanesian life, kinship was always more important than competition. From as far back as I can remember, my father, an old-world dignified Sicilian gentleman, would repeat to me the Sicilian saying that “to have a family is to have the earth”—the earth here meaning literally and metaphorically all that there is, the ground of action, and land upon which to plant crops. The Maring share a similar ethos saying that “kinship lies at the root” and that “the bond between siblings is the cause and reason of action.” In Skip and Annie, Cherry and Georgeda, I felt I had found not only an anthropology, but an intellectual family. From my years of conversation with them, from the exchange of notes and ideas, I am able to imbue this account with a depth and breadth that I could never have given it alone. More than that, there is a genuine joy in knowing that a better account of the Maring is all the gift I would ever need to repay them.

2. I will never forget now what I so long repressed. Victor Turner, who was a man of immense kindness as well as intelligence, held his graduate seminars on religion and ritual in his home. On the occasion of a stirring and poetic description of Ndembu ritual by his wife, Edith, he opened his scrapbook and showed a few of us who had lingered photographs of some initiands and their parents. I asked about one man who, seemingly out of context, was wearing a T-shirt and cap, to which Victor Turner replied that the inscription on the T-shirt and cap were of the mining union; the man in question was a union organizer. He was a Christian who

had used his position in the Church to rally people across cultures (the mines were, of course, ethnically omnivorous) to the union cause.

3. There are some interesting exceptions such as *The Pacification of Melanesia* (Rodman and Cooper 1979) that focus on the nature of capitalism and colonialism in this respect.

4. This notion of disciplinary valor was part of the unsaid of anthropology, though on certain occasions it did ooze to the surface. This was epitomized by G. P. Murdock's assertion that culture did not exist and Marshall Sahlins's stinging reply that not only called attention to Murdock's theoretical blunders based on flawed methodological individualism, but, in a powerful allusion to the French revolution, accused him of betrayal. Sahlins, the most influential anthropologist of his time, wrote, "In George Peter Murdock, anthropology may have already found its Robespierre" (1976:91).

5. The Maring believe, the Simbu hold, the Orakavia maintain, the Melpa claim . . . fill in the people, verb, and predicate. The ethnographies of Melanesia are replete with sentences of this order—the trope of totalization that all description relies on (even the statistical sampling of individuals common to Western polling, which embodies an element of totalization in the very structure of its questions) cannot help but set up totalized categories. In Melanesia, these are necessary acts of totalization, a kind of shorthand for saying that the dominant Maring belief is, the majority report among the Simbu is, most Orakavia maintain, or the Melpa generally . . . This way of talking about others takes for granted that the ethnographer has command of the entire society, which, in turn, rides on the assumption of a simple uniform mode of reproduction and clearly defined boundaries. The ethnographic sentence reads very differently if I say the Maring believe, though this belief wanes in border communities that are an admixture of Maring and Kalam clans . . . The sentence also reads differently if I say the Maring, depending on generation and gender, believe . . . The issue is how the evidence is to be heard and integrated into an ethnographic understanding. Are there socially meaningful relationships in these differences? One reason, if not *the* reason, the discussion about totalization has been confused is that anthropologists entertain two separate concepts of totality that, not coincidentally, correspond to their two notions of culture. The first notion derives from the limits of awareness of agents in practice. About this Sahlins (1997) comments that "cultural life in its complexity, let alone its totality, involves reasons and relationship that no one who lives it can be expected to express" (273). From what philosophers call an ontic standpoint, Heidegger (1962) argues much the same: namely, that the present is the temporal space least likely to receive an authentic self-interpretation because people, by the character of consciousness, are preoccupied with the immediate and what is "ready to hand" (246–47). Because Maring, like people the world over, assume their cultural life is natural and presupposed, they ignore the structural, historically evolving relationship between, for example, birth rites and funerals (Buchbinder and Rappaport 1976). And there are no practical benefits to be gained from the kind of abstract reflection that would elevate this relationship to consciousness, least of all when kin are saddened by a death or celebrating the birth of a child. Given the necessi-

ties and limits of practical awareness, any science of social life must engage in acts of totalization in order to grasp the character of structures and practices.

6. The primary reason that Melanesian ethnographers ignored studies of discourse and ethnographic speech events was that these materials require a high degree of linguistic sophistication. The concepts and language are sufficiently complex that only a substantial exposure to linguistics makes the materials comprehensible. Here, for example, is an account of the relationship between the production of an ethnographic text about a past event by two of the foremost sociolinguists.

[The aim is] to recover the co(n)texts from which the text-artifacts were produced in transduction-inscription. To be sure, the decontextualized text, understood as a meaningful building block of culture may have a narrative time line when evaluated purely for its literal denotational content, that is, when it is viewed simply as cohering denotational text. But does a denotational text preserve in any sense the durational contingency, the interactional “real time” of its originary entextualization? Does it preserve, for example, the temporality of emergence of intersubjective entextualization—moments of presupposed mutual (mis)understanding of what was happening—during the event of inscribing its artifact? (Silverstein and Urban 1996:4–5)

Ethnographers will be forgiven if such texts make them blind. Nonetheless, the point still holds that descriptions of the past are never ontologically authentic or transparent, though they are of course culturally real and meaningful. What the linguists are saying is that while the ethnographic interview that becomes text captures quite a bit of referential information, what escapes is the actual process of constructing the speech event. This process includes not only substance but spaces and lapses, for example. And it turns out that one of the most important aspects of Melanesian speech events is silence, which is the *sine qua non* of a nonreferential function of speech. This follows incidentally from the relational nature of Melanesian persons. The argument, which I will make here only in passing, is that because Melanesians externalize their subjectivity in the response they elicit from others, silence is a form of self-understanding or reflection. To put this another way, the act of being silent after speaking that signals the evaluation of the response of others is a far cry from being mute.

7. The notion of “my people,” which has its origins in the fieldwork of Malinowski, is part of the oral culture of ethnography, spoken at conferences in response to other ethnographers’ examples from “their” people but never to my knowledge used in print. The possessive pronoun *my* is double-edged: on one hand, it indicates that the ethnographers have conflated their own individuality with the identity of those they studied; on the other hand, it is an index of deep ethnographic understanding because this level of personal identification is necessary to bridge the social separation to which all ethnography in Melanesia is condemned. The progress from stranger to insider, more than a move in status, is a journey across a psychological landscape of self and others. Born of the delusions

of the person who is in-between, Malinowski thought he had invented the Trobrianders when, in reality, they had not only invented him but gave him the opportunity to reinvent himself.

8. A computer-aided search of bibliographic references on some sixty books and over 400 articles on the New Guinea Highlands since 1990 indicates that, with the exception of Wagner himself, this article had never been cited, not even by his students and those that explicitly use his theories. Ironically, Wagner noted in a conversation that he thought that this was perhaps his best article.

9. Besides making certain theories and evidence invisible, which is why transformations of paradigm in a social science usually entail the resurrection and/or reconceptualization of its ancestors—that is the re-appearance of what has been made invisible—another defense mechanism is the maintenance of a gap between grand and small theory. The assumption of totality is an interesting case in point. At a grand level, most anthropologists subscribe to the proposition, and openly endorse the theory, that an account of non-Western societies should avoid totalization and the forms of essentialization on the back of which it must ride. Taken axiomatically as a theoretical gain, there is no argument about this. This understanding notwithstanding, at the level of small theory, the specific concerns that animate a particular analysis or comparative generalization may presuppose that totality exists. The gap is so important because it allows analysts to deflect and deflate criticism by being able to point with confidence at the grand theory.

10. The ethnographers included but are not limited to Roy and Anne Rappaport, Peter Vayda, Cherry Lowman, Georgeda Buchbinder, John Street, William Clarke, Alison Jablot, Chris Healey, Neil Maclean, Robin McKenzie, and myself. Data was also collected on shorter visits by other anthropologists including Douglas Chen, Ralph Bulmer, and Sarah Meltzoff. In addition, Father Brian Bailey professed an interest in anthropology and sought to collect information on a variety of local subjects while the Bible translator and wife interviewed people on their language.

11. It is at this point in the ethnographic journey that postmodernism falls into logical decay. Amselle 1998 provides an instructive example. He argues persuasively that it is impossible to distill traditional African culture after centuries of Islamic influence and that colonial officials, anthropologists, and missionaries were responsible for fixing the boundaries of African cultures. But under the spell of postmodernism, he cannot resist the claim that these limits as well as the production of identity itself occur independently of the cultural understandings, logics, and concepts of those encompassed. Thus, Amselle argues that it is “absurd to even pose the question of Fulani identity” (47). As to why certain “unities” like the Fulani appear, Amselle writes that a cultural identity emerges because these unities appeal “to social actors who share a common response to its symbolism” (31). I can hear Marshall Sahlins—whom Amselle has already taken to the woodshed for his adherence to a concept of culture—chuckling. And Geertz and others join in. For in one fell swoop, Amselle has conceded his entire argument without apparently being notified of his own surrender. The reason is that we have a name for this common response and understanding of symbols: namely, culture. And lo and behold, only a chapter later we learn that there is indeed “a local theory of identity” that links the religion of the Fulani “to their ethnic particularity” (76). My

aim here is not to offer curbside assistance to a disabled theory, only to point out that the postmodern strategy of omitting local theories of ethnicity precludes the possibility of understanding the making of borders.

12. In the ethnography of Melanesia, language has always been something of a scandal. Ethnographers have ignored both language and the processes of encompassment because it was the encompassment of the Other that made ethnography linguistically possible. Whatever the difficulties of especially the Highland languages, ethnographic investigation has been dependent on pidgin as the contact language through which the ethnographer learned the indigenous tongue, as the language used to confirm the interpretation of local dialogue, as a language of investigation when the local idiom proved impossible, and as the language of modernity adopted by local agents. This pidgin is itself both a product of, and inculturated through, contact with the West. So Melanesian ethnography has presupposed the condition that it has bracketed. This avoidance is evident in the fact that few ethnographies say anything about the linguistic conditions of their own production even when they are avowedly talking about such obviously linguistic phenomena as myth (two examples among many are Gillison 1993 and Weiner 1995).

13. One of the most difficult things to learn and appreciate in fieldwork is that apparently simple statements, everyday run-of-the-mill statements of no monumental importance, often contain a complex epistemology. Statements like “take the aspirin I’m giving you, it will relieve your headache” embody an entire philosophy about the capacity of the I to cause change, about the relationship between empowered external objects (e.g., pill) and states of being in the world (e.g., in pain), and about the relationship between interpersonal action and personal biography.

14. Again, ethnographers, from Vayda and Rappaport to Healey and myself, have been willing to overlook their own words to preserve the integrity of the sovereign culture. At different points, we have all noted that Maring clusters only make war with other Maring groups, and that some clusters made war with the Manga. Both clauses of this sentence cannot, of course, be true. The reality is that because warfare was a mode of sociality the conflict between the Manga and Yonbam suggests that there was no cultural difference prior to pacification.

15. Cesare Pavese, exiled to Calabria by the Fascists, dispossessed of his identity, compares in a poem called “Agonia” (Agony) the forms of identity lost and regained, the perpetual search, to a quest for the most basic elements of the senses: colors. He writes, “desidero solo colori” (all I desire is colors). Then, “questo corpo dopo tanto pallore riavra la sua vita” (this body of mine will live again after all those colorless years).

Sentiro intorno a me scivolare gli sguardi  
e sapro d’esser io: gettando un’occhiata,  
mi vedro tra la gente. Ogni nuovo mattino,  
usciro per le strade cercano i colori.

[I’ll feel within the glances of men go gliding around me,  
and I will know that I am me. Just a look and I will know

I am there like my others. In the new morning,  
 I will step out on the street and go searching for colors.]  
 (my translation)

16. Antonio Benitez-Rojo's *Mar de las lentejas* (*The Sea of Lentils*) (1985) is a marriage of history and fiction that courts the Spanish colonization of the Americas. Drawn from the annals of the first encounters, *The Sea of Lentils* navigates the myths by which the Spanish, the indigenous peoples, and the Africans brought in slavery constituted each other through the stories they spoke, the fantasies they repressed, till there appeared a grotesque composite of mutual otherness—grotesque because its violent imagery paled before its violent reality. There is here a razor's edge between ethnographically true fiction and fictionally described ethnography.

#### Chapter 4

1. I mean this distinction between white and black metaphorically as the simulacrum for a raciology that is intrinsically intertwined with colonialism, power, and production and validation of regimes of subjectivity.

2. In Marilyn Strathern's words, to understand local practice, we need to adopt techniques that permit us to overcome the "tenacity of our own intervening metaphors" (1988:175).

3. This includes, of course, (partially) Westernized others such as non-Western academics and scientists.

4. See LiPuma 1990 for a discussion of the linguistic terminology used here.

5. This goes a long way in explaining why studies of personhood in Melanesia (such as Munn 1986) sidestep the issue of modernity and attempt to bracket the contexts and effects of the encompassment of Melanesia by the West, one of the primary effects being that Melanesians are the subject of Western understanding.

6. See LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989 for a more detailed description of the relation between culture and capitalism as well as the very theoretical work in Postone 1993.

7. Analysts who think an incommensurability between Melanesia and the West cannot help but overestimate difference. For example, in *The Gender of the Gift*, Marilyn Strathern notes that "gift exchange has always been a conundrum to the Western imagination [because it is] the circulation of objects in relations in order to make relations in which objects can circulate" (1988:221). But while this is certainly the culture of gift exchange, it is hardly unimaginable for Westerners such as ethnographers. Suppose, for example, I rewrote her sentence to read: dinner parties (among colleagues, members of a family, etc.) circulate foods and words in relations in order to create relations in which foods and words can circulate. There is little here that is mysterious or hard to imagine. The difference between gift and commodity-based societies, I would submit, is not (perhaps never) absolute; they do not rely on fully incommensurable epistemologies. The difference is that in gift-exchange societies, commodity-like transactions occur only on the social margins

(with, for example, Westerners), where in commodity-exchange (capitalist) societies, gift exchange is reserved for the small, nonpublic, and intimate spaces where kinship and community still have a voice.

8. Such duality is an inherent aspect of any social practice that objectifies persons through objects produced. This is as true for the anthropologist as for the Melanesian gift-giver. For instance, the paper that an anthropologist presents at a colloquium, though presented individually and bound by the norms of individual responsibility, embodies the labors of others, directly and/or indirectly. The paper is detachable and publishable under the sole name of the author because the author has extracted him/herself from the set of social relations without which that paper could not have come into being. So, what I write here inscribes not only my own labor, but that of numerous others, in the absence of whose labor in relation to me, my paper would look very different. In the ideology of the commodity form, this matrix of relations is externalized under the euphemisms of “influence,” “assistance,” and other things that, conventionally, appear in footnotes, brackets, and prefaces—lest the individual and individuality of the author be compromised. In this way, our commitment to the ideology of the individual and the commodity form guarantee that this product (the paper) will appear to be extrinsic both to its producer and to the set of relations that produce him/her. From the standpoint of the audience that focuses on the content of the paper (“what it has to say”), the meanings of the paper for its author (e.g., the memories of the “field” that it arouses) and the set of relations it embodies are tangential—so much so that this is hardly obligatory or presupposed information. The paper comes to the audience as evidence of its author’s intent, knowledge, ethnographic research, analytical insights, etc. For the audience, it is the author’s prestige, or intellectual capital, that is at stake. By reverse action, what an author derives from the presentation (besides a small amount of money) is the author transformed in regard to others which the author attaches to him/herself as prestige and intellectual capital. The author thereby depends on others for evidence of his/her own fame and intellectual identity. In this respect, the individual aspects of the person can be uncovered buried as they are beneath the ideology of the fully individual person and the paper as a pure commodity.

9. For example, it is more than possible to conclude from a truly relativist viewpoint that it is impossible to make any independent determination of a person’s rights. On this view, there is no critical position or leverage from which to conclude that a person from another culture has been deprived of their rights since the notion of right itself is culture-bound. This is the case whatever these rights may be (the right to life, right to be free of foreign domination, right of freedom from slavery, etc.). Thus, there are no grounds to conclude that the Western colonization of Africa and Latin America, policies of apartheid, enslavement, and genocide by a nation against one of its ethnic or religious minorities, and so on, abridge these victims’ “rights.” Truly relativistic positions are ultimately politically highly conservative even if they appear to be scientifically rather radical. Two disturbing (at least for me) consequences follow from this relativism. First, we have little or no obligation to help members of other cultures since we do not know if they have rights to violate; second, the “truth” of a position is ultimately no more

or less than the power to enforce a particular image of reality. The very notions of “human” rights or “women’s” rights (as opposed to culturally specific rights such as Enga, Catalan, Ndembu, Apache, or Kurdish rights) presume that there are sites of commensurability of personhood across cultures.

10. In fact, the status of names in a given society is a critical index of the relationship between dividual and individual aspects of personhood.

11. It should also be observed that cross-contextual regularities in ascribed intentionality are inseparable from the metapragmatic regimentation of speech. The reason for this is that what I call metapragmatics is nothing more than the system of signs for stipulating the use and meaning of signs in context. That is to say, we know that the use of language to convey an intention in social context A (e.g., a shaman’s intent to heal) is the same as context B (e.g., a nurse’s perceived intent to heal) because the metapragmatics of the language stipulates that the use of certain speech forms in A can carry the same meaning when used in B.

12. See Rappaport 1968 and LiPuma 1988 for further background material.

13. Other Melanesian societies also create comparative discourses about persons. The Paiela, for example, characterize some people as having spirits that are straight and good and other people as having no spirit or bad spirit, with the result that these agents act crookedly and badly (Biersack 1991:234).

14. The vision of misrecognition entertained by Marilyn Strathern in *The Gender of the Gift* is rather problematic. She asserts that the Western notion that society is authored is an “illusion,” but she fails to ground her account by articulating the character of illusion or misrecognition. In fact, the whole tone of the word *illusion* would seem to be a mistake in that it suggests simply a false belief, a sensory error correctable by sight and insight. On my view, a theory of the appearance and power of forms of misrecognition in social life should move along the following lines. It must begin in the understanding that these forms are socially constructed. That is, they are genuine cultural products having as much ontological authority as any others. Further, the forms of misrecognition are socially necessary. That is, the way that the forms inflect social action is essential to the reproduction of a society in its current, specific historical form. Hence, a given way of misrecognition will transform only when the society of which it is a part also transforms. And finally, analysis is able to grasp the genesis and source of misrecognition (and also establish the ground of social critique) through the analysis of the contradictions within the sociocultural system. Failure to come to terms with the terms of misrecognition forces the writer to adopt a universalizing logic in order to shape a relativistic position—which is precisely what Strathern does (Josephides 1991:148–49 drives home this point).

15. There are analogues to sorcery in other societies that stress the dividual element of personhood. In Hindu and Buddhist cultures, for example, world renunciation and other forms of ascetic retreat permit persons to declare their independence from society and thus express their individuality in respect to the social body. To put this another way, societies that feature the dividual facet of the person can permit the full-fledged appearance of the individual on only the margins of society—that is, as either profane or sacred.

16. Weiss (1998), focusing on Africa, notes that Haya notions of the practice

of sorcerers have changed in respect to capitalism, specifically that family farms, where the dead are interred, can now be bought and sold for cash. So Haya sorcerers are now more likely to disinter and cannibalize corpses than in the past. Indeed, I would suggest that it is possible to construct, for both Melanesia and Africa, a model of contemporary sorcery as the reconstruction or reimagination of “tradition” in the context of the modern.

17. Those who opt for an unalloyed theory of dividuality forget that many Melanesian societies have a conception of selfishness, meaning situations in which a person remains unpartible, refusing willfully to give in to the pull of the relations in which he/she is enmeshed (e.g., Biersack 1991:248).

18. I was only able to get four or five known cases of “wild man” behavior in which a person runs amok striking people irrespective of kin relation or distance.

## Chapter 5

The names and locations of the participants in the trial have been changed to protect their identity. I would also like to thank Andrew Strathern, Cherry Lowman, and Roy Rappaport for their helpful suggestions on this chapter.

1. Maring leadership was independent of spiritual and magical powers or access to them; in contrast to some lowland societies (Stephen 1987), having access to ancestor spirits or being able to magically cure and curse conferred leadership only within the circumscribed field of that specific practice.

2. By metapragmatics, I mean the use of language to organize how people do things with speech (e.g., report the speech of others or create boundaries on the speech event) and to define the context for the interpretation of discourse. Such rules of use delineate the different types of culturally recognized speech/social events such as gift-giving, addressing the ancestor spirits, performing magic, reporting an illness, giving an explanation, etc.

3. There is an entire linguistic dimension to the trial, as each trial is comprised of series of speech events that both presuppose and construct Maring cultural reality. Speakers use a whole range of “metapragmatic” devices to present and represent the truth in speech events. This ranges from informal speech events such as a greeting to more formalized events such as trials and invocations of the ancestor spirits. Within the trials, there are two levels of metapragmatic structuring. The first includes the general norms and conventions governing use of speech in this setting. For example, witnesses may talk for as long as they like, as often as they like, and on any topic they like even if it appears to bear little connection to the issues at hand. The second level is the use of speech to report about speech within the trial framework. People characterize each other’s speech in order not only to present its referential content but to represent the emotional, ontological, and validity state of the speaker. For example, in one trial, the witness noted that “the person I met on the path that night asked about my pigs [referential, descriptive content] with the nervous laugh of a sorcerer [thereby characterizing the emotional, ontological status of the speaker].” A growing body of Oceania-based research on culture and language (e.g., Feld 1982; Goldman 1983) supports this

notion of speaking, illustrating that all speech events are doubly mediated and determined—by the structure of the grammar and the pragmatic structure of the speech event.

4. Note that catechists in other cultures, such as Ambrym (Tonkinson 1981), have initiated antisorcery campaigns (though mostly on the premise that sorcery is destructive, not that it does not exist).

5. At the time of the trial, the exchange rate was US\$1.30 for each kina.

6. Though there is no way that I can prove the point, I would also suggest that this notion of the individual is indicated by people's increasing acceptance of private (as opposed to merely personal) property and of privacy.

## Chapter 7

1. The Anglicans had assumed that Koinambe could be bought like any other material thing, and the Cenda would be willing to sell this land because of their desire to hear about Jesus. The Cenda assumed that the land could not be alienated because their ancestors, not those of the Anglicans, were buried on this land, and that, for letting the Church use their land, they deserved a real material return commensurate with the wealth of the Church. An equilibrium rather than a settlement transpired. The Koinambe mission claimed ownership of the land but made some concessions to the Cenda; the Cenda did not renounce claim to the land but took no action against the mission. They did not have the know-how or muscle to remove the mission from their land, and in any case, the mission was a rather valuable resource.

2. Some of the more recent ethnography, such as that of Brison (1992), deals more explicitly with the Christian missions. But anthropological habits are hard to break. When anthropologists write about Melanesian religions, they still mostly write about indigenous, presumably precontact belief systems. For instance, a recent volume on the religious imagination in New Guinea (Herdt and Stephen 1989) has only one article (by D. Tuzin) that broaches the relationship between the mission and the religious imagination, set last in the volume (with the exception of the conclusion). None of the remaining ethnographic accounts even mentions Christianity let alone its impact on local ways of thinking and knowing.

3. Most of the accounts that appear in strictly mission journals feature three main concerns: the success of a mission in tallying up souls, Melanesian cultural barriers to Christianity and how to overcome them by winning over the locals, and urging those on the front lines to revitalize their own faith in order that they may evangelize others with renewed zest.

4. Several fundamentalist evangelical missionaries who I met in Mt. Hagen come immediately to mind. One of these, Thomas Jackson of the Tilibi Church in the Wola area, stands out. He excoriated both the intractable heathenism of the Wola as well as that of my colleague, Paul Sillitoe, who worked in the area in the 1970s.

5. As is so often the case for the Maring, a more detailed account of the stages of this process can be found in Rappaport 1969 and LiPuma 1988:172–86.

6. The missionaries were not sanguine about the future of Western civilization. Their reasoning was that its present period was one of a liberalization of values and actions that was nothing less than a socializing of sin. This was underscored by the legalization of abortion, pornography, and other sins, and by the creation of social institutions to advance them.

7. Some people were fascinated with the prospect of having a white ancestor, and more than one person even asked why, if their founding ancestor was white, were they black—a good question.

8. The Maring are, of course, by no means alone in the demise of customary religious ways. Men's cults throughout Melanesia, for example, have collapsed under the weight of Westernization, their trade secrets revealed to women and outsiders, the practices now reduced to relics of a heathen past (see Tuzin 1989).

9. This produced the anomaly that if two people had the same last name the one certain fact about them was that they were unrelated; conversely, no true brothers ever had the same last name since they were always given different Maring names at birth.

10. While all of mankind was said to be able to receive the call of God, it was still the case that European priests believed that the Maring did not now, and would not anytime soon, have the true sophistication to become “real” priests. This view didn't square easily with the official position that since everyone was made in God's image, hence all had the same core of possibility. The Melanesians, however, could not become real priests because their culture got in the way. There were remnants of belief in sorcery and magic, for example, that were not present in Christianity and seemed impossible to expunge. Custom apparently turned the inner core in every direction but heavenward.

## Chapter 8

1. This stance is especially true of ecological and demographic anthropology, which frequently sees local medicine as central to the life of the community only insofar as it presents an obstacle to the adoption of biomedicine. Paradoxically, this viewpoint, which reduces anthropology to a species of life science, systematically overlooks (because it has not developed the resources to grasp them) the sociomedical conditions that lead to the incorporation of biomedicine. Moreover, in drawing its vision of medicine from the logic of science, it has no way to address the practical functioning of any medicine, bio- or other.

2. Any account of ethnomedicine and local healing practices raises the question of their physiological and social efficacy: why healing succeeded even when local practitioners knew little about scientific disease types or appropriate remedies. Theories of the existence of indigenous medical practices have operated along several complementary lines. One thesis is that processes of natural remission generate healing on their own independent of medical intervention. Many patients would recover whether or not they received treatment of any kind, although shamans as well as Western healers may claim credit. This thesis can be further supported with the recognition that cultural responses to illness can help to

promote recovery. Greenwood (1981:219) notes that from the perspective of biomedicine, the value of cultural response lies in its social acknowledgment of illness, restoration of ontological wholeness and creation of optimal conditions for natural recovery. Anthropologists can cite medical studies conducted both in Western and non-Western societies to support this viewpoint. The elaborate emotionally moving, ritual events that frequently surround curing strengthen this argument. Finally, analysts may reinforce both these views by noting that ethnomedical treatments can have pharmacological, nutritional, or physiotherapeutic value. To cite a famous Maring example, feeding ritual pork to the sick may add quality protein to their diet at a critical time, helping to replace nutrients and to assist the body's natural defenses. Johannes (1980:62) explains with respect to the Nekematigi of the Eastern Highlands:

As a placebo, pork is likely to be highly effective because of Nekematigi values and benefits about its salubrious qualities. Killing a pig for someone communicates to him not only the acknowledged seriousness of his condition but also the fact that others, who value his life, are doing something about it.

In addition, pork may function as an important dietary boost. Added dietary intake of high quality protein during times of stress or infection helps to restore physiological equilibrium by replacing lost nutrients and or providing the excel necessary for the formation of antibodies and phagocytes.

Although all of these factors may contribute to the health of the patient, they are neither an explanation nor a description of ethnomedicine. Singularly or together, the views operate in terms of the functions of practice: the creation of optimal conditions for recovery. But there is no door that leads from the functions of psychology or dietary habits to the structure of practice. The functions can engross the phenomena because they are abstract, but they cannot specify the determinate forms of ethnomedical practices. This argument holds for the adoption of Western medical practice; nothing in the improved efficacy of biomedicine in treating certain types of illness can explain the structure and evolution of pluralism.

## **Chapter 9**

1. See chapters 4 and 5 for further discussion on the construction of the person in Melanesia.

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